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How does the implementation of a CML project allow 11th graders to challenge Cultural

Representations of drugs, sex, and consumerism in their EFL class?

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Abstract

This Action Research (AR) project was conducted to understand how the implementation of a Critical Media Literacy (CML) project allows 11th graders to challenge Cultural Representations (CR) of drugs, sex, and consumerism in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. The project was implemented at a public high school located in the municipality of Rionegro, Antioquia, Colombia. The data were gathered through qualitative methods such as teacher's journals, students' artifacts, and questionnaires applied to both students and the cooperative teacher. The data analysis revealed that the implementation of a CML project about CR allowed some students to challenge their worldviews concerning drugs, sex, and consumerism while becoming media creators and increasing their active participation in the English class.

Key words: Critical Media Literacy, Critical pedagogy, EFL teaching and learning, Cultural Representations.

Degree Requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Foreign Languages Teaching (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín-Colombia.

Acknowledgments

Preface

This paper presents the product of my practicum and research project as an EFL teacher at the public institution Escuela Normal Superior de María, located in the city of Rionegro, Antioquia. The project was conducted during the second semester of 2019 and the first semester of 2020 with 10th and 11th graders respectively; and was intended to know how the implementation of CML allows 11th graders to challenge CR of drugs, sex, and consumerism in an EFL class.

During the first practicum semester, I conducted a needs analysis and data collection process that revealed a series of needs, lacks, and interests in students' learning processes. First, it was identified the need for addressing consumerist CR, in-class activities, from a critical perspective suggested by the school curriculum. Second, the lack of language performance in most of the students was a key factor that appeared during the AR design. Third, a series of students' interests related to high consumption of mainstream media, as well as the explicit reference towards sex, drugs, and alcohol use in class was another key aspect to consider the design and implementation of this project's actions.

Then, during the second semester of my practicum, I decided to focus my actions on the implementation of an eight weeks CML project aiming at challenging the already mentioned CR. I decided to implement this project because I thought about the importance of promoting a space for students to use and learn the Target Language (TL) while questioning and reflecting on these CR, present in students' local context, from the basis of critical pedagogy (CP).

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Description of the Context

The Institution

The Institución Educativa Escuela Normal Superior de María is an urban, public, and coeducational institution located in the city of Rionegro, Antioquia. This school is a K-11 institution and has four different branches: Carmela Bianchetti I, Carmela Bianchetti II, Ojo de agua, and Los Colegios main branch, being the latter the facility where this research project took place. This institution also offers teaching training for students who want to continue their pedagogical education after graduating from high school. Regarding its physical resources, the main branch is furnished with a library, a computer lab with an internet connection and 20 computers, a public restaurant for students, a private canteen, catholic religious symbols, and 22 classrooms. Some of them are equipped with either a video beam or a T.V set.

The institutional coexistence manual includes all the school rules and regulations complying with the Colombian law for elementary and secondary education. Moreover, the school's philosophical foundations, stated in the institution's website, conceive the importance of educating teachers to act as agents of change in a local context whose traditional agrarian economy turned into an important industrial, service, and tourism-based economy during the last 30 years. Besides, this institution, historically managed by the catholic church, has played a pivotal role in the education and training process of teachers from Rionegro during the last 147 years.

The English Subject

According to the English syllabus of this High School, the English subject is offered to students from 1st to 11th grade and the syllabus is aligned with the Colombian policies for English teaching and learning. This syllabus design presented the Grammar-based and Communicative (CA) approaches as the basis for its pedagogical practice. Notwithstanding,

the institution also included the critical approach for the 10th and 11th grades through the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) activities. Then, teachers at these levels were supposed to foster communicative competence for students to propose actions about contemporary social issues that affect both the global and local contexts.

My Practicum Groups

I had the opportunity of working with two different groups along this process. During my first practicum semester (2019-2), my group was a 10th-grade group composed of 43 students aged between 15 and 17 years old. Then, for my second practicum semester (2020-1), my group was an 11th-grade group composed of 34 students — 24 women and seven men— aged between 16 and 18 years old. Only 14 students from my first practicum group continued with me in this 11th-grade group. For both cases, all students lived in urban and rural areas belonging to the middle-low socioeconomic strata of Rionegro (Survey, August 13th, 2019).

With regard to students' needs, lacks, and interests in the EFL class, there was a gap between these three factors. According to the curriculum design, 10th and 11th-graders needed to recognize and use all verb tenses, infinitive verbs, gerunds, modals, reported speech, and WH questions. However, most of the students were only able to communicate short isolated expressions and words in English, with only a few of them being able to express ideas fluently in the TL. This demonstrated huge lacks and gaps in terms of students' language performance and its relation to the official curriculum. What is more, most of the students demonstrated behaviours and interests related to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) devices, such as smartphones, to access multiple media platforms. Likewise, it was common to observe a considerable reference towards sex, drugs, and capitalist CR in many students along the process.

My Cooperative Teachers

I also had two cooperative teachers (CT) during my AR process. On the one hand, my first CT worked with me during the practicum semester of 2019-II. He held a bachelor's degree in English-Spanish teaching from a private university in Medellin. He counted with 24 years of teaching experience and had worked in the institution for five years. He oversaw the English subject for 10th and 11th graders during 2019. On the other hand, my second CT held a bachelor's degree in English-French teaching from a private university in Rionegro. She counted with four years of teaching experience, two years inside the institution, and oversaw the English subject for all 10th and 11th graders during 2020. Both teachers tried to include activities aligned with the English syllabus of the school curriculum and based on the grammar-based and CA to foreign language teaching, respectively. What is more, both teachers tried to include PBL in their classes by assigning short class projects such as poster presentations and micro teachings.

<center>**Statement of the Problem**</center>

The first data analysis of this research project allowed the identification of a set of institutional practices and students' cultural traits that were influencing and affecting their educational process. Regarding institutional practices, it was identified an existing gap between the official curriculum and its incorporation into class activities. Concerning students, there were identified three main issues related to low performance in the target language, class behaviour, and cultural interests.

The first issue refers to the way in which the suggested curriculum was incorporated into class activities. This curriculum proposed the inclusion of both grammar and critical reflection about contemporary social phenomena, such as globalization and consumerism, in order to consolidate actions of sustainability in students. Nonetheless, when these topics were incorporated into class activities, students had to describe different capitalist CR by

using the language from a structuralist perspective, without the critical turn suggested by the curriculum. This situation seemed to consolidate a TL learning process based on the acquisition of isolated grammar structures along with the promotion of consumerist CR, as it is presented in this example:

> (...)Students were supposed to cut each brand logo to paste them on their notebooks and write sentences about their countries of origin. The teacher wrote an example on the board that said: "Mercedes Benz is a company that produces cars. It's from Germany. I like this company" (...) Students started to do the activity. Some of them started to talk about some of these brands: "My wallet is an Arturo Calle; it's fucking cool!"; "I bought myself a stunning pair of Adidas" (...) "Apple is the best in the world"(...) "Uh! I would love to have an LG TV set!" (journal N° 5, September 04th, 2019; researcher's translation).

The second aspect of the problem refers to students' and their low performance in the target language, class behaviour, and cultural interests. In fact, most of them were not able to recognize or produce basic language structures or words. Moreover, their class behaviour was characterized by the constant use of smartphones to access multiple social media platforms, which was probably related to their lack of motivation and linguistic performance. What is more, it was possible to identify a set of students' cultural interests related to having music, speaking, and listening activities in the TL class as well as an interest to explore the topics of sexuality and drug use (Survey, August 13th, 2019). Most of these cultural interests were confirmed during the implementation of the first pilot actions of the project, where students made constant references for drugs and alcohol usage as well as sexual behaviours related to pornography consumption and multiple sexual identities (Journal N° 7, September 16th-18th, 2019).

Also, it was found that the local context of this research project is a place with a high rate of psychoactive substances abuse. According to the United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime and the Colombian government (2016), Rionegro is the second municipality with the highest drug possession rate in Antioquia. This city is also the fifth municipality with the highest register of psychological and physical diseases derived from drugs and alcohol abuse in this department, which is the region with the highest drug and alcohol consumption rate of Colombia (23,5%). There was also found a stablished relation between psychoactive substances use and a prostitution phenomenon in this city. Then, there is a special concern in public health authorities towards the access that children and adolescents have to alcohol, drugs, and prostitution as well as their probabilities of early consumption, which confirmed the relevance of implementing actions to combat and prevent psychoactive substances use in the underage population from the region.

Finally, it was identified the need to implement an approach to foreign language teaching that included a deeper analysis, reflection, and challenging of those CR that were influencing students' culture. Then, based on the importance of incorporating a serious critical analysis of the new mainstream media, popular culture, and ICT in public schools curricula, proposed by Giroux (2000), as well as on the importance of enabling students to question the corporate control, power, and consumerism promoted by the new media, stated by Alvermann and Hagood (2000), CML was identified as the most suitable approach to incorporate these students' needs, lacks and interests into the lessons.

Theoretical Background

In this theoretical framework, I briefly describe the roots and definition of CML from the fields of CP and Critical Literacies (CL). Thereafter, I present some theoretical notions about the relevance of CML in contemporary education as well as the concept of CR and how the core concepts of CML can guide the analysis of CR present in the media.

Finally, I present some research projects on CML conducted at the level of both international and national contexts.

Roots and Definition of CML

To begin with, Freire (2000) introduces the need for transforming traditional "banking" education through the implementation of a pedagogy of the oppressed, in which through a problem-posing educational model, committed to freedom, students can be able to read, reflect on and transform not only the word but also the world around them. Then, by following Freire's ideas on CP, different authors like Giroux (2000), Janks (2000) and Luke (2012), have shaped CL as a field working towards social justice and aiming at the transformation of the structures that maintain a relationship oppressor-oppressed. All this in order to read, analyse, question, and transform not only canonical literary texts but also works from pop culture and new ICT. Then, from this field of Critical Literacies, CML stands as an educational approach that includes the analysis of power relationships in new communication forms such as the mass media, popular culture, and ICT in order to encourage students to challenge hegemonic narratives by creating their own media texts (Kellner & Share, 2007).

CML in Contemporary Education

Considering the importance of critically analysing the relationship between media and power, Alvermann and Hagood (2000) present CML as a key point to educate critical and literate citizens in a globalized 21st-century in which mass media and ICT become the main cultural artifact of society. Furthermore, Thoman and Jolls (2003) propose the "Empowerment Spiral" model as a way of incorporating CML on curriculum and unit design. By relying on Freire's work, these authors follow four stages, to implement CML, that may encourage students' inquiry, self-expression, and empowerment: Awareness, or getting access to media messages; analysis, or the process of analysing the media message;

reflection, or the evaluation of the message; and action, or the creation of a counter-message.

Several CML authors have embraced five core concepts for exploration and analysis: Constructedness, the way media messages are constructed by different people; codes and conventions, which are the techniques used in the creation of media messages; audiences, or how different types of people experience media messages in different ways; values and lifestyles, those embedded values that shape people's minds towards accomplishing the purpose of the message; and purpose, a concept stating that media messages always aim to gain profit or power (Kellner & Share, 2005). Then, these models to implement CML were adapted and applied for the actions cycle of this AR project.

CML and Cultural Representations

Kellner and Share (2007) ratify the need to use CML as a means for empowering students, through CP and cultural studies. This may support participants in this study to interpret information from different perspectives as well as to challenge the hegemonic CR of the media. With regard to CR, Hall (2000) defines them as codes that consolidate meaning and, thus, culture (shared ideas). In such a sense, this author conceives CR as a pivotal force in the construction of meaning, in which language is seen as a diverse system of discourses that changes over time. Hall points out that ICT consolidate a new construction of different meanings and discourses through multiple CR. Consequently, Giroux (2000) problematizes how the new media and ICT consolidate a corporate construction of a postmodern-neoliberal youth by using CR of drug addiction, consumerism, and a rampant and objectified sexuality with the purpose of exercising control and promoting consumerism.

CML in the International Context

After reviewing some CML projects conducted in an international context, it was found that Begoray et al. (2013) implemented CML at an urban, lower-middle-class high school in Canada. According to the authors, their project aimed at critically analysing food/drink media messages with adolescents aged 12-13. The authors found that the research project enhanced critical thinking and empowerment in students to create their own media messages. Likewise, Garofalo (2013) implemented CML to analyse CR of women in Disney animated films with a group of girls aged 7-11 at a Canadian primary school. The author aimed at making students active agents and critical readers when consuming media. Garofalo concluded that implementing CML allowed her students to be critical media viewers. She also recognized the importance of CML in education for empowering the youth to question, argue and critically read the corporate media that entertain them.

CML in the National Context

Even if CML research projects in the Colombian context have been scarce, it was possible to find that Lara (2016) conducted an AR project on CML, at a private institution in Boyacá, with 10th graders in an EFL class. Lara implemented CML to raise awareness in students about the effects that advertising has on people's identity construction. After conducting her project, she found that students not only expressed to have become more critical about the way advertisements control them but also improved their EFL level in terms of grammar, writing, and lexicon. Likewise, Dominguez (2019) conducted a study on CML at a public university, in the region of Eastern Antioquia, with pre-service EFL teachers. Dominguez's project aimed at critically analysing the linguistic landscape (LL) of advertisements in this region. After the project, the author found that students not only

improved their reading and writing skills in the TL but also raised awareness about the impact and role of advertising and LL in their communities.

In short, the role of CML seems to be pivotal in the contemporary CL pedagogical movement. It has the potential to enhance both students' language performance and their awareness of CR in the EFL class. Finally, the scarce literature found on CML projects conducted by undergraduate foreign languages student-teachers in the institution and local context where I was performing as a teacher, allowed me to identify the need for implementing this AR project, since it could shed light on the way local 11th graders respond to the inclusion of these issues that considerably affect contemporary education, society in general, and our local context.

Research question

How does the implementation of a CML project allow 11th graders to challenge Cultural Representations of drugs, sex, and consumerism in their EFL class.

Objectives

General Objective

To understand how the implementation of CML allows 11th graders to challenge CR of drugs, sex, and consumerism in the EFL class.

Specific Objectives

- To explore how CML key concepts allow students to analyse, question, and deconstruct mainstream CR of sex, drugs, and consumerism.

- To identify how the implementation of CML promotes reflection on the influence of mainstream media in people's lifestyles.

- To engage students in the creation of their own media messages to promote sustainable and healthy lifestyles in their communities while using the target language.

Action Plan

To answer my research question, I proposed to incorporate CML into a class project by following Thoman and Jolls' (2003) empowerment spiral model. This model was meant to be incorporated through a 10-week class project divided into two CML cycles. Each cycle was meant to be implemented in a term of five weeks by following the sequence proposed in these authors' model: Access - Awareness; Analyse - Analysis; Evaluate - Reflect; Create - Action. Then, students were supposed to create an advertising campaign as a final product per cycle, an e-poster and a video respectively, in which they would promote a sustainable and healthy lifestyle in their communities while challenging CR of drugs, sex, and consumerism portrayed by the media.

For the first cycle, students had to analyse an EDM (Electronic Dance Music) video clip in order to create an e-poster promoting a sustainable lifestyle under the UN 17 sustainable development goals, which was a topic required by the school's curriculum. Then, for the second cycle, students would have to choose a video clip/song of their preference, for analysis, in order to produce a one minute video, in teams of three, aiming at promoting reflection about sexuality or drug addiction issues in their communities, which was connected to another topic proposed by the school curriculum (health issues inside students' communities).

I also proposed to implement three data collection methods:

Journal. I proposed to write a journal after each lesson in order to state all the events that occurred in class, my CT's comments and suggestions, and my own reflections about the occurred events and its relation to my research question and objectives. This method aimed at analysing how students were engaging and responding to the project. The journal was meant to be written after each lesson during the 10 weeks of the actions to analyse most of the events occurring during the project.

Students artifacts. I proposed to use student's artifacts as an important data collection method in order to analyse and understand how students were responding to the project as well as challenging the influence of mainstream media on people's lifestyles through the CML analysis. Specifically, I proposed to collect students' final products; the E-poster and the video that they would create per CML cycle. These artifacts were meant to be collected at the end of each cycle to analyse the final products of their processes.

Class discussions. I used this data collection method to have a democratic dialogue with students that made their voices heard about the project. This data collection method would serve as a tool to give confirmability to the data analysis process. This method would also serve as a tool to know students' final reflections, learnings, and engagement during the project. Then, only two class discussions at the end of each stage were planned to be conducted and recorded along the entire project.

Development of actions

Despite some factors that affected the implementation of my actions, such as multiple external events at the institution and the SARS Cov-19 pandemic, my project could be implemented in a different but satisfactory manner. First, the multiple external (mainly religious) events at the institution delayed the implementation of the project at least in two weeks. Second, the sanitary emergency produced more than three months of school closure in Colombia, which led institutions towards the implementation of virtual lessons during the rest of the academic term. These situations considerably changed the schedule and implementation of the project, since only the first CML cycle, that was initially conceived, could be implemented. This first CML cycle had to be divided into two modalities: awareness and analysis, presentially; and reflection and challenging, virtually.

The face to face modality of the conducted CML cycle allowed the implementation of the awareness and analysis stages of the project. These stages were carried out at the

institution, before the Covid-19 outbreak, and had a length of four weeks. During these four weeks, we could get access to the media message, analyse it under the CML core concepts proposed by Kellner and Share (2005), and start with the reflection stage, in which students could express their opinions in the TL about the content and the lifestyles portrayed on the analysed message. They also had the opportunity of both learning vocabulary and starting with the construction of sentences to express their ideas about the video analysed in class.

Regarding the data collection process, this awareness and analysis stage allowed me to write and analyse weekly journal logs with descriptions and reflections about the development of the lessons. This data source helped me to understand and reflect on the way in which students were responding to the implementation of the project.

Then, the virtual modality of the project allowed the implementation of the reflection and challenging stages of the CML project. The implementation of these stages also had a length of four weeks and was conducted under a distant learning modality due to the Covid-19 outbreak. After the sanitary emergency was declared by the national government, schools were closed and students went on a period of vacations, while teachers had to start their online lesson planning. In my case, this period was used to restructure the project and the way in which it would be finished. I decided to continue with the same goal, which was the counter-texts creation. However, now students would create a video that would be presented on a class blog for the purpose of socializing their final productions and reflections.

One month later, we started implementing the online lessons in which we focused on the reflection and challenging stages of the project. First, we reviewed the documents used to analyse the media message under CML core concepts. Then, we continued with the reflection stage, in which we had a class discussion to collectively reflect on the CR analysed in the video. Afterward, students chose one of these CR to create their counter-

texts. They started by writing about their chosen CR in a reflective paragraph. To do so, it was necessary to explain the paragraph structure in class. Moreover, students received feedback on their paragraphs and continued by recording themselves reading the content of their paragraphs. They also received feedback on this aspect until the recordings were intelligible. Later, they created their videos by using the app Inshot, and most of them published their videos and paragraphs on the class blog, in which the entire group watched, listened to, and commented on their classmates' counter-media texts. Finally, we closed the action stage with a class reflection in which we discussed our learning outcomes and experiences during the project.

Finally, during this second stage, it was possible to collect all the missing data to better understand the way in which students responded to the project. First, I started by collecting and analysing students' classwork documents. Second, I wrote and analysed two journal logs to state my reflections and class descriptions during the virtual lessons. Third, I collected and analysed students' final products. Finally, since the virtual learning modality did not allow the implementation of a class discussion for the data collection, I decided to conduct one reflective questionnaire at the end of the process for students, and another questionnaire for my CT, in which I validated and confirmed the findings of the analysed data. Thus, during the virtual modality, it was possible to achieve the research and teaching goals of the project.

Data analysis

In order to answer the research question of how the implementation of CML allows 11th graders to challenge CR of drugs, sex, and consumerism in the EFL class, I conducted a data analysis process by following both a deductive and an inductive approach. This means that data were analysed not only from the basis of theory but also from the collected data per se.

First, under a deductive approach, based on Powell and Renner (2003), I used the present categories technique. This means that I searched for pre-established categories on the theory that gave directions to what I wanted to identify in the data. This deductive data analysis process not only allowed me to associate some emerging categories to the theory but also allowed me to focus the data analysis on my research question and objectives since all of these aspects were related to the theory. Some pre-established categories from the deductive analysis were: Reading and analysing media messages; Questioning and challenging media messages.

Second, by following Burns (1999), under an inductive approach, I used the decoding process technique. This process of assembling and codifying data allowed the emergence of different codes and patterns. To do so, the data were compared to identify patterns and their similarities and differences. Moreover, based on Saldana (2009), I implemented a simultaneous coding process technique, in which I also revised the data four times. This allowed me to identify different patterns of similarity, frequency, and sequence in the data. Also, I used the graphs strategy in which, through the qualitative software Atlas.ty, I organized and classified codes from the most to the less recurrent. Then, some of the most common codes shown by the data were: Students reflect on CR of drugs, sex, and consumerism; Students question and challenge CR; Students express themselves in the TL; External events affect class activities; Students link the project to their lives; Students talk about social issues.

Third, based on Burns (1999), I used other data analysis techniques such as activity code and peer review. With regard to activity code, I identified certain common institutional practices that could have influenced the result of the implemented actions. Besides, the peer review technique allowed me to constantly receive feedback and ideas from my practitioner-researcher colleagues, my research advisor, and my CT at the research

setting. This technique allowed me to analyse the data from different perspectives, which contributed to making a more unbiased analysis. Moreover, after receiving feedback from my research advisor and CT about the actions and students' responses to the project, some of my findings were not only validated but also questioned when it was required.

Fourth, by following Burns (1999), to ensure validity and trustworthiness to my data analysis, I followed two different ways of validity criterion. First, I followed the triangulation strategy, in which all the collected data were assembled, codified, and compared by using the software Atlas.ty. Second, to give trustworthiness and confirmability to my findings, I went through the basis of the participants' point of view. I implemented a final questionnaire in which I wanted to know students' and CT's final reflections and perceptions about the implemented actions.

Finally, I put together and re-stated the categories thrown by both the inductive and the deductive data analysis. Then, the following five categories were defined: Reading and analysing media messages under the CML core concepts; Questioning and challenging CR in media messages; Relation between CR and students' lives; Becoming media creators; From expressing basic ideas to oral and written production of more complex texts.

Findings and interpretations

After the data collection and analysis process, it was found that this project allowed most students to analyse and challenge the proposed CR while enhancing the TL and increasing their engagement in class activities through the creation of counter-texts. However, some students were resistant to the lessons and to the use of ICT. These findings are presented in the categories below.

Reading and Analysing Media Messages Under the CML Core Concepts

After the implementation of my actions, it was identified that most of the students read, analysed and reflected about the proposed media message under the CML core

concepts, "Some of them[the students] started to talk about the relation of this media message and the promotion of sex, drugs, and a life based on working to earn money." (Journal N° 5, May 4th, 2020).

Then, it was found that students were able to connect the embedded values of the analysed message to hegemonic values present in other music genres such as reggaeton: "Many reggaeton videos promote the use of alcohol and drugs and an active sexual life; Some reggaeton and trap songs show similar messages related to the video like similar lifestyles[...]" (Students artifacts, March 12th, 2020). With regard to media and social values, Thoman and Jolls (2003) point out that the lifestyles, plots, and settings of media messages portray a set of embedded values that give power to certain groups of society. This confirms that most students were able to analyse and reflect about hegemonic CR present in the proposed media message.

Moreover, even if some students did not question the messages and values of the video, they were able to reflect about the proposed media message under the CML core concept of audiences, "For me the message is good but each one can take it in different ways, we all think differently." (Student artifact, March 12th, 2020). Then, if we consider that, "different people experience the same media message differently." (Thoman and Jolls, 2003, p. 25), it is possible to say that during the CML analysis some students were able to recognize that there are different perspectives as well as the analysed media message can be interpreted in different ways by other people.

Questioning and Challenging CR in Media Messages:

Most of the students challenged the CR portrayed in the analysed media message by creating their own counter-media texts. In this process, students focused, mainly, on challenging CR of drugs, alcohol, consumerism, and mental health, respectively. However, none of them focused on challenging CR of sex.

First, most of the students focused their counter-texts creation on the topics of drugs and alcohol consumption; where students made emphasis on the harmful effects of these substances and some students linked the topics directly to their own lives, "[...] that is when you want to change your lifestyle, because this hurts my life, because my life is worthier than consuming that white powder." (Student artifact, May 7th, 2020). Second, some teams challenged CR of consumerism and pollution, "Humanity must become aware of the risk to which we are exposing ourselves, due to the excessive contamination that we generate." (Student artifact, April 30th, 2020). Finally, even if many students had analysed CR of sex in the analysis stage, none of them decided to challenge or reflect on it in the action stage.

Moreover, some students stated that they would like to take future actions to challenge the CR proposed in the project. One student stated that she would like to promote responsible sexuality as a future action: "I would like to implement in the future the importance of living a life with a responsible sexuality" (Reflective questionnaire, May, 13th, 2020; researcher's translation). Some other students stated that they would like to work with communities affected by drug addiction, "[...] mainly about the topic of drugs, I'd like to talk about this because it is an issue that has been lived even by nine-year-old children." (Reflective questionnaire, May 13th, 2020; researcher's translation). By considering the act of challenging CR, it is important to say that "CML offers the possibilities of becoming subjects empowered to tell their own stories and collectively challenge dominant oppressive myths" (Kellner and share, 2007, p. 99). This leads to say that the project allowed students not only to create their own counter-media messages but also to consider taking future actions against oppressive CR present in their lives and contexts.

Relation Between CR and Students' Lives

One emerging category during the data analysis was the relation between class content, students' lives, and their engagement with the project. First, during the action stage, it was observed that "students started to increasingly express themselves about the analysed CR" (Journal N° 7, May 7th, 2020). Then, I realized that for most of my students the project was interesting for their lives and future as adults, "I think that these are very interesting topics that may help us to think about the way we want to live" (Reflective questionnaire, May 13th, 2020; researcher's translation). My CT also said that "The most important impact of the project is that it allowed students to take positions against the life situations they are exposed to in current society." (Questionnaire for CT, May 13th, 2020; researcher's translation).

Then, it is possible that the project allowed some students to connect the CR included in the class content to their own lives and contexts, which motivated most of them to participate in class activities and learn the TL. By considering that the critical "is about creating the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lived experiences of teachers and learners" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 70), I confirmed the importance of CR in the EFL class that include students' own life experiences and contexts to give meaning to their TL learning process.

Notwithstanding, not all the students felt motivated by the project. During the entire process, it was very common to find students who were not willing to participate in class as it was evident in one class, "we have around 12 students who do not work, do not cooperate and are always doing different things in class." (Journal N° 4, March 10th, 2020). Likewise, some students stated that the project was not completely interesting for them due to the use of ICT, their lack of TL proficiency, and their lack of interest in class activities (Reflective questionnaire, May 13th, 2020).

Then, data evidenced that the implementation of class activities that required the use of ICT and media analysis could have been cognitively demanding for some students due to their difficulties to master these ICT resources as well as to interact in the TL. Especially under the confinement that we faced during the pandemic, which decreased their motivation and increased their difficulties to achieve learning goals. However, other aspects that could have influenced students' low motivation towards the class could be related to my own personality, teaching methodologies, the instructions that I provided, etc.

Becoming Media Creators

The CML process allowed students to become media creators by learning how to use multiple digital tools necessary to create their counter-media texts. After the final questionnaire, some students stated the importance of the counter texts creation on their learning processes: "I learnt how to create content on those platforms" (Reflective questionnaire, May 13th, 2020; researcher's translation). This is something I also observed during the lessons: "students are learning and developing very interesting skills related to ICT use and media literacy skills" (Journal N° 5, May 4th, 2020). This allows to state that the project could have enhanced the use of media literacy and ICT skills in students.

Regarding the development of media literacy skills, it is important to mention that "media production can be taught as an essential component of CML [...] in which the students explore their concerns and create their own alternative media to challenge the dominant representations" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 7). Then, the process of creating the counter-texts was essential not only to challenge the analysed CR but also for the development of media literacy skills, which was a significant learning outcome for students after the implementation of the actions.

From Expressing Basic Ideas to the Production of More Complex Texts

The process of enhancing language ranged from the production of simple ideas to the construction of texts such as paragraphs and audios. First, during the analysis stage, students expressed basic ideas in the TL about social issues that emerged as a product of both class content and students' interests: "Students started to make very interesting reflections about the lives of working-class people." (Journal N° 2, February 25th, 2020). Second, in the action stage, students increased their use of productive skills such as writing and speaking to create their videos. Then, most of the students stated that the most significant learning outcome during the project was related to the TL learning they experienced. Being speaking, vocabulary, and writing the skills that students considered as the most significant for their TL learning process (reflection, May 13th, 2020). My CT also made similar claims: "Most of the students have overcome their own language difficulties to get involved with the project." (Questionnaire for CT, May 13th, 2020; researcher's translation).

With regard to language and CML, Luke (2009) presents how CL are processes that entail not only reading the word but also the world, as said by Freire, in which it is essential to see the patterns and dynamics of both language and culture in order to develop the capacity of deconstructing the word and the world around us into communities interests. Then, the implementation of this CML project was a starting point for students in the non-ending process of reading the word to understand the world, where language is crucial to question and challenge CR representations.

To conclude, it can be said that in spite of the issues to implement the actions, and the fact that not all the students challenged CR, the objectives of the project were generally achieved. In fact, most students not only analysed, reflected on and challenged the CR

implemented through CML but also connected these CR to their own lives and contexts and developed media literacy skills while enhancing the TL.

Conclusion

After this AR project, whose purpose was to understand 11th graders responses towards the implementation of CML for challenging CR of drugs, sex, and consumerism, it is concluded that even if some students were totally indifferent towards the class, most of them were open and active learners during the project. Also, the fact that most students reached the objectives of creating their own media messages while enhancing the TL, demonstrates that it is possible to teach and learn a foreign language from a critical perspective. In this sense, language becomes an alive and evolving instrument that gives voice to students; that allows them to question the world around, and the CR that oppress them, while being active learners.

Moreover, this experience leads to the importance of including students' perspectives and life experiences in the class content, since this gives tools for students not only to understand and question their realities but also to take action against social issues that affect their lives and communities. In this sense, the CML pedagogical approach may be a great tool to explore the implementation of contextualised CR in a language class. Finally, further research should be focused on questioning the relation between media and power in society. I consider that this topic was not very present in my project and it becomes pivotal to promote awareness on the political role of the corporate media not only in Colombia but also worldwide.

What is more, some implications and challenges of CML, for language education in Colombia, may be related to the structuralist conception of language that remains in students and teachers; which demands from educators, willing to work from the critical, to be prepared for the lack of interest towards this perspective that will exist in some students.

In the case of this project, even if there was a general interest in students, the structuralist view on language that existed in some of them did not make possible their engagement with the project. However, some other limitations such as the way in which the project was addressed as well as the lack of more interactive learning resources, may have also influenced the lack of interest towards the project in some of these students. Finally, working from the critical is a non-ending process, in which it is not possible to say that we made our students critical beings; we only tried to open a space for them to start or to continue with their own processes towards emancipation.

Reflection

After this year of practicum and AR project, there are incredible learnings for my professional and personal life. I think that this project allowed me to see reality from another perspective. I could reflect about and understand multiple social issues of my community and social context that I had not questioned before.

This project allowed me to see that the issues treated during its implementation are global public health issues present in my community. These issues are not only linked to the search for hedonistic pleasures, sold by the media, but also to the difficult reality of those who do not fit in a social system that puts wellness on the material aspects of life, forgetting about the being; which creates multiple mental and physical illnesses on people. Then, these issues of drug addiction, responsible sexuality and consumerism are cultural and educational challenges that need to be treated by schools, since when families and communities do not have the elements to face these issues, it is at school where people are supposed to learn the necessary knowledge to be prepared for these realities. This leads towards the relevance of critical and emancipatory education to allow people to free and deconstruct themselves, which represents a huge challenge for teachers, who need to be capable of understanding students' realities.

Finally, regarding my practicum-teaching process, I must say that even if it has been a huge challenge for me, it also allowed me to know more about the needs of public education and institutions. There are several issues that our contemporary public education faces in terms of teaching and learning conditions and students' contexts. For instance, the pandemic that we faced during the practicum made me realize how unequal access to high-quality education in our country is depending on the region where you live as well as on your socio-cultural background, which maintains the relation oppressor-oppressed in society. In this sense, a very urgent need of today's education lies not only in ensuring digital equity to all people but also in ensuring CML to make democratic and participatory use of digital tools.

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