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INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION: AN APPROACH BEYOND
FORMAL LEARNING

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Abstract

The presence of many cultures in the same society has been a constant in the History of Humanity, but its increase has become so pronounced in the last quarter of a century that it has aroused the interest of many researches from different perspectives. This cultural diversity has brought with it an increase in antidemocratic attitudes based on the promotion of immoral values such as intolerance, lack of respect or racist attitudes. From Education, various approaches have been adopted in order to put an end to these stances and with the aim of instilling in students the democratic values gathered in Human Rights. Have these approaches reached their objectives? The article includes the contributions of different authors who analyse some of these approaches, and it proposes the Intercultural Education and its competence as the optimal methodology to instil respect and cooperation in students. This should not only appear in the School-based Education Project but in every subject. As an example of that, the study suggests one proposal based on this methodology for English as a Foreign Language classes. Thanks to this Intercultural Education, students will have the tools to respect people who belong to another culture, race or religion, and above all, value them and live with them in harmony.

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1. Introduction

The History of Humanity is a mix of related customs, cultures and languages. Cultural diversity needs to be considered a characteristic of the human being, Arnesen et al. (2008) made reference to this fact: “people have travelled and crossed national borders throughout history for a variety of reasons: either by force, necessity or will because of natural disasters, poverty, desire for a better life, new future, desire for adventure, colonialism and refuge from wars” (p.12). This is the reason why today these movements should not be considered something extraordinary but as an innate characteristic of the human being that has increased in the last centuries and has become global. This ease has come thanks to the technological improvements in transport, but as explained, in the past, although there were more difficulties people travelled and migratory movements existed in the same way, so it is concluded that it is a constant throughout the centuries (Salaverry, 2010).

In the last centuries the human being has lived the opening to a more worldwide world thanks to two big changes: the technological and the economic. The Industrial Revolution (18th Century) brought with it an improvement in transports but also a very important demographic change. Cities and villages with a developed industry expanded their population more than 70%, as can be seen in the following map of the Spanish National Institute of Statistics:

The Industrial Revolution did not only bring consequences to demography but it also had an impact on economic systems. After industrialization, the capitalist system was established as the only economic system in The West and little by little the liberation of the markets was a reality. The most remarkable consequence was the weakening of the Welfare Systems enjoyed by many countries (Beas, 2010).

All this had consequences in later centuries, with the 20th Century being the century par excellence in terms of opening. The revolution in these mentioned levels was such that, there was an unprecedented demographic transformation. This was due to the fact that the capitalist society allows large differences in the buying power of citizens; which is why social inequalities are not only perpetuated but also increased year after year (Gómez Lara, 2012). Liked to this idea, it is worth noting that thanks to the opening to the world, known as globalization, which consists in the elimination of borders and the free movement of people around the world: today people are “free” to live where they prefer (Fundación Entreculturas, 2009). All these aspects have resulted in an increase in migratory movements during the 20th Century and the present, having as a consequence culturally diverse societies, where people find themselves acing realities different from their own (Beas, 2010). As this author also comments, immigrants often settle in societies where traditions, religions or ways of thinking are radically different from theirs.

The cultural diversity present in societies, mentioned above, has been a constant in History of Humanity. The 21st Century, therefore, should be presented with the image of a free, fair and intercultural world, where interactions were based on solidarity and tolerance. But nothing is further from reality, the system perpetuates inequalities and therefore there are still subordinate cultures or people who feel rejected or excluded for not being part of the big society where they live in (Palomero Pescador, 2006). Today’s societies have proved incapable of managing the prejudices or intolerance that many people show towards immigrants. Due to this, institutions and governments consider that it is important to solve the wave of racist, xenophobic, intolerant and violent attitudes that sometimes occur in current societies (Leiva, 2010).

2. Problem Statement

Education has been considered throughout history the best weapon to develop more equitable and fair societies. Taking into account the need expressed by the authorities to offer answers to the current situation, it is considered that the pedagogical approaches put into practice during the past century have done nothing but perpetuating the negative attitudes and inequalities of societies. This article will make a formal review of these approaches with the aim of showing that the Intercultural Education and its competence are the only methodologies capable of ending these inequalities and of working towards a fairer and more inclusive society. As explained by Tirzo and Guadalupe (2010), the 21st Century is the century of interaction, a world characterized by conflict and crisis is presented and it is obviously necessary for citizens to be able to interact in an equitable way: forgetting power relationships.

The approaches put into practice so far had not emphasized on the need of interacting with others, as it will be discussed in depth later, but on acceptance and evaluation. As mentioned, interaction is necessary at this time and that is why the intercultural approach is considered as the best to offer a real response to diversity and coexistence. Intercultural Education and the use of competences will motivate the complete development of people, so that they are able to develop themselves as professionals and as human beings. As explained by Fundación Entreculturas (2009), citizens who are educated under this approach will be able to interact with diversity and live with it, thus acquiring complete training.

The main goal that societies need to achieve is considering cultural diversity as a benefit and not as a negative aspect. As societies will be inclusive and the importance will fall on participating all together, confrontations or social tensions could be ended (Arnesen et al., 2008).

3. Purpose of the Study

Cultural diversity is undeniable in today's society, which is why it is not surprising that the institutions need the implementation of an educational reform that takes into account this new reality (Leiva and Escarbajal, 2011). As explained by these authors, the educational reform cannot consist in a procedural or content reform but, it must be a reform at a general level of education.

The purpose of the study is showing that the Intercultural Education is the approach under which this educational reform should be done. Therefore, three different models whose objective is to manage diversity are analysed, in order to establish a basis to understand the approach that is more beneficial and the one which is less. The three models are: assimilation, multiculturalism and interculturality. Through these approaches we see a chronological progression and a change of mentality in the population, so that it could be understood as an opening to a more tolerant and open-minded society. Even though, it is still necessary to implement this reform in order to end with attitudes such as those commented in the introduction.

The study does not only seek to highlight to the importance of intercultural education but also explain some measures that could be put into practice in Second Language classes. The objective is to present an approach that is not only part of the curriculum but that can encourage coexistence between schools and families, collaborating with everyone and helping everyone to learn about the others. The last

objective of this new method is not other than to emphasize in the importance of the democratic rights and to educate citizens in a real coexistence with the rest.

4. Theoretical Framework. A Chronological Perspective towards Diversity

The need to manage diversity first arose in the United Kingdom, where they saw that it was necessary to take into account the plurality present in their society in order to improve relations and the organization of it (Essomba, 2008). It is important to mention that the analysis is based on the assertion of Canimas and Carbonell (2008) to understand diversity as a broad concept, that is, not linked to cultural aspects but also to: race, gender, religion, ethnicity or diet.

It is important to understand diversity in this way because, nowadays, societies do not present homogeneity in the thoughts or ways of seeing life of all the people that make societies up. That is, people can coincide in race, culture or religion, but they can understand in different ways politics or animal's respect. At the present, the ways of seeing and facing life are increasingly variable and diverse, so it is considered important to investigate and put into practice new measures that fit this reality and encourage students to have more open and more tolerant minds.

With the aim of establishing connections between diversity management models, the global and capitalist system and the negative attitudes mentioned above, the study has decided to compare the assimilationist, the multicultural and the intercultural model. The first two, in spite of being obsolete, are chosen because nowadays they are still being put into practice, and the study maintains that many of the negative attitudes towards diversity are derived from those management models.

The beginning of immigration arises with the well-known empires and the desire to demonstrate to the world the power they had thanks to the numerous conquests. The assimilationist model arises at this moment, the great empires have to maintain their hegemony and their power, and with this aim they taught the world their own culture and language. In some way, teaching their model was showing to the world their hegemony. As explained by Vansteenberghe (2012) in the assimilationist model the foreign population is forced to abandon their culture, so in the past when they shared a place with the dominant culture or they were conquered, they had to adopt it as their own and forgot theirs.

In this model, respect and tolerance are absent since the dominant or host culture does not even value the possibility of letting them put their own cultural acts into practice, but forces them to accept the new culture as their own. As mentioned by Moliner and Moliner (2010), cultural diversity is seen as a problem and as a threat, the important thing is to perpetuate the dominant culture and continue to expand it. The assimilation promotes the cultural uniformity looking for that way the prejudices disappear, but it does not foment anything more than attitudes of hatred, feelings of superiority and rupture by both parts.

Although the birth of the approach was negative and it did not look anything different from reinforcing the feeling of superiority of the dominant culture, in the school environment, it was different. Assimilation has been seen as positive for years since the immigrant students were seen as students at a disadvantage compared to the rest. While it is true that it did not begin as a negative approach for immigrant students, Essomba (2008) emphasises that this methodological proposal exponentially increases inequality among students. Jiménez (2014) also refers to this fact, for him, the pedagogical approach sought to give

him tools that would break with this inequality, although it is true that in this way assimilation does not integrate the student correctly, but he loses his identity and his values.

After this model and the negative consequences of it in the academic life of many students, a more oriented towards tolerance and respect model was launched. The most important and modern idea that emerged with this new approach was the positive assessment of the difference, that is, if in the previous model the dominant culture saw the rest of cultures as negatives and inferior, with this new approach there was a change in people's mind: they became respectful and tolerant.

The beginning of the multicultural model can be established in the mid-sixties. In the United States, the Civil Rights Act was approved, prohibiting discrimination based on race, colour, age, religious belief or origin and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which established the importance of facilitating school success for those from low social classes or minorities (Antolínez, 2011). Through these two legislative examples put in place by the United States, the importance of respecting the minority and of appreciating the cultural pluralism present in the country can be seen. At this moment there is a social change towards openness and respect, which is an advance in terms of cultural management.

Despite the efforts to promote pluralism, the multicultural model was implemented in such a different way and, after many decades of teaching under this approach, it has been found that this model alienates immigrant citizens from non-immigrants, since despite respecting, they do not share anything. After almost half a century teaching under this approach, research began to promote another method that is based precisely on the relationship and coexistence between people with different cultural values.

The most remarkable difference between the approach discussed above and the one they developed later was that multiculturalism referred to one's own culture and the respect to other cultures, while intercultural referred to one's own culture in relation to other cultures, meaning coexistence (Giménez, 2012). In contrast to assimilation or multiculturalism, the intercultural education proposes the participation of all social agents as equals, so that with communication and interaction they can learn from each other: combining and avoiding the isolation of a culture. In this way, it is explained by Díe, Melero and Buades (2012) that the result will be beneficial for all involved, since none will be reduced to another.

In the present, after having implemented different methods with the aim of promoting cultures and offering equal opportunities to each other, it is necessary that it becomes the most important social challenge of the 21st Century. The intercultural model emerges with the intention of being the method that puts an end to this need. That is why it proposes qualitative improvements in human relations, so that tolerance, respect and equality are the basis of this education. As Vargas (2007) states, the ultimate goal is to achieve a positive assessment of cultural diversity and an optimal coexistence in every society thanks to promoting this values as the foundation of relationships.

In the educational centres, this approach has been put into practice using different methodologies based on interaction and cooperative work, which is why the basis of this approach is fulfilled: relationships based on meetings with respect and recognition (Fundación Entreculturas, 2009). This model will be the key to end the negative relationships derived from the contact between cultures, where domination and the ideas of homogenizing prevail. Interaction between cultures will improve and, as a result, cultural and social enrichment will take place. The last result will be that the systems of domination and exclusion between

cultures will be eliminated, forming a fairer society where all cultures are considered equal (Tourrián, 2006).

It is important to highlight how societies have advanced towards more inclusive realities, with the example of these three advances it has been possible to point out the importance of not segregating and offering the same opportunities to all. Globalization and the problems derived from capitalism could be relieved if methodologies based on this approach were put into practice and if the importance of education fell on educating in values throughout more interaction and cooperation. Despite there is not a magic key that can put an end to all social problems, the article comes to the conclusion that the intercultural education could be a key tool that enables the prevention of some of these problems mentioned above. This would be thanks to the fact that young people would not feel alienated from their culture but an active part of the society where they live.

5. Findings

Education is considered one the best weapons to put an end to social problems derived from contact between cultures. That is why Rodríguez Rojo (2006) comments that it is mandatory for students to learn that wars are fought with dialogue and understanding and that they must collaborate in peace with their mates. The violent attitudes discussed above have to be combated in classrooms thanks to approaches such as the intercultural, which supports dialogue and the search of common ground.

For all this mentioned, the research offers a proposal for action in the classroom of English as a Foreign Language, as an example of implementation of Intercultural Education. The objective is to demonstrate that this intercultural approach should not only be part of the School-based Education Project but of every subject. It is important to promote activities related to cultures and festivities but it is even more important to create everyday activities related to cultures and understanding. In that way, students develop respect and dialogue thanks to integrating people with other thoughts in their daily school life.

The activity suggested by the article is based on an activity proposed by Corros (2008) that deals with a personal diary that promotes the acquisition of the cultural competence. In this diary the students will capture the daily activities of a child with different cultural features with the aim of reflecting on the similarities that are shared more than paying attention to the differences. The activity works vocabulary and basic grammatical structures of the foreign language but could be adapted to higher levels by modifying the grammatical structures or even adding more specific vocabulary according to the learning needs. After the autonomous work of each student, cooperative groups will put their diaries in common and they will correct all together spelling or grammar mistakes. In this way, all will have shared their findings with the rest of the group, and later they will be able to show their work to the whole class voluntarily. The learning objectives of this activities do not only reside in the use of grammatical structures related to routines or vocabulary related to festivities but to improve oral and written skills all combined with their cultural competence, as well as practising their autonomous and cooperative work.

Table 01. Timing of the activity

Session	Activities	Objectives
1	- Talking about the vocabulary of the unit: festivities & routines.	- Learning vocabulary words.
2	- Reviewing <i>Present Simple</i> . - Explaining the activity: <i>A cultural diary</i> . Dividing the class in cooperative groups.	- Being able to use <i>Present Simple</i> . - Working on the cultural competence throughout the proposed activity.
3	- Putting in common their diaries and finding mistakes.	- Being able to find mistakes and to learn from them. - Being able to work in groups.
4	- Showing in class their own diaries focusing on the cultural similarities and differences between them and the person they represent.	- Being able to highlight the important aspects. - Being able to represent other culture with respect and showing their value.

The activity aims to promote various aspects of the education of students. Not only a reinforcement of their grammar level, an objective that would be within the basic curriculum, but training them to establish common topics and relationship with other cultures. The goal is that during their representations in class they are able to put themselves in the shoes of those who have different cultural aspects from their own and feel them as their own. They should be able to show how the culture is to the other students with respect.

This is only an example of acting in English as a Foreign Language classroom, but the objective of the intercultural approach is to work through active methodologies (role-playing, cooperative work or task-based learning among others) that put into practice not only knowledge about other cultures but also that motivate the students to engage in a dialogue with the rest of their classmates. In this last day of the activity, all the students can freely talk about their experiences during the activity and exchange opinions about what can they do to modify the social reality. Accordingly, education will not only come from what the textbook shows or the teacher explains, but it will be the students themselves who will promote learning thanks to their own interest about their realities.

6. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to clarify why it is necessary to put into practice new methods that are based on cooperation and dialogue and set aside approaches based on knowledge and not on interaction. To this end, the article has made a synthesis not only of the current state of education and the methods proposed to manage diversity, but it has also made a chronological analysis of different methods of managing diversity used around the world. This has been important to concluded that many of the current social problems, such us terrorism, social inequalities or economic problems, can be derived from the lack of understanding between different societies, as well as necessary to highlight the need to manage diversity in a different way.

Three methods have been chronologically analysed with this objective of managing diversity from the 19th Century until today. It has been done taking into account some important legislative changes as well as the change of mentality that has been seen in societies in terms of acceptance and recognition of cultural diversity. As previously mentioned, the assimilationist and multicultural models did not favour cultural exchange but rather were based on power relationships to either reduce the minority, segregate or

divide the established cultural groups in the same society. After the analysis of the two approaches and their negative view of cultural diversity, it has been concluded that the novel intercultural approach is the only one capable of training students for cultural understanding. That is, students who work under the intercultural model will be able to relate satisfactorily with citizens who have different characteristics to their own, giving them value and respecting their opinion.

Thanks to this conclusion drawn from a brief review of the theory, the article contributes with a proposal for action in the Foreign Language classroom. The objective is to show that the intercultural model must not only be part of the School-based Education Project but that it must be present in all subjects. Proposing a curriculum based on activities that promote this intercultural education and cultural competence will not only work formal education (the one in school curriculum) but it will work from a much more open perspective. In the intercultural method and working with active methodologies, the teacher gives the students some rules and they are the ones who investigate and collaborate all together to develop the activity proposed.

Taking into account the problems presented in the introduction and the educational reality presented in the 21st Century, it is concluded that the greatest educational challenge of the moment is to learn how to manage culture diversity. For this reason, after analysing some methods, it has been given one proposal based on the intercultural approach whose aim is promoting culture and interaction in classrooms.

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