ARTÍCULO DE REFLEXIÓN

La enseñanza del inglés: Una propuesta didáctica desde el ser para habitar

Teaching english: A didactic proposal from being to live in the world

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Resumen

La siguiente ponencia describe una propuesta didáctica realizada en la institución Educativa Distrital Carlos Albán Holguín desde la enseñanza del inglés. En este contexto educativo, la implementación de una estructura curricular desde unas orientaciones gramaticales no muestra un impacto significativo en términos del campo disciplinar, ni fortalece los contenidos para la proyección de vida de los educandos. A partir del año 2017, se diseñan algunas unidades didácticas desde el enfoque pedagógico de la Enseñanza de la Comprensión con el fin de dar respuesta a los retos, demandas y competencias que las nuevas generaciones de estudiantes y sus contextos requieren. Cada intervención permite mejorar en las competencias comunicativas del aprendizaje del inglés y anexo se presenta un estímulo en la formación del ser en su ámbito educativo. Así mismo, se realiza un abordaje de los contenidos propios de la disciplina con el Currículo Sugerido de Inglés, el enfoque pedagógico de la Enseñanza para la Comprensión, particularidades de los estudiantes y orientaciones de grado desde el currículo meso y macro institucional. Como resultado del proceso, se consolidan cuatro unidades didácticas evaluadas desde la vivencia, con sus respectivas orientaciones pedagógicas para escolares de grado undécimo.

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Palabras clave: inglés, enseñanza, unidad didáctica, ser, comprensión.

Abstract

The following paper outlines a didactic proposal carried out at Carlos Albán Holguín District Educational Institution for teaching English. In this educational context, the implementation of a curricular structure from grammatical orientations did not significantly impact the disciplinary field, nor did it strengthen the contents for the life projection of the students. Since 2017, some didactic units are designed from the pedagogical approach of Teaching Comprehension in order to respond to the challenges, demands, and skills that new generations of students and their contexts require. Each intervention allows for improvement in the communicative competencies of the learning of English and annexes a stimulus presented in the formation of the being in its educational field. Likewise, an approach to the contents of the discipline is carried out with the Suggested Curriculum of English, the pedagogical approach of Teaching for Comprehension, particularities of the students, and orientations of the degree from the meso and macro institutional curriculum. As a result of the process, four assessed didactic units from experience are consolidated, with their respective pedagogical orientations for eleventh-grade students.

Keywords: English, Teaching, Didactic unit, Being

Introduction

English Teaching at Carlos Albán Holguín School has been the possibility of generating proposals inspired by each generation of students, but also the opportunity to make transformations in their lives and improve the outcomes of the Saber 11 English test. My experience allowed me to build ways of seeing the teaching of English differently from the one implemented at the school. An open mind made it possible to create proposals from the articulation of diverse components to improve the results of the Saber 11 English tests, except for the pandemic, integrating our students' needs and interests. The teacher's beliefs mobilize to generate transformations in the teaching and learning processes. In other words:

> Teachers' beliefs impact their teaching behavior, learner development, guide their decision-making and interactions with their learners. Beliefs help teachers form their planning, curricular decisions, and identify what should be taught in the classroom. On the whole, it can be concluded that teachers' beliefs will have a great effect on forming active teaching methods and will bring about a considerable amount of advance in learners' language capabilities. (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017, p. 4)

When I entered the institution in mid-2010, I found myself with a curriculum for teaching English from grammatical orientations, that is, from a grammar-based approach. This teaching became progressively more complex from sixth to eleventh grade to contribute to the internalization of sentence structures in English, in other words, from the approach of the recognized verb To be to the teaching of the passive voice and perfect tenses. In this sense, Azar (2007) exposes the advantages when working with this approach:

> GBT is that it helps students gain an understanding of grammar concepts: concepts such as subordination and coordination; concepts of expressing time relationships through the use of verb forms; concepts of nouns and adjectives, subjects and verbs, clauses and phrases. Students can understand grammar concepts with simplified

terminology, with a minimum of metalanguage and grammatical TESL-EJ, Sept. 2007 Azar 2 analysis, and even without definition of key terms such as noun or verb. (p. 2)

Despite these benefits and knowledge that would be attractive to any English teacher, in our context, the results of the English Saber 11 tests did not show any improvement. Regardless of the flexibility of the language by generating interdisciplinary learning while enhancing different communication skills, our work kept the same curricular route from the structural orientations of the foreign language.

At the end of 2016, the Ministry of Education published a proposal called: Suggested English Curriculum, as well as the Basic Learning Rights for secondary grades. This material is focused on English teachers, the different educational institutions, and the Secretaries of Education in Colombia, integrating four main contents, health, democracy, environmental sustainability, and globalization (MEN, 2016). At the end of 2016, the Ministry of Education published a proposal called: Suggested English Curriculum, as well as the Basic Learning Rights for secondary grades. This material is focused on English teachers, the different educational institutions, and the Secretaries of Education in Colombia, integrating four main contents, health, democracy, environmental sustainability, and globalization (MEN, 2016). Over time this proposal was disseminated and promoted from different initiatives by secretariats in agreement with the British Council, but that year it had not been possible to develop it in schools. The suggested curricular proposal had some interesting contents, but they were too ambitious for our learners' English proficiency, being difficult to implement faithfully. Moving from primary syntactic structures to fully complex texts in English would encourage translations by a small group of students and copying the exercise from another part of the course, triggering long-term demotivation for learning the language. In this sense, Fandiño (2013) "argues society needs teachers who understand the changing and flexible nature of literacies that address areas as diverse as technology, multimedia, relationships, and culture" (p. 193) and one way to deal with these demands is from the approach of 21st-century skills (Fandiño, 2013). Next, didactic units that contribute to the human being formation and

projection of student life will describe them, favoring the necessary skills to perform in the 21st-century from the English teaching at Carlos Albán Holguín District school.

1. Beauty

The different conceptualizations around 21st-century skills coincided with the need to create areas to develop and enhance essential skills to achieve success or at least approach it assertively in the 21st century. It implies some changes that the different social actors should incorporate. In this regard, Fandiño (2013) assures

> They all agree on the fact that the abilities individuals should have for life, career, citizenship, and self-actualization in the 21st century are different from those needed in the 20th century. These differences have basically emerged from the changes in the ways we communicate, use technology, produce knowledge, and interact with others. These changes demand students, workers, citizens, and individuals equipped with a new set of competences that allows them to act, think, and network successfully (p.196)

In this sense, the development of specific skills with a social impact also first implies the development of skills at an interpersonal level. Otherwise, weaknesses and shortcomings in the person's self-concept would hamper a possible success. Gardner (2000) expresses his concern about the complexity in the conceptualization of beauty, truth, and goodness that new paradigms and thinkers have given them, generating a fragmentation in society, therefore, at the school. That stated, in his words:

> In times past, the links among these realms were not seen as complex. The ancient Greeks evolved a sense or virtuous person, the individual who was fully developed. Such individuals cultivated knowledge; were courageous, loyal, just, physically strong, and supple; and evidence a developed sense of beauty in matters of body and spirit. The purpose of education (*paideia*) was to ensure that as many individuals as possible achieve such rounded excellence (p.33)

211

Unfortunately, this era has not only demanded the challenge of having a series of abilities; but also complex realities in which family support is precarious. The fundamental and essential needs of many of our students are not strictly solved, and additionally, the (dis)information of the social networks highly consulted by them trigger false perceptions of beauty. The school thus becomes the stage that reveals absences on an emotional level and in their self-esteem. They reflected in their attitudes, physical postures, behaviors, aggressive reactions, and additional accessories that they incorporate into their uniform (jackets, scarves, makeup, piercings, jewelry, among others) that I related to the answers to the question: Am I pretty?

In 2017 for tenth grade, I designed a didactic unit with the generative topic: Could the beauty concept be ugly for me? The goal sought to blur stereotypes of beauty that consciously or unconsciously altered the perception of themselves with a scope in their self-esteem. The unit brought young people closer to the concept of beauty from different cultures and how some promoted practices that in ours are more related to opposite beauty standards. That opened the opportunity to generate reflection on one's perception of satisfying others through self-concept and often one's well-being. Taking into account that self-esteem should increase in adolescence to favor success and well-being in the domain of areas that involve health, work, and interpersonal relationships (Orth et al. 2014), the approach to the subject favored the stage to reflect on alterations in personal aspects or physical appearance to fit into aesthetic stereotypes that constitute as true in the cultural dynamics. Among other performances contemplated in the unit consisted of knowing routines of Japanese, American, and other Colombian adolescents (topics and activities taken from the Suggested English Curriculum for eleventh grade: English Please!) to develop an understanding of cultural diversity and encourage respect for difference. To conclude the unit, the young people created murals in English where they promoted respect and love for themselves. At the beginning and end of the intervention, the students defined the concept of beauty which improved, enriched, or completely changed as a result of the didactic and pedagogical process.

Figure 1. Eleventh-grade murals Final stage of synthesis
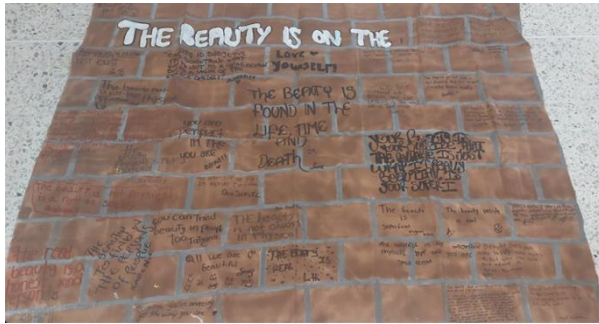
2. Could I make things happen the way I think?

21st-century skills are defined and classified from different orientations to enhance knowledge, skills, and disposition as prerequisites to occupy a place successfully in the future world. That is why globalization and digitization need that the school must favor responding to these new global demands. For his part, Fandiño claims:

> Not only is there a growing awareness of the need for promoting the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in different fields of the working life, but there is also rising concern over the effective use of educational approaches on how to become literate in today's knowledge society (Fandiño, 2013, p. 192)

On the other hand, Salamanca and Badilla (2020) define these global demands as the "group of cognitive, social, emotional and digital skills, which will help current students to face the challenges and problems that will arise when they are citizens of the society of the century. XXI" (p. 35). Additionally, in 2018, it was still recurring to talk about the curricular

213

reorganization by cycles, which established imprints according to the population included in a curricular group. In the case of cycle V, it establishes, Professional and labor projects (Rincón, et. all, 2015). In this sense, through different performances, young people understand the importance of having focused dreams about their life projects, particularly their professional areas. They investigated all the private and public institutions that offer the career of their interests and everything related to their admission there.

At a later stage, the students are organized into smaller groups that carry out a research intervention about the vocational projection of the lower grades of high school. From these views, the unit is oriented in order to enable the development of essential thinking skills for life in general and professionally (Partnership, 2009). This competence was primarily the collaborative skill that Germaine et al. (2016) defined as the skill "which includes working effectively and respectfully with diverse teams, exercising flexibility and willingness to accomplish a shared goal, and assuming a shared responsibility for collaborative work while valuing individual contributions of team members" (p.19). In this line, they are the ones who decide what types of research techniques and instruments to adopt for this purpose, establishing a series of questions to carry out their intervention. During the final stage, the students socialize with the student community about the interpretations of their findings.

Figure 2. Socialization "This is What I like"

3. Biographies

Bearing in mind that being successful in the workplace and personally implies the development of skills and abilities for the 21st century. One of them consists of creativity as a skill that can and should be stimulated at school since it is not innate, as Germaine et al. (2016) claim that "It's partially a skill, but it's largely an attitude. It's about coming up with ideas that are novel, that are new, that are useful in some way, and that are relevant to whatever you are trying to accomplish." (p.25) nothing more relevant to discuss than their life project itself. On the other hand, critical thinking is the ability to solve problems involving judgments and decisions with reasoning (Germaine et al. 2016). The construction of an entire timeline they made becomes a problem since it suggests an additional responsibility to write about the people they will be in society.

Inquiring about the professional career or the studies that young people want to study was a discouraging diagnosis when in their vision, nearly graduating from high school, the option of studying was diffuse. Many had the idea of resting for a year or at least half to be ready to start their life. Others, for their part, thought of work as a feasible option that would allow them to enjoy better living conditions. This panorama fed in me the idea of taking you to think about the future as if they were a third party who read about the traces left in this history.

Regarding the Suggested English Curriculum, the first module, called The future is in your hands, involved dreams and goals for the future as a fundamental theme. This module allows students to reflect on the power dreams have to influence the immediate environment and transform the future. (Ministry of National Education, 2016). Regarding the Suggested English Curriculum, the first module, called The future is in your hands, involved dreams and goals for the future as a fundamental theme. This module allows students to reflect on the power dreams have to influence the immediate environment and transform the future. (Ministry of National Education, 2016). The planning included activities and exercises from that module as exploratory tasks. It also contained lively games and strategies. Students created a timeline making visible the most relevant moments in their past, present, and future.

From these experiences, writing work is carried out that eventually constitutes the learners' biographies, consolidated not in an autobiographical way but written in the third person. Now, a four-chapter book compiles their outcomes.

This intervention favored the visualization of their lives in an ambitious but grounded way, that is, as part of the construction, some specific exercises carried out that led them to direct their dreams from concrete actions that would lead them to that end. In this way, these visions, beyond a grade, corresponded to the organization of ideas to concretize its future.

Figura 4. Book "Life Project"
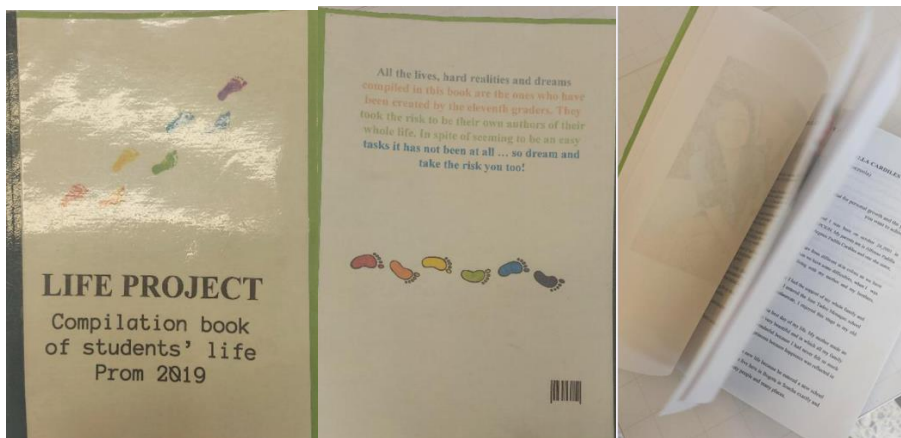
4. I can. Can you?

The most recent pandemic, known as the Covid-19 virus, affected not only face-to-face educational dynamics in all nations of the world but also brought emotional, interpersonal, academic, and behavioral consequences, affecting the processes carried out with normality until 2019. Pokhrel & Chhetri (2021), professors from Bhutan, state it like this:

> The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population. This has brought far-reaching changes in all

216

aspects of our lives. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Reopening of schools after relaxation of restriction is another challenge with many new standard operating procedures put in place (p. 133)

Consequences materialized less rigorously in mid-2021, after having stopped attending educational institutions for a year and a half and with the school reopening at the beginning of 2022, we as teachers experienced not only the academic emptiness with the sensation of not having any schooling during that time, but the impact of reintegration into the community led to the unleashing of many conflicts at the interpersonal level, affecting the dynamics with life experiences. Now, the entire educational community once again faced a new challenge, managing to arrange everything as it was before the pandemic. The new normality brought many more challenges than those implied by the same virtual teaching, unknown to several teachers.

In this scenario, using the Design Thinking strategy, a board game is developed that manages to articulate different components to try to close the gap of our new normal. Brown defines design thinking as:

…a methodology that permeates the entire spectrum of innovation activities with a people-centered design philosophy. I mean that innovation is driven by a solid understanding, through direct observation, of what people want and need in their lives and what they like or dislike about how products are made, packaged, marketed, sold, and sold, and support especific products. (Brown, 2008, p. 3)

My target population corresponded to eleventh-grade students who attended in a staggered manner due to the biosafety protocols of the time. I meant that the groups were small and kept their distance inside and outside the classroom. Within the framework of agreement 2234 of 2021 between the Ministry of Education and the British Council, I designed a strategy to improve learners' self-confidence when speaking in English. The motivation for this

intervention was being afraid to speak English, the lack of language study habits, and the necessity to understand the explanations in English. From an empathic perspective, I thought it would be convenient to provide them with target phrases that would help them to participate assertively and gain the self-confidence that a learner of a foreign language needs.

After finding in my students' different levels of English, according to the Common European Framework of Reference, little willingness to improve their language skills, and little autonomous work that would favor their level, I thought of creating a board game to play during the first 10 minutes of each class. In this proposal, I articulated the four levels of understanding of the EPC (naive, beginner, apprentice, and master), the life project of the students framed in 4 main scenarios (The school, university, the airport, and a foreign destination), two prototypes included in the Saber 11 test (vocabulary and conversational parts) and finally a qualitative and quantitative evaluation from an assessment chart. During the dissemination and implementation stage of the strategy, the students got QR codes that directed them to the explanation of the game content and the 4-boards' pronunciation to facilitate their autonomous work. The different board games prepared within the framework of this strategy are the following:

Figure 4. Yellow Board Game

Figure 5. Blue Board Game

Figure 6. Red board Game

Figure 7. White Board Game

Figure 8. Zappar and QR codes
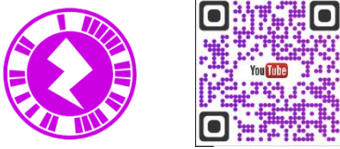
As a result, that is 10 minutes of each class for two months, the students improve their disposition for the sessions, increase the use of expressions in English inside and outside the classroom, improve pronunciation in this language, and finally, everyone uses English up to the level that each one reached. At the end of the intervention cycle, the adolescents create a staging in English, recreating the achieved board context, where they generate a situation using expressions worked on that game board.

5. Who you are makes a difference, aren't you?

Ignorance of diversity in any field, particularly at school, triggers selfishness, racism, and discrimination; it means unfair practices that violate human rights. This perspective goes beyond the ethical logic that should prevail in societies. Due to this fact, English teaching becomes an opportunity to approach this concern.

Keeping in mind the need to generate an educational scenario that would enable reflections from English learning, eleventh-grade imaginaries from Carlos Albán Holguín district school identified to know traditional structures around gender diversity that limit how they behave in a diverse social fabric. In this sense, the IDEP (2008) states the importance of addressing the issue at school because,

> [...] it is where the inputs are to build a thought on gender from the power of women and not from the lack. It is to make visible how they create new worlds, how they reinvent themselves, how they draw lines of flight concerning those discourses that outline their ways of being a woman or being a man (p.9)

In this sense, the unit offers the possibility of addressing issues around gender with a big picture of diverse but concrete perspectives that, from biased constructions and imaginaries, power anti-values perpetuated in society. Some included performances in the proposal, and the intention, are briefly described below. In the exploratory stage, the teenagers draw the human silhouette where, through images, they answer three questions to recognize their imaginaries around gender roles. The first question is about their future aspirations, the second on what society demands of them, and also what expectations the family had of them for the future (Pinilla & Ramírez, 2013).

Figure 9. Human silhouettes. The silhouette created by boys is on the left, and the right, by girls from the same group
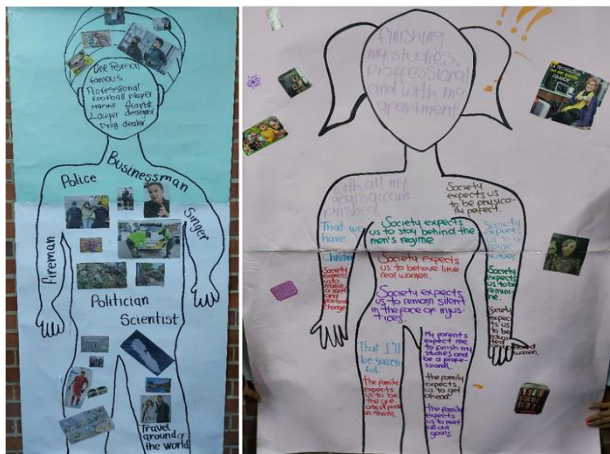
The images clearly show what Pinilla & Ramírez (2013) reveal in one of their texts:

> It is necessary to recognize that gender relations have been framed in a patriarchal model, in which exclusionary roles assume for men and women that have been transmitted socially to new generations. These ways of understanding gender are based on a vision of domination and submission that has caused damage to society and the

family and, therefore, to children and young people, subjects with whom the pedagogical exercise occurs directly at school. (p.28)

At this stage, students define the difference between gender and sex by themselves, identifying whether their perceptions are correct or not for their approach later in the unit. Subsequently, the learners realize terminology related to the theme, such as gender identity, gender roles, binary and non-binary gender, and sexual orientation, among others, through an observation game. They recognize gender stereotypes and address the sexist language that takes place in everyday life that is promoted by the frequent use of each speaker to mitigate them as soon as they occur.

Pinilla & Ramírez (2013) state that imaginaries, stereotypes, and prejudices are like those images established jointly, from which society nourishes and the notions that we share as individuals, in such a way that they are part of the forms to understand and give order to social facts" (p.30). A discussion takes place where the topic is addressed and contrasted with the definitions found to deconstruct and build more responsible conceptualizations that do not violate the rights of others.

Authentic material has not been designed for pedagogical purposes but has a social purpose that fulfills some language needs in context to incorporate them into the unit. In other words, it bridges the gap between classroom knowledge and real life (Morley & Guariento, 2001). This unit includes Ted Talk videos as authentic material on gender-diverse constructions since none of the groups has real testimonies to share in classes.

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Additionally, the students listen to a speech by Emma Watson, a feminist activist, to delve into the issue of gender equity in society, and empower young women in these grades to take control of their lives in different areas and places they are. Apart from this, biographies of heroines who have been part of the historical construction of history in varied disciplinary fields are made visible.

Lastly, students chat with adolescents from other nationalities using the PenPal Schools page http://www.penpalschools.com/, a webpage created to keep in touch with different global citizens. The intention of establishing this contact is to find similarities. Establish dialogues based on respect and find in empathy the richness of difference. Furthermore, adolescents define gender and sex once the intervention is over to recognize its impact on their perceptions.

Figure 10. Definition of the same student. At unit startup and shutdown, respectively.
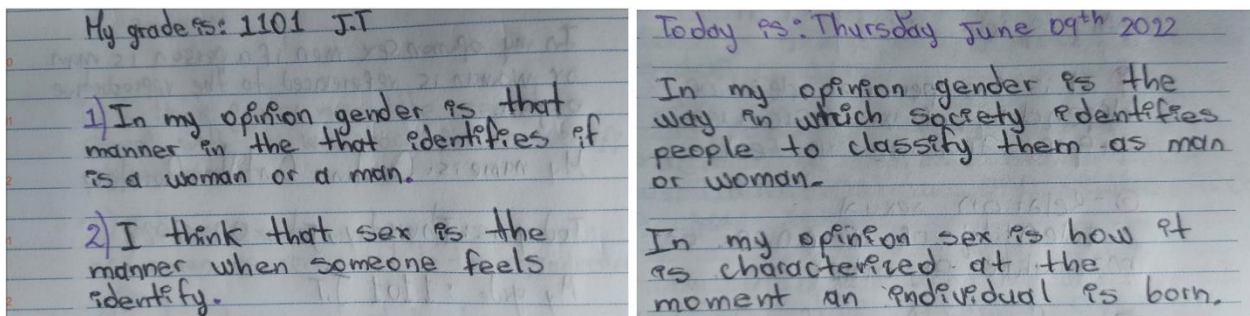
Conclusion

My experience allows me to realize that reflection in pedagogical practices is as necessary as breathing. Indeed, the teaching processes can naturalize, like when a healthy human does not think about breathing. The problem of not breathing is fatal. The same happens in the educational field. Breathing is essential. In other words, to reflect. Reflection is an opportunity to improve all the involved role actors in the educational dynamic. Reflection makes it possible to observe what is not visible to the naked eye.

These proposals and their implementations increased improvement in many aspects. When do I take over teaching eleventh grade at the institution with the units: Could I make things happen the way I think? and, what am I brilliant at? final scores in English tests improve, confirming that not all approaches, methods, and successful methodologies in other institutions work in ours. But beyond the result, the English teaching approach with a much broader scope was necessary, one that transcended the student's life and fulfilled what Stone (1999) considers essential from the Teaching for Understanding approach:

> Currently developing curriculum standards and frameworks emphasize the need for students to understand key concepts of the disciplines, develop intellectual dispositions and habits of mind associated with inquiry, construct their understanding rather than just absorb the knowledge created by others and see connections between what they learn in school and their daily lives. Given the attention to understanding, the new standards make teachers make a judicious selection of curricular content, be clearer about their purposes or goals, and make performance-based assessments more integrated with the teaching-learning exchange. (p.52)

In that case, the grammar-based approach did not have the impact that certainly has in other contexts; instead, learning that integrates language and content (CLIL) managed to achieve better results in the student body. This content inspired or motivated by the students' needs produced favorable results. Whit this in mind, Harmer (2015) in his book called: The Practice of English Language Teaching states reasons why this type of approach is successful:

> CLIL mixes the teaching of content and language so that the students learn both the content and the specific language they need to express that content at the same time. In other words, whereas in general English lessons, the syllabus selects the language to be taught and someone then looks for content to exemplify that language, in CLIL lessons content is selected and then CLIL planners look for the precise language which will enable the students to understand and talk about that content. Thus, the

224

students may have to learn technical words and structures that would never normally be included in a general English lesson at that level. (p.8)

In addition, planning must always start and conclude with the characteristics of the population. The success of a unit can be the same as obtained in previous interventions, although one day it may no longer be successful. We inhabit a continuously changing world just as Bauman says. He uses the metaphor of liquid modernity to refer to modern times. Bauman (2012) states that history has gone through transformations very similar to the characteristics of liquids, changing, splash, spill, leak, flood, spill, and cannot be stopped, among many other features. He claims "the wish to discover or invent solids of lasting solidity, a solidity which one could trust and rely upon and which would make the world predictable and therefore manageable" (p.18). In simple terms, surrounding contexts must constantly analyze to respond to as many needs as possible.

To sum up, the EPC approach became an opportunity to reflect, to propose new ways of teaching this language. Undoubtedly, the Ministry of Education's suggested curriculum opened my mind to other schemes for bringing English to my students. However, it was a demanding proposal to carry out in its entirety, considering that it implies the approaching texts in class, texts that the students do not have. Printing these copies is an implausible mission for any possible solution. For this reason, in needed contexts, it is a right-minded option to create alternatives that give these communities the best educational quality despite having more challenging realities.

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