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# ISSUES IN ENGLISH TEACHING & LEARNING

## ISSUES IN ENGLISH TEACHING & LEARNING

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**M.A. Applied Linguistics**

*Pontificia Universidad Católica*

- This magazine aims to promote discussion around the issues that the different actors involved in language teaching and learning face. We invite students and teachers to send their contributions, requests or inquiries for our next issue due in April/May next year. Please email us at [plara@uahurtado.cl](mailto:plara@uahurtado.cl)

**WELCOME!**

# **SECOND ISSUE OF OUR MAGAZINE**

**Dear students and colleagues,**

Congratulations to the Second Issue of our English Department Magazine! Welcome all! This issue has included new items to its index, such as students' and alumni's voices providing us with insights from totally different points of view to enrich our perspectives and possibly help improve our curriculum. They have lived through the COVID19 pandemic for the last two years, a plebiscite, the installation of our Asamblea Constituyente, a presidential election offering two distinct and contradictory alternatives and are still here, with enough inspiration, to share with us their experiences, reactions and opinions.

This issue starts by exploring critical issues in language teaching and teacher training, such as the approaches we might follow to teach or how we perceive the role of teachers in the classroom. Then, it continues with some insights on how literature can be incorporated in EFL classrooms by Lusvic Torrellas. Likewise, this second issue brings about different experiences from teacher educators at our program that aims to contribute with precious knowledge that can inform our teaching practices. Additionally, guide teachers from schools are also present when referring to their role in the professional training of our pre-service teachers, expanding on the challenges and contributions of such significant work. Finally, students' voices are also present in this space that seeks to offer other pre-service teachers the possibility to learn from their experiences, gained learning, and the challenges they faced this year. Our second issue closes with a book review by Camilo Ramos, who critically analyzes Byram's work on developing an Intercultural Communicative Competence.

We, the English Department, wish that the magazine is informative and thought-provoking and that you enjoy reading it. And finally invite you to send your contributions to our next issue coming up the first term next year.

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**December, 2021**



# A REVISION OF THREE CONTROVERSIES IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND THEIR IMPACT ON ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN CHILE

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Applied linguistics (AL) has been one of the most common core courses within the syllabi of most English teaching training programs in Chile. However, the concrete relationship between this field and teaching methodologies remains unknown by many language educators, pre-service teachers, and people interested in languages from different dimensions and areas of inquiry. In this essay, three significant controversies revolving



around AL and EFL teaching will be explored to stress the importance of fostering an essential theoretical background that could eventually improve the graduate profile of future English teachers.

The first controversy has to do with the main challenge encountered when identifying the central role behind languages. Transitioning from French linguist Saussure's seminal and posthumously published work (1916) until more contemporary researchers such as Chomsky (1965;1968), and Halliday and Hasan (1985), the definition of language has shifted from 1) a structural dimension; 2) a mentalistic perspective, and 3) a more sociocultural and functional one. What has been explored until now by other research lines and later contributions in the field can be simply categorized in one of these three "umbrella" stances.

From a practical point of view, supporters of the first definition will consider languages as a habit formation. Therefore, the practical approach in class will emphasize grammar rules, building vocabulary, and grasping lexical items regardless of a given specific context. However, advocates of the mentalistic perspective adopt a radical and basic premise that the human brain operates with the same complexity as a machine or a computer. In this line, language is defined as a mental phenomenon and part of our genes. The role behind languages within this dimension is, in fact, controversial. For Chomsky, languages would not function primarily to suffice communicative purposes. Accordingly, he challenged linguists by stating: "If you just introspect for a minute, you'll discover that you can't go thirty seconds without talking to yourself. It's almost impossible. And 99% of your use of language never even is externalized" (2013, p.2). As for the third dimension, languages are considered a cultural artifact and essential for negotiating meaning with others in functional contexts (Van pattern & Williams, 2014).

The previous controversy leads us to a second debate about the main goal or target behind language teaching and learning. In other words, the definition of success when teaching/ learning English in Chile. Indeed, the primary theoretical rationale regarding our views behind languages could help us build and evaluate the effects of our instruction. Advocates for the first dimension behind languages (structuralism) would likely favor grammar and vocabulary acquisition. In contrast, those who support the other dimensions would emphasize the construction of either a mental lexicon or grammar or a more functional/ communicative approach for language development.

The third controversy deals with the fundamental role of AL and language teaching. The debate starts with the definition behind the discipline and the importance of building a personal stance that reconciles both areas. Authors such as Obilinovic (2005), Seidlhofer (2003), and Pastor Cesteros (2006) have indicated that AL as a field has spread and focused primarily on language teaching and second language learning or acquisition. Therefore, both fields should be reconciled to identify new research opportunities to generate new knowledge, and that could, as a result, improve our teaching practices.

As illustrated previously, some of the most common controversies encountered within AL have pointed to the definition of languages, the definition of “success” in language learning/ teaching, and the field's role in foreign language instruction. Since truth can be found in each school of thought and the latest advances in the field are aligned with such theoretical findings that derive from concrete educational observations, having a basic knowledge of the language theories. AL can definitively help EFL teachers adopt critical methodological paths that can be consonant with the significant contributions made by second/ foreign language researchers.

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## HAVE WE DEMONIZED THE USE OF POWER IN THE CLASSROOM?

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To open this article, I would like to share a statement known for all teachers: the demands to become a teacher are plenty. The one challenge that I have decided to target is the issue of the use of teachers' power. I will approach this topic from experience, offering a brief analysis and reflection.

### **Context**

Before starting the discussion on the issue of power use, I would like to contextualize readers. During their years in the UAH English teaching program, ELAB and Practicum



students have not only learned English and received teacher training. They have also acquired what Lewison (2002) defines as Critical literacy through the years. That is to say that year by year; our pre-service teachers have been taught to look at reality and education from multiple viewpoints. They have learned about education and the teaching profession in connection with sociopolitical issues and changes, motivating pre-service teachers to advocate for social justice. In this scenario, classroom teaching would be the driving force to contribute to transforming a profoundly unequal society.

Along with this, our teachers have learned there are counterproposals to the hegemonic views of language teaching and pedagogy. From *banking education* (Freire, 1962) to *World Englishes* (Kachru et al., 2006); and Post method (Kumaravadivelu, 2001), our aim is that students integrate these perspectives to promote social change and to question relations of power. The teaching experience adds to this context for our teachers to become aware of their role in classrooms. As a university program, we expect them to see themselves as professionals who serve to narrow down the gaps of a lagging education system—starting by changing classrooms interactions between teacher and students and among students. For these purposes, the program has also nurtured horizontal relationships and democratic environments with and for our undergraduates.

Despite this preparation for the future, I have witnessed that some trainees struggle to apply these critical skills (Lewison, 2002) and view of education to the school setting. After years of placing themselves as critical observers of hegemonic views permeating education and schooling, some seem reluctant to take on the duty of wielding authority. To take over the leadership of their classrooms. It could be that the years of serious reflection may have worked as power-use suppressors; preventing young teachers from ruling their classrooms.

### **One case**

There is one experience that marked me in these terms. I had just observed a teacher teaching an English lesson to a 6th grade in a vulnerated school. She was trying to teach, but her students seemed to ignore her. I wrote, “she’s not able to make herself heard”. I saw that she was overpraising students when giving any answer. In fact, she could barely start her class and teach some pieces of vocabulary. When the class finished (because time was up), we met for feedback. I wanted to know what happened to her, so I asked how she felt. She said she was okay, that at least the kids reached the vocabulary part, and that the advice given by the host teacher of going slow was helpful. I asked her why

she did not try some of the strategies learned to manage her class to at best reach the reading comprehension part. She augmented that these children had lived enough violence to be imposed on learning. She was right. I gave her my counterargument. I said that offering quality and responsive teaching was a way to soften that violence and be taken up, that she needed to lead her students to learn and speak louder. She said no and kept strong in her position. I accepted her answer and let her know that her decision and the evidence I collected that day would affect her evaluation. She said she was aware of that, but she would not force her children to learn something they did not want to.

Although the one exposed is an extreme case, because the teacher explicitly refused to use her power to guide students' learning, it drew my attention to similar situations. In those circumstances, I have used my experience to help teachers to calibrate their authority and be able to teach their lessons. Some of these cases included host teachers demanding more traditional teaching methods that may help control students' behavior. These situations caused nothing but aversion from trainees to the school context, doubting the beliefs fueled through the years of teacher training.

### **Teacher's voice, power, and power awareness**

Power is attached to the teacher's voice. That is my interpretation of Becerra (2005) as she defines teacher's voice from critical pedagogy (Wink, 2000; Giroux, 1999; McLaren 2002 in Becerra, 2005). A teacher's voice, then, is described as the ability to use one's influence to articulate (safer) alternative realities and produce meaningful experiences for students and teachers. These instances should be respectful of the background and histories of the members of a classroom as a social and cultural shared space. Additionally, a teacher's voice should not be used to silence students' voices (Pennycook, 2001 and McLaren, 2002 in Becerra, 2005, p.46). Therefore, a teacher should use her voice to communicate the intention of creating such meaningful learning opportunities. In this sense, and coming back to the case presented, my statement 'She is not able to make herself heard' shows more than harsh judgment. Teachers need to be heard, as this is a resource to communicate their intentions of turning the classroom into a space for the construction of learning, knowledge, and experiences. McCroskey (1983) supports this connection between a teacher's voice and power, emphasizing communication, even stating that teaching is communicating (McCroskey, 1978 in McCroskey, 1983). However, in this case, the most significant emphasis is on communication as a channel to exercise power for good. Yes, power for good.

Additionally, McCroskey proposed five types of power based on French and Raven (1968). The ones that offer a more democratic use of power in the classroom and enhance the teacher's voice are referent and expert power. The referent type relates to quality rapport developed and promoted by the teacher, which may help her connect with students to become their role model. On the other hand, expert power refers to students recognizing their teacher as knowledgeable and competent enough to accept her guidance. In the case of the teacher I observed, she may have wanted to build this rapport by praising her students' participation, but the intention of using power for good was out of her sight. Indeed, the sentence 'they have lived enough violence to be imposed what to learn' **may be evidence** that she only conceived power as coercive. I was not far from her. As I saw that my counterargument did not convince the teacher, I tried to handle the situation using expert power. It did not work, so I quickly moved to a coercive exchange without even noticing it. There was no power awareness in this situation, and the tutor-teacher bond was severely affected.

By that time, it would have been advantageous to know about types of power that can be used for good. Furthermore, it would have been practical to know how to use power without sacrificing our rapport. To help with this last point, Reid and Kawash (2017) propose, in the first place, that there should be explicit conversations about power to bring about changes in the classroom and/or teacher-students interactions. Second, they suggest that teachers should probe for the way students perceive teachers' actions. Explicit exercises of the association of teacher behavior to types of power would be helpful. This input may help teachers communicate better and make sure students do not misinterpret these actions, making them signs of alert to become defensive. Third, the benefit for teachers is to consciously manage and project themselves through power use impregnated in their teaching practice. In the case of our students, the benefit would be the buildup of classroom relationships that may favor the implementation of an education based on the beliefs acquired through their years in the program. An equal society is constructed, first, inside a classroom.

### **Last thoughts**

As exposed, the development of critical skills and the awareness of teachers' role as agents of social change might have influenced how our teachers embrace and use the power given to them. Regarding this, the chore of adjusting to the school from a position

that represents power may cause a clash of beliefs. However, the efforts to adapt to the role could be beneficial once novice teachers understand the relevance of using teachers' voices, types of power, and teachers' power could be used for good.

Power relations in society and, therefore, schools will not disappear. Teachers will remain teachers, and the power attached to our job will not be removed. However, what matters is how to make this attribute a resource to construct learning, knowledge, and experiences and promote social justice within schools. Like waves in a tank, may fair use of power spread softly from classrooms, expanding its reverberation to school communities, producing a progressive change in our still injured society. Teachers may be the ones who undergo this change.

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## LITERATURE IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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Defining literature has become a great challenge for those involved in the teaching of literature. Many theorists have endeavored to describe literature, yet not all of them respond thoroughly and satisfactorily to what literature is. The difficulties arise when we narrow down such a broad concept or simplify what seems so complex. Let us consider, then, a general definition of literature proposed by McRae (1991), who states that literature is any text whose imaginative content will stimulate reaction and response in the students. There will always be a reaction when a literary text has been read. The literary text ignites the students' minds to discuss the function of language in the text, culture, behaviors, and other social norms. Salina & Othman (2011) claim that the



literature component in English classrooms aims to enhance students' language proficiency. It is also geared to generate the aesthetic part of the language, a personal response from students. So, can literature be part of the English classroom? Sell (2005) highlights that the literary contents can be more faithful to life and more relevant to learners than the typical textbook topics. Besides, the engagement with the literary text encourages students to express their opinions and feelings and make connections between their own personal and cultural experiences and those described in the text. This result is what Carter & Long (1991) call the personal growth, which is what goes beyond the classrooms; what students take with them when teachers incorporate literature in the English classroom.

Regardless of the turmoil of reasons for integrating literature and teaching English, there is a common tendency to use the literary texts to isolate the teaching of a language, use the text for a straightforward translation, or just for the teaching of literature. The literature in the English classrooms aims to focus on integrating language and literature for more comprehensive and enjoyable learning activities. Lazar (2004) claims that literary texts cannot be used to translate from one language to another but to use them as valuable, authentic material for students to gain culture and language function exposure; this leads to communication. As Sanchez (2011) points out, since language is primarily learned for communication purposes, literary texts are the ideal vehicle for developing communicative skills in the classroom because literature allows sharing feelings and emotions. Langer (1997) states that using literature in the classroom permits students to know what they know and who they are. Literature is a particularly inviting context for learning about social context, culture, and language. It opens horizons full of possibilities, allowing students to question, interpret, and explore other experiences to connect them with their own. In short, literature is considered an essential resource for language learning purposes. Let us explore some of the benefits of using literature in the English classroom:

### **Socio-cultural awareness**

The literary texts provide a broad and vivid context for literary protagonists, whose background, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, values, habits, and everyday life reveal to the reader codes and rules of the real society (Collie and Slater 1998).



## **Language**

Literature and language will always be related because literature is made of language. They are inseparable. Literature is language in use; it is an excellent tool because students know how this one has developed over the years through the analysis of language. Language provides a rich context where students can study the functions of the written and oral language in a class. In addition, among the benefits of using literature in the classroom are the expansion of the vocabulary, increased reading fluency, enhanced interpretive and inferential skills (Bibby & McIlroy 2013).

## **Motivating material**

Literary texts deal with themes that are more likely to be of students' interest than other topics unrelated to students' social context (Duff and Maley 1990).

## **Integrating the four skills**

Instead of using the literary texts to isolate the teaching of a language or literature, teachers can use them to integrate the reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills since English should be taught for communication purposes. So, literature is a challenging reading material that serves as a tool to understand that the communication goal is part of every language course. Exposing students to gradually challenging reading materials and integrating the skills will assure real-life and purposeful communication (Manaj 2015).

Using literature in the classroom provides the English language teacher with a great tool. In addition, the benefits of using literature in the English classroom may go a long distance. First, literary texts cultivate the students' creativity and imagination. Second, they allow them to seek, interpret and communicate messages and meanings within the literary text. Finally, literature opens the door to other cultures to enable students to interact, express opinions, experiences, and feelings while being in the English classroom.

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# FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: ALUMNI EXPERIENCES





## **MANEUVERING TO KEEP YOUR HEAD A FLOAT: AN IN-SERVICE TEACHER EXPERIENCE IN THESE CHALLENGING 3 YEARS OF CHANGES FOR CHILE**

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**Profesor de Inglés**

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The last three years have been a turmoil for most education-related professionals, especially for our country and its political changes since the social uprising and the pandemic. These events led to a dramatic turn in how learning and teaching are conceived, which molded my first three years of teaching. I humbly share my experience, challenges, and words of advice to provide you with a clear view of how theory looks in the field. My ultimate goal is to help you keep your head afloat in a Chilean reality that seems to deviate to turmoil more often than ever.

In my experience, these three years have been dramatically dynamic and demanding. I had to deal with getting used to the school system and applying all the things I learned

about how English is taught and how education works. Additionally, the pandemic pushed all schools to their limits, making the task of adapting to the school context even harder. Students were faced with isolation for so long that they lost any motivation to be part of a class. While attending to these issues, you are trying to give your best at planning and material design, thinking about how to make a difference. Although you might struggle on all fronts, and stress gets to invade you, there are many ways to tackle these issues. Most teachers solve their conflicts and find ways to be the teachers they want, so it is not impossible.

One of the biggest challenges was finding ways in which your students can feel engaged while having lost any motivation to be part of a class. Sometimes they would join the lesson and say nothing, or they would just disconnect from the session in the middle of an activity. My piece of advice, in this case, is to accept that you will not have everybody's attention, not even in a no-pandemic context. Once you understand this reality, you may want to start looking for new platforms, materials or activities, that may help you improve the experience within your class. For instance, platforms such as Nearpod, Wordwall, or even Kahoot are always good partners when you need to give a twist to the lesson. Also, have in mind that you could involve your students in the design of lessons, make use of feedback sessions with your students to ask them how they think they would learn better. Usually, the best ideas come from their minds.

Integrated Language Teaching seemed to be one of the challenges at first, but it came almost naturally when giving classes. Once you start automatizing the planning process, you will start finding your way to take the theory into practice. My suggestion is to devote enough time to planning whenever you can at school because it may be hard to find the right time. Make sure your goals are clear, and always think from your students' perspectives. Nevertheless, most schools do not give you enough time to design units and lessons because they expect you to follow the textbook or books they already own. This is when you must make difficult decisions and consider what is best for your students, bearing in mind that adaptation is at the core of school planning. Remember, textbooks are useful sources of material, but they are not your lesson plan. Think and plan ahead, focus on your objective, and how you are supposed to evidence learning.

As a final word of advice, fight your battles at the right time. We may think of education as the ultimate chance of defying the status quo, though you would not want to defy it so

much, or you will get yourself fired. Freire & Shor (2014) say the goal of opposition is not to lose your job but to sustain a long-standing opposition. Give yourself time to learn how schools work in terms of myriads reports, meetings, and extracurricular activities that may have no educational purpose. Once you get a hand at it and are acknowledged as a valuable worker, it will be time for you to take a more active role in bringing Critical Pedagogy to the field. Just look for your place to ignite the spark that will, someday, make your students realize they understand society deeply. If you ever feel you are drowning, just go back to the basics, simplify your struggles, and modify your goals.

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## **BECOMING A TEACHER: A NEVER-ENDING LEARNING PROCESS**

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I started working at a school almost at the end of the first semester, I was excited to start implementing all that I had learned. Among the school staff, the use of backward design and the division of the lesson in stages were encouraged. I was excited because I had not seen that before. I started working with my students to realize that they had only learned grammatical structures in English classes.

As I started working with CLT (reading/listening comprehension, identifying language features in the input, etc.), it seemed like students thought I did not know how to teach “real” English. For example, they knew they would have to put the verb and add the suffix

-ed in a simple past fill-in-the-gap activity, but when I asked about what it meant, they had no idea. For them, learning English was all about formulas, repeating isolated structures, and translating ideas to Spanish, so English was purposeless.

After a pandemic and a year and a half in online lessons, I saw that most of my students did not really enjoy being cognitively challenged (quite understandably), much less with English. Slowly but surely, I started working to help them focus on meaning, on communicating/understanding ideas. They struggled. We struggled because, in their experience, comprehending a text meant understanding the translation of every word. Once I realized this, I implemented reading/listening comprehension activities that guided students more than usual. I repeatedly modeled identifying and extracting the information, I used pictograms for instructions, and I even banned the use of translators for some lessons. Little by little, my students began to understand general ideas from the input in English, they could select specific ideas, and then they were able to express abilities, give directions, among other things. By seeing these results, the students began to feel motivated about their language learning.

Teaching English in an integrated way is challenging for many reasons. For a novice teacher, its planning can be time-consuming, and its implementation can be frustrating. The theory is printed on paper only, and so many elements and variants influence how we can apply it to practice. However, seeing the results in my students also motivated me to continue discovering theory. There are some lessons that I feel I failed. I did not achieve my learning objective completely; the fun activity I designed did not come out as I had expected, most of my students did not connect or attend classes. However, I see it is that teaching is an infinite learning curve, but we have to take time to self-evaluate. Why did my students not understand the activity? Were my instructions not logical or explicit enough? Did I scaffold the way to this lesson well enough? If this is such an enriched experience on paper, why did it not work? What **will** I do differently next time?

As I said before, integrated language teaching is challenging. However, I understand that if one lesson or intervention does not come out as expected, next time will be better if I sit and evaluate what I did right and wrong. My advice for future colleagues is not to be afraid to experiment, challenge yourself, receive feedback from peers and learn from them. We graduate having knowledge, but then you have to explore how to use it, and that is on you.



## THE LITTLE BOAT: ITINERANT TEACHER AT WORK

**DIEGO ESPINOZA**

**Profesor de Inglés**

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It is March 2018, and I am about to start the ninth semester of my undergraduate degree. I'm nervous because I'll be starting my practicum in a school near my home, so I partially know how it works. It has large, very heterogeneous groups in each of its grades, and students share -more or less- the same English levels: which is what I have been used to in both my years as a student and as a teacher in training.

Hours walk, and it's April now, and I need to explore some topics because I need to decide my focus on my action research. So, I start navigating through the Mineduc website, especially the English as a Foreign Language section. There is a story that calls my attention, and it tells the story of Daniela Maldonado, a teacher from Cabrero who teaches in eleven different schools. 'She seems happy -I say-, that must be much fun, she's teaching small classes in the countryside, getting to work with different people. I

closed the tab in the browser and started searching about other topics because, of course, that reality was not even close to my actual context.

At least, at that point.

"Yes, this letter is for all teachers. It means that we're not renewing your contract, but we'll start a new one. It happens every year, and everyone continues with the same workload. Except -he said, with a face of concern-, with you". At that moment, it was the second year of my teaching life, after I decided to move to the Ñuble region as soon as I got my degree. They told me that I was not going to be the teacher in charge of the English subject of the school as I was in the first year. Instead, my situation would be as the one of my colleague. I would have to travel between schools, but just five of them and with a beautiful weekly workload of eighteen hours.

Now, imagine this as a recipe. A spoonful of rurality, three hundred milliliters of remote work, some English knowledge in most cases, and of course, a full kilogram of a deadly pandemic. These ingredients in the pot must be served in six different dishes now. Six, as the six levels that are together in every school, in the same classroom, at the same time. Finally, multiply that recipe for five, as the number of schools I also work at.

I managed to plan everything during the summer, right before Covid attacked. After that, I had to erase and rethink everything because of the change of rules in the game. So did the methodologies and the expectations.

## **Skills**

As we know, there are many elements to consider when planning to have an adequate language classroom. However, all the odds were against this little boat. I took the advice from the more experienced itinerant teachers; the focus had to be on teaching vocabulary because teaching a skill could be highly difficult in the context we were going through. Despite this, we sometimes attempted to develop language skills. However, the crash against the wall was disastrous. Sometimes we could not play a video or a song, or half of the class could not watch it. Though I understood that was a national problem, the case of rural schools was even worse. Did I mention that six different levels had to be addressed in those short 60 minutes of video-lesson? Well, if I didn't, now you know it. In my context, I must assert that I don't think I could teach skills as well as I would have wanted to because of the problems presented above. Last but not least, you can also add to the list a load of frustration. What a great word of the English language, isn't it?

## Meaningful learning

Even though skills were not ideally addressed, students could still navigate through this delightful language we happen to speak and teach. In my conversations with my students (and their parents), I understood that learning the language was meaningful. For many of them, the English language was something new, and even though they found it difficult, they waited for the English lesson to happen. As a whole group during the teaching hour, we tried to give it a purpose and a direction. There were two reasons why the closure moment was their favorite: because they were about to close their webcams, and we were able to share and be aware as a group of what was taught and what was learned; with an attitude of fulfillment and, I'd say, sometimes, joy. If you connect with students, they will find a reason to listen to your class and believe in you as a teacher. Likewise, you will understand that teaching is not just transmitting words but sharing a language between -almost- friends.

## Limitations

Oh, yes; the alternative title to this entry. I mentioned numberless issues already. However, I think that muscle comes from pain when working out. In a pandemic context, working from a distance in so many schools with different English levels is the Oxford Encyclopedia of Limitations and a great place to learn. Or at least, it was for me. You will find that most textbooks were not made for your specific context, and some of the things you learned at the university may not suit your needs or your students'. Finally, you will see this as a great moment to start looking for new ways to overcome those limitations because that's what makes a great teacher.

## Advice or conclusion, or what I would like you to read, actually

I used the boat metaphor and told you about the storms I experienced because I believe we are all sailors in this boat called the English classroom. However, as Roosevelt said: "a smooth sea never made a skilled sailor." We will find rain, storms, big waves, and even hurricanes in this sea: but we can't do anything but know that these things happen. There will be moments we won't be able to teach a skill correctly, a lesson you carefully planned is not going to work as you dreamed in your mind, or even the job-related issue I told you at the beginning of this long monologue. And it's ok. It will be ok. The only important

thing is that you remember that next day, the day when you are just about to start another journey, there is no reason why it would not be sunny and fruitful to give our best to those exceptional children navigating with us.

I would say that this conclusion makes more sense to me when I think about my training: being an English teacher is not only about developing language skills (even though it is the goal). The importance lies in finding moments when we can find common spaces with our students to enhance their motivation and continue teaching the language, which can be a cultural asset to build a comfortable environment, a key to the world—best of luck.





## INSTAGRAM IN AN ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAM IN CHILE: REFLECTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

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### Introduction

As Chile is a highly unequal country (OECD, 2016), access to the internet is one of the many ways this is reflected. This experience emerged from the emergency online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which included third-year students from the language training teaching program at Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Santiago, Chile. We felt that at least one of the modules of the 'Integrated English Language lessons' had to be more practical rather than the content presentation, by simultaneously allowing the students not to be necessarily connected to a computer. Thus, considering: (i) their English level, B2, (ii) the fact that most of them were used to writing on their

phones quickly, and (iii) the writing objectives set in the course, we decided to use a familiar social network, *Instagram*. This experience refers to using a tool for developing writing skills based on an application of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in an online setting (Hall, 2007).

## **Implementation**

In order to successfully adapt this tool, teachers reflected on how writing skills material is adapted to available technology (Nguyen, 2020) and the consequences for the evaluation and feedback (Cheng & Fox 2017), following the learning results of the module. The first step was to include an introduction to the social network and a warm-up session that prepared them for their public post. The introduction put forward the task's objectives along with all the requirements for its assessment. Likewise, after each session, students were provided with feedback on their performance. Even when students are usually referred to as digital natives, simplicity is still the key to successful technological adaptation in the classroom (Naveh & Shelef, 2020). The procedure for this purpose is detailed next.

After the introduction to the social network, a brief weekly discussion between the students and the Teaching assistant took place, guided through a previously prepared question that was of national interest yet unrelated to the session content. This oral activity was organised in smaller sections that aimed to promote interaction and participation from all students, considering the limitations of the context and the level of participation of each student in the weekly lessons. This was the first instance for students to reflect on the chosen topic and share their views about it.

Second, an *Instagram* post was published, where students had to reply based on the previous discussion. The posts looked like this:



**Figure 1**

*Instagram Post Session 3*

**Figure 2**



*Instagram Post Session 7*

After the discussions that took place in the term, there was formative assessment and careful follow-up of the participation of all students by the Teaching Assistant and professors. The highest mark was possible by simply participating in the eight posts throughout the term and complying with the requirements for the task. The criteria for the evaluation of the weekly comments was the following:

1. Each post must be 40 words minimum.
2. Posts must address the workshop question directly.
3. Posts must be shared before the given deadline.

The criteria for the task assessment were mostly based on practicality, which is understood as the logistical and administrative issues involved in the process of making, giving, and scoring and assessment instruments. Some of the elements included in this section are the costs and the time it takes to construct it and provide feedback (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010).

## Results

In terms of written production, students shared complete answers which were explicit to the topic discussed in the conversation section and, in some cases, were above the expected outcomes, as is seen in the samples below:

I believe that what happened with this whole situation of the Instagram store selling Selknam pajamas goes beyond getting inspiration in another culture and it is straight stealing a culture. In the same way, I believe that nowadays people call everything "cultural appropriation" without considering that cultures are malleable and they do not have a specific owner. Can we say that something is a hundred percent Chilean? Cultures share features among them due to many different reasons, for that, I think that it is important to pay attention and recognize the process of a proper cultural exchange, which has to be voluntary and natural. As Drexler

**Figure 3**

*Sample from Instagram Post Session 3*

believe many people have made the mistake of celebrating the triumph of Apruebo as the end of a process, when in fact it is the other way around. The winning of Apruebo is the beginning of a whole new process, which is why it is pivotal that we are in it more than ever. What is next now is to choose those who are going to speak for us. This is going to be an exhausting task, since there is a myriad of unprepared people trying to win people's votes out of popularity and fame. I believe that our job now is to be critical and dedicated to informing ourselves and those around us. Being skeptical regarding constituyentes

**Figure 4**

*Sample from Instagram Post Session 7*

Our students' feedback and results show that collaborative work is essential to succeed in this setting and that learning using social networks is possible if conditions are met. In addition, lecturers should also immerse themselves in this setting to appropriately manage privacy issues in the application. For example, some students said: "I think I was able to develop my skills as I had never done it before, as my teachers gave us all the possible support and the tools to improve our English level."

Some of the implications of this experience are that these tasks can complement regular face-to-face classes and are highly accessible for students, offering regular writing exercises and equal access through the students' phones, which are two of the weaknesses encountered during COVID-19 hit the country in March 2020. We also suggest that these kinds of tools could be exploited by tertiary education institutions worldwide using methodological support beyond personal interest and curiosity.

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## **SHOULD CAMERAS BE ON TO ACHIEVE MEANINGFUL LEARNING? PROBLEMATIZING CAMERA USE IN EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN AN EFL CONTEXT**

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Since educational institutions shuttered in 2020 due to the COVID19 sanitary crisis, instruction was abruptly forced to adapt to Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning. Overnight, the accustomed face-to-face interactions were mediated through a digital



device in a virtual environment, leaving limited space and time to adapt to the new outbreking interaction conditions. The classroom setting shifted to a virtual window on a screen in the EFL context. Verbal communication was mediated through a microphone and speakers, and non-verbal communication through camera use. However, several suggestions have been made to avoid mandatory camera use since their utilization has sparked the debate on privacy, equity, and accessibility issues in the educational community. Therefore, it is worth wondering if cameras should achieve meaningful learning in EFL classroom interactions.

In a face-to-face context, the class participants use non-verbal hints such as smiles, looks of confusion, clarity, and boredom to mediate communication and negotiate meaning, which are critical elements in teaching-and-learning experiences and classroom management (Holland, 2020). To illustrate, in specific disciplines, such as theatre or sign language education, the camera use is pivotal to mediate the teacher-student and student-student interactions in every class since the visual canal permits communication. In contrast, in other disciplines, such as the EFL context, the every-class camera use is debatable since looking at each other is not the only means to interact. For these reasons, camera use has become the cornerstone of the meaningful learning debate in the Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning context.

In the educational context, the main arguments for camera use consider this device necessary to observe skills, monitor engagement, and community building (Masland, 2021). For instance, Castellu and Sarvary (2021) state that teachers can note the way learners speak, express and move. Moreover, Masland (2021) explains that teachers can follow students' performance, monitor the learning process, and provide effective feedback. In the case of EFL learning, the camera use would facilitate teachers' monitoring of students' performance, for example, by observing the articulation of sounds and students' engagement and by observing the learners' reactions to use pedagogical strategies to exemplify, adjust, and adjust and provide effective feedback. Finally, in the EFL classroom, the cameras may promote students' language interaction, contributing to language learning and building rapport with their peers and teacher, facilitating community building and a sense of belonging (Castellu and Sarvary, 2021).

Notwithstanding, there are also arguments against camera use during synchronous sessions. Firstly, accessibility issues have evidenced resource inequality in the education community by disproportionately affecting teachers and students whose connectivity access has been hindered by the lack of high-speed internet connections and appropriate technological devices. From a critical lens, this situation has agitated the participants' confidence and self-esteem as they might feel uncomfortable exposing their home environment or having an unstable internet connection (Gherhes, Simon, & Para 2021). Similarly, camera use has invaded personal and family space, as some educational community members have reported, due to the lack of a private place to work or study. Finally, the exposure cameras demand has affected space and personal and family time. As Gherhes, Simon, & Para (2021) point out, turning on the camera might make learners feel exhausted, fatigued, and distracted by staring into their faces for hours.

Taking into account the perspectives for and against camera use during synchronous sessions, it is possible to acknowledge their validity and relevance in the current emergency remote learning conditions. Perhaps, the strong for and against viewpoints behind camera use come from the Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning context, since neither teachers nor students had time or instruction to adjust to this new environment. Virtual learning is still a recent phenomenon, and the anxiety of those who see the camera use as a need during synchronous learning sessions may come from the artificial face-to-face feeling of interaction it provides. Therefore, camera use could be considered a contribution that enhances virtual interactions, whose use may facilitate the adaptation process of teachers and students from the face-to-face paradigm to the current virtual one. In the educational context, camera use may not be a unique resource to achieve meaningful learning. In the EFL virtual classroom, cameras may ease student-teacher rapport, assessment, and feedback delivery; however, it is essential to consider the class's needs to identify any potential obstacle that may impede full participation in the virtual classroom. Accordingly, camera use ought to be sufficiently negotiated with the participants to optimise its use whenever possible; otherwise, alternative ways ought to be found to ensure all students' participation and engagement in the learning experience.

Regardless of the difficulties of remote instruction, the educational community has undoubtedly been committed, resilient and reflective to find the best manners to adjust to this new environment. These profound challenges might deepen and enrich the

discussion on meaningful learning by shedding light on the importance of considering equity and privacy issues beforehand at the curricular and instructional levels.

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## FROM ISOLATION TO COLLABORATION: IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE CO-TEACHING

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Generally, teaching is characterized by taking place in isolation (Cookson, 2005). It is not a regular practice for teachers to share what we do in the classroom, design lesson plans or materials together, or agree on classroom management strategies, bringing teachers to a state that they find themselves alone without any interaction with their colleagues.

With the implementation of *Programa de Integración Escolar* and other initiatives such as intercultural co-teaching, teacher collaboration has become a common practice in schools. However, due to the isolation mentioned previously, along with the absence of adequate conditions for collaboration and experience and instruction, it has become a

challenge as well: “Collaboration rarely ‘just happens’” (Berry et al., 2009, p.6).

Several varied forms of teacher collaboration aim to support teachers and students, improve practices, and promote reflection. One of them is co-teaching.

## **Co-teaching**

Co-teaching is commonly defined as “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space” (Cook & Friend, 1995, p.1). The rationale for this approach is meeting the needs of the students and providing individualised instruction. It can also foster teachers’ professional development and collegial support (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011).

Educators and researchers have mainly considered the co-teaching approach between a general teacher and a special educator for inclusive education. However, other experiences have shown co-teaching to be successful in any context, for example, pairing pre-service and experienced teachers, teachers of complementary subjects such as art and history, or intercultural team teaching (Guise et al., 2017).

In co-teaching, teachers must take decisions together, share responsibilities and roles, and develop trust through interaction and communication. The way teachers rely on one another is essential for effective collaboration, and they establish better communication when they consider one another as equals (Haghighi & Abdollahi, 2014). When they trust each other, they can implement constructive co-teaching, engaging in effective and ongoing communication (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2016).

For co-teaching to be successful, there seem to be several elements to be considered, especially before and during its implementation. Before co-teaching, teachers need to explicitly articulate and discuss essential topics to facilitate open communication and share a mutual understanding. These topics may include practical knowledge, instructional beliefs, expectations, philosophies, and priorities.

Co-planning is another integral part of co-teaching (Cook & Friend, 1995; Pratt et al., 2017). The approach and the models to be used must be planned carefully and in advance, considering the topics discussed in meetings previous to the implementation

phase. Clarifying these aspects in advance helps teachers to start on the same page and identify potential misunderstandings or problems beforehand. To co-plan every lesson, there should be an allotted time and place with a structured organization of the sessions (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011; Pratt et al., 2017). According to Berry et al. (2009), a good amount of planning time would be at least 90 minutes. It is crucial to make the most of this time by defining roles where each teacher takes on responsibilities with greater competence (Trent, 1998). Setting a common language and previous discussion of background knowledge, context, and expectations may also allow a faster work.

Incompatibilities, difficulties to delegate duties and responsibilities, differences in the importance given to teaching, and lack of openness can be some of the drawbacks of co-teaching (Trent, 1998). When teachers engage in collaboration, there are different conceptions of roles and beliefs about curriculum and instruction to acknowledge and understand the potential success of the collaboration. Different knowledge, beliefs, skills, and reflective abilities shape collaborative work (Brownell et al., 2006).

When two people work together, challenges are frequent and, in order for them to be overcome, these challenges need to be acknowledged. As in co-teaching, two teachers collaborate; it is crucial to recognise that they are two professionals from different backgrounds, with unequal experiences and diverse teaching styles (Rytivaara & Kershner, 2012). There is no 'true' collaboration, only different forms with varied consequences and serving different purposes (Hargreaves, 1994, p.189). Feeling supported and with an excellent professional relationship is the first aspect of effective collaboration. Teachers who work in a secure environment have the basis for reflection and questioning. They can discuss concerns, ideas, and interests with less anxiety, allowing them to take challenges and critically analyze situations to solve problems together.



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## BEING A GUIDE TEACHER DURING COVID-19 TIMES

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The year 2021 has been challenging in terms of teaching in many ways. We started with online lessons thinking that the experience we gained during the year 2020 would be helpful to overcome all issues we faced during our first experience teaching in a pandemic. Many things were taken for granted but remained unsolved. Some of them are still unsolved today. Despite the difficulties, I decided to accept pre-service teachers in the school I work, hoping to demonstrate that, despite some adverse situations, we can still give the best of ourselves for the sake of our students.

I was worried initially because the experience the university students were going to live as pre-service teachers was a kind of parenthesis in our existing education system. Virtual lessons, turned-off cameras, microphone issues, and a feeling that our teaching was

somewhat impersonal were aspects none of us could get used to. Notwithstanding these challenges, I received a couple of excellent teachers to be. Why? Because despite the difficulties and the challenges they started experiencing, they never gave up on the idea of delivering knowledge and applying everything they had studied at the university. I could see a strong commitment in them translated into well-prepared lessons that they had to design.

As they told me, these pre-service teachers had the opportunity to apply the knowledge they gained in courses like methodology and linguistics and those leading to reflective practice. They demonstrated being prepared to teach despite the circumstances. During every meeting I had with them before and after implementing the lessons they designed, I noticed how much these future teachers knew regarding disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge and how eager they were to apply everything they learned into the classrooms.

Talking about these students' contributions, I can say that they helped me be more organised in terms of working collaboratively and designing the lessons. Sometimes we lack new ideas or strategies to make our lessons more engaging. However, these UAH students provided me with fresher ideas connected with the students' contexts and interests. They also reminded me about different teaching strategies that I took for granted, but sometimes I forgot they existed.

Regarding collaborative work, as I addressed this topic above, after getting to know each other better, pedagogically speaking, we had a transition from using a couple of hours in each meeting to prepare the lessons we had to implement to having 30-minute meetings where ideas flew smoothly. We already knew what the other meant to design or implement. This collaboration was positive, to the point that I trusted their work, and I gave them the responsibility to design and teach their lessons. In the beginning, they were a bit nervous, totally understandable, but they could manage this duty without problems.

After moving from virtual to hybrid lessons, hybrid meaning having virtual and on-site students, they realised how different it was to see students' reactions during the lessons. They could notice that just by paying attention to students' faces and moods, we can understand if a lesson is successful and if we need to modify something we had already

planned. Sometimes a lesson was successful, and sometimes it was not, but despite this, I could notice how committed and perseverant they were. Additionally, they always asked for feedback and comments regarding the lessons they planned, and I was eager to provide it because I wanted them to learn to teach in the best possible way.

However, every rose has its thorn, and in this case, I can still see some challenges ahead of these pre-service teachers' careers. One of them is the feeling of insecurity. A feeling we have every time we put our feet in a new school, in a new classroom or with new colleagues because we do not know if we are doing a good job or not. A challenge here is to work with this insecurity by dealing with it. It is understandable because of the lack of experience, but this is something we should not demonstrate, and I think these teachers to be will overcome this by believing in what they know and the skills they have. Another challenge I see is working with time management, but we learn to deal with this through time. In order to learn how to manage the time in our lessons, we need to try different methods, strategies and get to know our students and contexts. Getting more experience will help overcome this challenge.

All in all, it was a pleasure working with UAH pre-service teachers because of all the reasons I have mentioned here. They were always respectful; what is more, they were very eager to learn from my experience, not only from the current school I work at but also from my experience in general. I know they will be great teachers; they just need to believe it.



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The dual immersion experience was truly challenging. At the beginning of the first session for the first time in the whole year, I felt that I had to apply everything I had learned so far but in a good way. I was very nervous, but the students from the USA were very understanding, and the atmosphere that was generated was enriching. This experience seeks that we can test our abilities and also our understanding with our other foreign partners. I believe both they and we had mutual learning and learned cooperatively.

As a UAH student, I am grateful to have had such an experience. Dealing with native English speakers is very different and has generated a really good experience. I was able to realize that our training is on the right track, and I am convinced that it will be a direct contribution to our lives as future teachers. The other thing that I highlight is that as UAH students, we had no doubts to help North American students with their questions about how Latin America is composed, for example. We were able to explain that we do not all speak the same and tell about how our culture develops and very interesting customs. The exchange of tastes and interests was not left out of the experience, and it was something really fun. I would repeat the experience.

-Belén Navarrete, 1st year student

During this semester, I was able to work on an online modality, but I wish I could work with students face-to-face. Despite the context, I think that I could achieve a positive relationship with students by making little conversations with some students because I could talk with them beyond the school content. For instance, I could have conversations about mutual interests that even allowed me to complement some classes. Last year I had to work in an online context. Still, I could notice the responsibility to prepare material, activities and be able to talk with my guide teacher to work as a team instead of working separately. Regarding the most difficult challenges that I had to face throughout the year, there was the internet connection, the use of only one computer at the house, and the difficulty to work with students that seem to be demotivated. That is why my expectations for the next year are to be able to work in a face-to-face context, improve my teaching skills, and try to put into practice what I have learned in both online and face-to-face modality."

- Vicente Trigo, 4th year student

Entering the world of education during a pandemic is by far one of the hardest things I've done. I chose to teach because I wanted to be in the field physically, in contact with students, and see their faces and expressions during classes. In the end I wanted to witness their learning process with my own eyes. However, the pandemic put a barrier between me and that reality. I had to start my teaching experience through a screen, where not only I couldn't see my student's faces, but I hardly ever heard their voices. That reality made me rethink my career choice, doubt my abilities, and worry about my happiness. Nevertheless, I kept trying to find new ways to connect with these children, to adapt to the situation, and make the best out of it. That mindset was the most powerful motivation to keep studying and creating learning experiences as meaningful as possible. Surprisingly, despite all the worries and struggles I went through. Silently, I could build a connection with my students, even though I couldn't explicitly see it. They made sure the last day that I knew they liked my classes and me; they even said they would miss me. I got my motivation back, and I'm as sure as ever that this is what I genuinely want to do with my life.

- Francisca Cortés, 4th year student

Even though the pandemic has carried out many challenges for our professional development, I think that overall it has been a positive experience for me. Having the chance to perform hybrid classes (online and also face-to-face) has given us the possibility to try different learning strategies to tackle the low motivation of learners due to the current scenario. For that, it has been quite an enriching experience to be able to interact with students and know about their interests, expectations, and also, points of view in regard to different matters. At first, we only attended online classes and I felt very comfortable with them, however, when we had the opportunity to finally attend face-to-face I felt a little bit nervous because it was my first time coming back to a classroom as a teacher. But, at the end of the day, I was glad that I could overcome that feeling, and also, it was great to feel that I was finally able to connect more with students, since usually in the online context they do not turn on their cameras. I hope for next year we can keep immersing ourselves more and more within the educational context, continuing with the never-ending process of learning to be more prepared for our future as teachers of Chile.

- César Gajardo, 4th year students

Without questions this year has been challenging in many aspects, especially when it comes to teaching practice. This time, I had the opportunity to work with 5th and 7th grade. Due to pandemic, we were still working online. However, the last month I was able to go to school and experience my teaching practice, again, face to face. It felt good to be back. See the students around, greet them and look at them in the eyes it is something irreplaceable. Moreover, the school reception was warm enough as well as the teachers and staff members of the school community. Once being there, I continued facing challenges. The motivation, participation and English proficiency level of students are aspects that need to be severely improved. Even though the process was quite difficult, it gave me plenty of opportunities and tools to keep growing and learning in this path called “being a teacher”. Last but not least, my expectations for next year are still working face to face and have the opportunity to teach English to other levels I haven’t experienced yet.

- Constanza Cornejo Gómez, X year student

## BOOK REVIEW



### TEACHING AND ASSESSING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: REVISITED

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A world of increasing diversity, constant change, and pluricultural and plurilingual relationships should compel those with an interest in (English) language learning to think about the purposes and ways in which such learning can be more meaningful. In a timely second edition, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence: Revisited* (Byram, 2020), offers a succinct, yet rich vantage point to

facilitate this needed discussion. The book, organised into an introduction, 5 chapters, a conclusion and an appendix, presents a discussion of principles (i.e., a framework) of *foreign* language teaching, with valuable practical implications for planning and implementing teaching. As such, the monograph is not a model of learning.

The first three chapters discuss and describe the foundations of the model: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). Byram begins the introduction with two analogies, one to understand the role of an intercultural speaker/*sojourner* and another to illustrate that of a more instrumental language learner/*tourist*. The invitation here to conceive education as a transformative activity, and to help learners adopt sojourner modes of experiencing and analyzing other ways of life and their own. Since Byram sees ICC language learning as the foundation for 'intercultural citizenship' (ICit), language education has a political, democratic impetus. His points become more nuanced as he problematises *foreign* language learning, national cultures as the locus of interculturality, and native speakerism. The focus of Chapter 1 is the concept of competence, anchored in a long tradition that goes back to Hymes and Chomsky. In this chapter, Byram also addresses the notion of intercultural and pluricultural competence and the role of assessment in a model that cannot neatly operationalise learning and that is always highly context sensitive. Chapter 2 is where Byram addresses the notion of the *Intercultural Speaker* and describes ICC and its components: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence, and the components of intercultural competence: skills of interpreting/relating, knowledge, critical cultural awareness, attitudes of curiosity/openness and skills of discovery/interaction.

The second half of the book, comprised of Chapter 3 to 5, has a more practical orientation. Chapter 3, for example, introduces ICC and its components in terms of competencies and objectives. This should help readers make sense of the model and think about ways in which ICC can be brought to their contexts. While noting the advantages of precision, coherence and transparency afforded by the formulation of learning in terms of objectives and competences, Byram also proposes to ignore the constraints of defining objectives as always externally observable behaviors. After all, it is educators and learners themselves who should determine what counts as learning in view of their needs and contexts, and it is not always clear the extent to which less observable traits such as attitudes of openness and curiosity can be translated into

measurable behaviors. When it comes to acquiring ICC, Byram sees in fieldwork and independent-learning valuable opportunities. In that sense, we are also invited to redefine *the classroom*. Chapter 4 moves the discussion of objectives and competences into the realm of curriculum issues, where Byram proposes a set of general processes involved in ICC curriculum design: the geopolitical context, the learning context, the developmental factor, the identification of objectives, the ICC threshold, and sequence in the curriculum. Issues of learning progression and ICC threshold are dealt with greater depth and the overall proposed curriculum design is illustrated through two contrasting examples: teaching French in the United States and English in Taiwan. Chapter 5 is dedicated to assessment, a subject new to this second edition. Building on previous chapters, Byram situates assessment as fundamental to learning and expands its possibilities beyond testing. Here, the author also discusses the difficulties of assessing attitudes and sees in the use of portfolio work and continuous (formative) assessment more meaningful forms of appraising student learning.

This second edition of *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence: Revisited*, should be of interest to anyone involved in language education. The book succeeds in bringing theory to practice and presents a relevant and updated discussion on a number of critical issues.

## REFERENCES

Byram, M. (2020). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence: Revisited*. (2nd ed.). Channel View Publications.



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