

Teaching Cultural Diversity: Service-Learning in Second Language Classrooms

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Abstract

The history of migratory movement's dates back to Antiquity but it is true that thanks to the technological and communications advances, migratory movements have increased in recent years. The management of cultural diversity, therefore, is not a problem of the present but it is necessary that it becomes one of the challenges of the 21st Century in order to put an end to the wave of violent and anti-tolerant attitudes. For this reason, social and educational researches with the aim of promoting tolerant and respectful attitudes among citizens have been developing from the middle of the 20th Century to the present. The study seeks to make a theoretical synthesis on the issue for then, suggesting the service-learning as a methodological proposal to address cultural diversity in the schools but in the community also. The most striking conclusion is that active methodologies, the ones in which the teacher takes a backseat and students have all the tools to achieve knowledge, are the most effective when it refers to manage diversity. Students are more motivated to work as a team, to respect and to create an atmosphere of exchanging opinions without having to do anything else than collaborating between them.

Keywords: cultural diversity, service-learning, teaching methods, second language acquisition, didactic approach.

1. Introduction

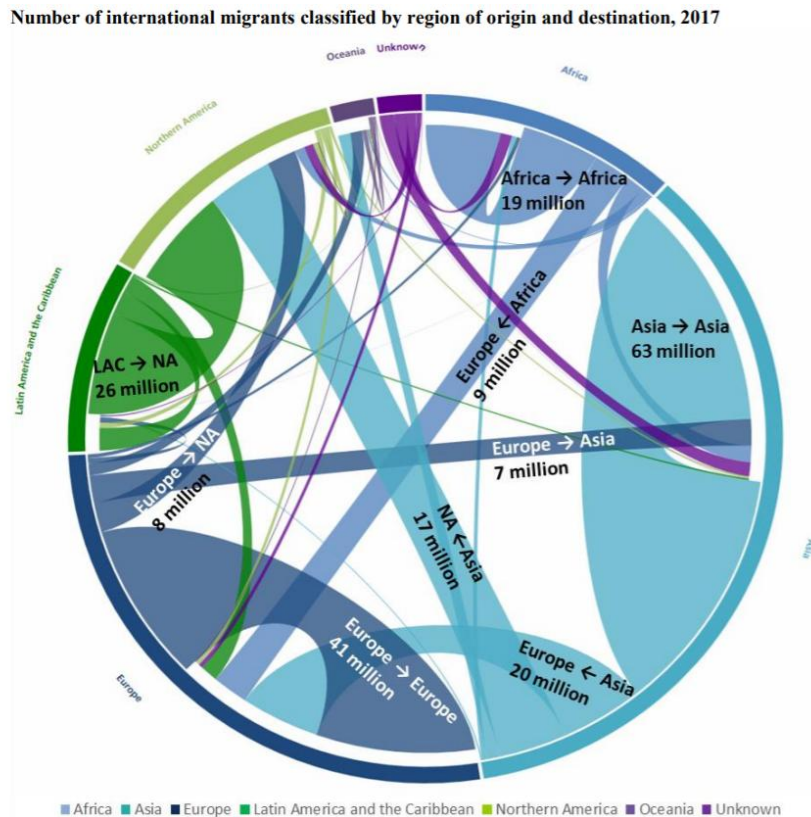
1.1. Cultural diversity in societies.

Cultural diversity has been a constant in the history of human beings (Dassetto, 2016) and it has occurred for several reasons over the years. As explained by Salaverry (2010) already in Antiquity there were many travellers who explored other locations and reflected what they observed during their trips in diaries, picking up the great variety of cultures that they found in their path. The History of Humanity, therefore, is a history of encounters, mixes of cultures and interaction between different groups: cultures, traditions, religions and even languages that have been found for thousands of years until today.

People have travelled and have crossed borders throughout History for different reasons: either by force majeure, need, desire or natural disasters, poverty, the search for a new life, a new future, adventures, colonialism or refuge by wars (Arnesen et al., 2008). Throughout the years of study, researchers like Arnesen et al. (2008) and others have pointed out the multicultural dyes of many populations as the common, that is, they saw that this existence of numerous culture was typical of all societies and that the non-management of this diversity had led to periods of peace but also to periods of wars, conflicts and violence.

From the middle part of the 20th Century until now, population movements have increased year after year thanks to the economic opening and the development of transport and new technologies (Beas, 2010). These movements are not isolated movements that happen in one part of the world, but as it can be seen in the following graph, the migratory movements are global displacements that increased year by year.

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As it is shown in the United Nations (2007) chart, current societies, therefore, are much more plural societies. The image shows how people change their place of residence within the same continent or even changing the continent, which means that they not only face leaving behind their lives but also a society that may be different in terms of culture or traditions. According to Castro Solano (2012), people who face a change of residence not only have to adapt to another place, with its different landscapes and new locations but on many occasions they have to learn to live in a different culture with other traditions and they even have to learn to communicate in another language different from their own.

Despite having to face this, the Declaration of the Human Rights signed in 1948 established that people were free and that they should be on equal conditions regardless of nation, race or culture, thus supporting the feeling of fair society. But well, do those who emigrate or who are part of minority social groups feel free or on equal terms? Palomero (2006) explains that in this reality that is characterised by population movements, people are not free at all. Despite the approval of the Human Rights and all the movements carried out from the middle part of the 20th Century up to the present, people do not feel free to interact or free of prejudices and do not feel that societies are governed by the principles of tolerance and respect.

This is because, according to Arnesen et al. (2008) many countries have created their societies based on the hegemonic culture, which means that minority populations are not taken into account and, therefore, the principles of freedom, tolerance and respect are relegated to unimportant levels. The identity the nation projects is based on the promotion of a single culture and the homogenization of the population, always being favourable to the dominant elite. Bearing this in mind, it is proven that the cultural diversity that worries both researchers in education and society is not a novel subject but rather has been a constant throughout the centuries. Although, one cannot forget the importance that it has at the present time and the need to execute equitable and fair solutions that do not only promote a homogeneous culture but that validate in an equal way all the cultural realities present in the world.

1.2. Cultural diversity management

The management of cultural diversity has been of great interest to researchers related to education but also to the study of society with the aim of ending the homogeneous promotion of nation-states and letting each society praise the cultural differences that are in it.

The approaches proposed in the past have not resulted in any adequate proposal that really reveals and practices a correct and modern management of plurality, neither at a social nor educational level. According to Aguilar and Burachi (2012), the proposal to manage diversity must be designed by all countries and must include proposals for integration and coexistence. The good treatment between the diversity present in societies will be based on proposals that encourage interaction as a fundamental aspect to reach cooperation among all members of the community.

In recent years, despite having emerged many approaches under which to address this diversity present in societies, two have been the most recognised and those that most follow these premises discussed above: multiculturalism and interculturality. Although multiculturalism refers to the existence of different cultural groups in the same environment or society (Salaverry, 2010), interculturality is in which participants are aware of their interdependence, maintain their own identity but respect and enrich themselves through the contributions of the rest (Aguado, 1997).

Interculturality promotes relationships between people of different cultures, where it is sought that the encounter between these people with different backgrounds occurs in an environment of equality, as explained in the following quote from López Rupérez (2013:15): “La noción de interculturalidad concierne a las relaciones que se establecen entre personas y grupos sociales pertenecientes a diferentes culturas y que propugnan el diálogo y el encuentro entre ellos, en el marco de un concepto de ciudadanía que comporta igualdad de derechos y de obligaciones”.

The author explains that the concept of interculturality refers to the relationships that people or social groups with different cultures establish and that promote dialogue and encounter, all understood within a concept of citizenship in equal rights and obligations. This statement clears a classic problem of understanding between the two concepts mentioned above: interculturality and multiculturalism, the latter being the mere presence of cultures in a society but without the need for interaction between both, and that is the key to understand the first concept (Cano, 2013). In addition, as discussed above, it is sought that the management of diversity promotes plural nations and that citizens learn to respect differences, so if the goal is to teach young citizens to manage diversity, the most appropriate will be doing it under the premises of intercultural and not multiculturalism.

The interaction promoted by interculturality is not a challenge of the current century, but has always been present, so much so that the bad interaction with others or misunderstandings have led to violent attitudes and even wars. All this has been accentuated in recent years and that is why we have seen the imperative need to establish diversity management in the classrooms based on this intercultural approach. This application in the classroom is based on the objective promoted by Vargas (2007), who explains that interculturality seeks optimal coexistence of different people in the same society where values of respect and tolerance are the basis of relationships. Thanks to the acquisition of an education under this intercultural approach, citizens will achieve these values from a young age, they will be people without prejudices and they will understand that just as they like to be accepted and feel part of the community, the person they face also wants to be part of it, without assessing culture, religion, ethnicity, race or nation (Morales, 2015).

It is not only important to bear in mind that education has to promote interculturality but also the methodologies under which these interaction concepts are going to be worked out. Nowadays, there are numerous studies that have worked in cooperative work and contact between students more than the traditional magisterial teaching, and in educational centres this approach has been implemented under these more active methodologies (Entreculturas, 2009).

For all the aforementioned, the study seeks to propose activities to be carried out in the Foreign Language classroom that promote interculturality through active methodologies. With the aim of showing that student will not only learn aspects related to the second language but that they will be able to develop positive attitudes towards diversity and their classmates. In the future, students will not only have been grown up in multicultural environments but they will have been related to them and will have learned not only individually or directly with the teacher but will have learned through dialogue, autonomous research, management of the time in a group and respect for the opinions of others.

2. Proposal for Action in Second Language Classrooms

2.1. Service-learning

Service-learning is described by Aramburuzabala, Cerrillo and Tello (2015:85) as follows: “El aprendizaje-servicio es un método de enseñanza-aprendizaje innovador y de carácter experiencial que integra el servicio a la comunidad y la reflexión crítica con el aprendizaje académico, el crecimiento personal y la responsabilidad cívica.” The authors refer to learning based on experience but also knowledge, integrating the formal aspects of the curriculum but also the social community that surrounds the school. The author Koçi McLeod (2017) refers to this learning as a two-way learning in which students put into practice the skills learned in the classroom, acquire responsibilities and see the consequences of their actions. The author explains that just as students improve their skills and knowledge, the community also improves and that is why it is considered bidirectional.

The authors Martínez (2008), Rubio, Prats and Gomez (2013) and Herrero and Tapia (2012) emphasise this fact and all point out that the service-learning is directed to the community where the educational centre is located. That is, it is not only a formal learning but it goes beyond pure knowledge and focuses on the experiences of students in this environment that welcomes them, as explained by the first authors mentioned Schwartz (2011) indicated that students who work under this method will be able to develop a strong sense of social justice and will be critical to the injustices they see not only in the environment but in the global society.

As explained by Martínez (2008), Rubio, Prats and Gomez (2013) and Herrero and Tapia (2012), the teacher presents a scenario of social disadvantage, exclusion or injustice and students have to develop attitudes that promote equity, respect for diversity, interculturality, solutions for learning difficulties, educational inclusion or respect for human rights. All this, together with a structure dialogue moderated by the teacher, but letting students be free to comment and debate about the realities they have found and about possible prevents that foster social change (Billig, 2006). In addition, service-learning projects are very important because they not only reflect during the process of the activity but also allow students to develop debates afterwards. This is of great interest in relation to interculturality because as Baldwin, Buchanan and Radisill (2007) point out, students may be prejudiced before performing the activity, and may change their values and attitudes toward people in inferior conditions as they live the experience.

Taking into account all the aforementioned, it is important to refer to the actual constitution of the activity, to how teachers can develop training activities for students that in turn are a service for the community. Teachers have to develop an activity that integrates curricular content but that also does not refer specifically to what is explained in classroom. That is, the activity has to be related to what has been mentioned in classroom, it has to be part of the curriculum of the subject but it is not about students learning curricular content directly with this activity but learning from the experience the activity gives them.

The proposed task has to be a challenge for the students, who thanks to it will be able to develop their skills and their thoughts and apply them in different ways; this is explained by Koçi McLeod (2017:23): “Service-learning projects do not aim to simply replicate what happens in the classroom: their value, precisely, is that they *differ* from what is taught in school, thus challenging students to adapt their skills and their thinking and apply them in new ways”. In the following section an activity related to the acquisition of the foreign language will be developed in depth, making reference to: objectives, timing, content, competences, evaluation criteria, evaluable learning standards and learning outcomes.

2.2. Didactic proposal

The didactic proposal that is presented below is intended, as mentioned above, for the Foreign Language classroom, but it could be adapted to any subject as long as its purpose is the same: to promote critical thinking about diversity through the work in the social community of the educational centre. The proposed activity is developed under the methodology detailed in the previous section, service-learning, that involved highlighting the injustices and inequalities that exist in the neighbourhood of the school and also tries to end them. This is explained by Puig et al. (2007:20): “El aprendizaje-servicio es una propuesta educativa que combina procesos de aprendizaje y de servicio a la comunidad en un solo proyecto bien articulado en el que los participantes se forman al trabajar sobre necesidades reales del entorno con el objetivo de mejorarlo”.

This active methodology, as already explained, will seek to leave aside the role of the teacher, thus leaving the students to seek their own knowledge and develop in depth what attracts most their attention. After the activity, the students have a time of debate in which they can reflect critically with their classmates, trying to reach common meeting points and, as Puig et al. (2007) explain, propose possible solutions to the problems.

2.2.1. Introduction

The activity is focused on the last year of Compulsory Secondary Education (16 years), since it is considered that their degree of maturity and their knowledge of the Second Language will allow them to develop the activity satisfactorily in their social environment. With the aim of approving the subjects of languages, students in the Spanish educational landscape must show, either in an exam or in a paper that they have read and understood a book that the teacher has proposed. Given this fact, the activity developed with the objective of showing this knowledge about the reading will be carried out under the service-learning methodology.

In the following sections, relevant aspects of the activity are detailed, but in broad strokes, it is about students putting autonomous and group reading into practice, and being able to read and pronounce correctly aloud. After some work sessions in the classroom where the students will develop activities related to the reading and expose the most representative fragments of it, they will be divided into groups to go out to different groups of young children with learning necessities, economic difficulties or similar to help them with their reading in a foreign language.

This activity is proposed in the Spanish social landscape and within a community or neighbourhood, but it could be done by encouraging an exchange between schools with cultural or socioeconomic differences, promoting help to immigrants with reading or conducting Dialogic Literary Circles in reception centres.

2.2.2. Objectives

- Knowing and using adequate and basic verbal forms in the foreign language.
- Knowing vocabulary related to the reading proposed by the teacher.
- Improving fluency and pronunciation in the foreign language.
- Improving oral skills and oral comprehension in the foreign language.
- Knowing and understanding other social and cultural realities through the proposed activity.
- Developing social competence and creativity.
- Actively contributing to the social community.
- Actively contributing to group work in the classroom.

2.2.3. Timing

The activity will begin in the sessions before Christmas holidays since students will have a prudential time to carry out the reading and they will have time to consider some activities to do with the children. After this, two sessions will be necessary after the holidays: in the first, work groups will be held and the days in which the activity will take place in the community will be divided and in the second, there will be a group debate where they will explain what they have done, felt and learned when doing the activity. In the first session, it is also important that the students explain the activities they have thought about and what fragments of the text they consider important to be read to the little children, so they do not only play but also work on a reading.

	Activities and materials	Objectives	Homework
1	- Explaining the service-learning activity and giving examples of possible activities. - Reading book and vocabulary worksheet.	- Working on vocabulary and pronunciation.	- Reading the book. - Thinking about activities.
2	- Making groups of 5 students and deciding when they are doing the activity. - In groups, putting in common the activities they have thought.	- Deciding what activities they want to do and preparing them. - Deciding what fragments are they going to read.	- Preparing posters, costumes...
3	- Reading and making the activities with the children.	- Putting into practice thereading, improving their pronunciation and working with others.	- Once the activity with the children has finished, thinking about debate questions or feelings...
4	- Debate session: how do you feel during the activity? Have you changed your mind? If possible, do you want to repeat the activity? Do you think we all have the same opportunities? Do you consider the world as equitable? How can we change the situation?	- Making the students think about the world. - Working on consciousness and moral values such as: tolerance, respect, cultural awareness...	- Preparing at home some posters collecting photos of the activity, remarkable sentences of the debate, feelings... Some posters will be hanged in class and some will be given to the children.

2.2.4. Contents

Conceptual Contents	Procedural Contents	Attitudinal Contents
Knowing other realities.	Fluency and pronunciation in the oral activity.	Autonomous reading and group work.
Simple verbal tenses and basic structures.	Developing activities related to the book.	Positive attitude towards the others.
Vocabulary related to the book proposed by the teacher.	Describing feelings and questions in a debate.	Respecting others' opinions and speaking time.

2.2.5. Competences

Competence	Content
Linguistic competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The second language will be used by the students to express their ideas and to speak with their classmates and with the teacher. - They must be able to communicate fluently themselves with the children during the activity.
Social and civic competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The students will learn about other realities and other behavioural codes throughout the activity. - They will have to participate in the community trying to make it better. - They should develop good attitudes towards tolerance based on the Civil Rights.
Consciousness and cultural expression competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The students will develop cultural awareness during the activity; they will have the possibility of valuing others and being conscious about others' realities. - During the debate, students will be able to respect others' opinions and respecting diversity.
Lifelong learning competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The students will be motivated throughout the activity. They need to promote their wish to learn and to improve others' learning process. - The students will be able to manage their time during the holidays to read and to prepare some activities related to the book.
Entrepreneurship competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The students will have time to think about their feelings and their thoughts after the activity, they must be able to manage their emotions and reconsider their opinions. - They must know how to communicate themselves and develop their creativity and self-esteem.

2.2.6. Evaluation criteria

- Knows the vocabulary related to the book proposed by the teacher and is able to put it into practice.
- Uses correct verb tenses and basic spelling and punctuation rules.
- Knows socio-cultural aspects and has intercultural awareness.
- Manages your learning time and contributes to create a climate of work and respect within the classroom.
- Strives to pronounce correctly.
- Works in groups to design activities and games.
- Respects the right to speak during the debate and values others' opinions.
- Develops creativity with the proposed works.

2.2.7. Evaluable learning standards

Day	Evaluation Criteria	Evaluable Learning Standards	Evaluation: When And How
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knows the vocabulary related to the book proposed by the teacher and is able to put it into practice. - Uses correct verb tenses and basic spelling and punctuation rules. - Strives to pronounce correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student uses correctly verbal tenses and vocabulary. - The student tries to pronounce correctly during the reading. 	First session. - Direct observation and correction of vocabulary worksheet.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manages learning times and helps to create a climate of work and respect in the classroom. - Works in groups to design activities and games. - Develops creativity with the proposed work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student contributes to the group work. - The student is able to manage class time to work and helps the others. - The student develops creativity and tries to carry out activities and games. 	Second session. - Direct observation. - Class work. - Portfolio of the activity.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knows socio-cultural aspects and has intercultural awareness. - Strives to pronounce correctly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student is able to respect and promote other cultures. - The student tries to pronounce correctly during the reading. - The student helps others. 	Third session. - Direct observation. - Activity development.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses correct verb tenses and basic spelling and punctuation rules. - Strives to pronounce correctly. - Respects the right to speak during the debate and values others' opinions. - Manages learning time and contributes to create a climate of work and respect within the classroom. - Knows socio-cultural aspects and has intercultural awareness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student uses correctly verbal tenses and vocabulary. - The student tries to pronounce correctly during the reading. - The student shows respect during the debate with her/his participation. - The student is able to respect and promote other cultures. - The student contributes to have a good atmosphere in class. 	Fourth session. - Debate activity - Class posters.

2.2.8. Learning outcomes

The learning results that are extracted from this activity are diverse. On the one hand, the priority in conducting the activity is that students should be able to recognise other realities living in their communities and work for the improvement of their neighbourhood. On the other hand, the different exercises proposed by the teacher thanks to the reading of the book promote motivation in students, who are able to carry out group and autonomous tasks. In the final debate, students will not only have to demonstrate everything they have reconsidered about diversity and equal opportunities, but they will need to respect and value the rest of their classmates.

In particular, the activity is a good proposal to work the autonomous learning process but also the insertion in the community and the cooperative work. The results that are sought are relative to the knowledge of other cultures but above all to the respect and the search of a better and more social community.

The session specifically dedicated to the service-learning is very important in terms of developing positive attitudes towards diversity, as well as to make students see that equal opportunities are possible as long as all members of the community work to achieve it.

3. Conclusions

The population movements are an innate characteristic of the human beings, they have occurred throughout the History of Humanity and they continue to occur today. While this is true, it is also important to note that during the 20th and 21st centuries, migratory movements have increased considerably to the point of being considered one of the focal points of current social and educational research.

Due to this reality and to the development of technology that has taken place in recent times, Katz and Ryan (2010) cited by Duffy, Mowatt, Fuchs and Salisbury (2014) understand that: “[...] there has been an increase in student awareness of social justice issues facing certain social groups such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, economic class, age, political affiliation, and veteran status [...]”.

And yet, they themselves point out that: “yet, there are no indications that students are indeed aware or ethically grounded in working with diverse populations or issues related to social injustice” (Duffy, Mowatt, Fuchs and Salisbury, 2014). These statements made by the aforementioned authors and included in the document published by Duffy and others (2014) highlight the problems found today in the classrooms. It is important that students improve their perception of diversity and are able to relate adequately to form fair and tolerant societies. With this objective in mind, the study has carried out an analysis of service-learning, since it is considered that his method is of great help to create this social awareness that is sorely needed by students. After this, an activity based on this method has been proposed for the Foreign Language area, but knowing that this methodology can be adapted to any subject.

The chosen methodology, service-learning is not a simple methodology but requires a lot of perseverance and motivation on the part of the teacher (Kenworthy-U’Ren, 2008). The planning and development of the activity need much more time than a traditional class activity, and that is why teachers, students and the social community must be committed because if not, the results are not going to be as successful as they can be.

Taking into account the effort and dedication required by this activity, it is not surprising that innovative and impressive results are expected from it, and this is how it has been seen thanks to the application of the activity in the Foreign Language classroom. The learning results are really remarkable. Students do not only develop aspects related to the subject and activities are not only done in the classroom, but the entire contrary, students leave school and become an active part of their community: helping, collaborating and promoting cooperation with the rest regardless of where they come from or the educational level they have.

The application of interculturality in the classroom is of great importance, since, as it has been commented, the students have not developed a plural consciousness and it is important that they do so. As the authors Duffy, Mowatt, Fuchs and Salisbury (2014) point out, the world in which the human being lives is an interconnected world and therefore, it is necessary that students are prepared for a diverse world both in environments and in population. In the future, it is expected that the students, thanks to this and other active methodologies, will be able to train themselves critically in the fair treatment and respect of diversity.

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