

# Global Issues in ELT

## Perspectives from Ecuador

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# Presentation Overview

- Personal and professional background
- Integrating global issues: a bottom-up approach
- The English Film Club: bridging the gap between classroom activities and reality



# Personal and professional background

- Schooling in Hungary and India
- MA in Applied Linguistics: Cross-Cultural Communication
- Political refugee in the UK
- BBC World Service
- VSO in Ethiopia
- Settled and living in Ecuador



# Global issues and the local perspective: being glocal

- Glocal: “Reflecting or characterized by both local and global considerations” (Oxford Living Dictionaries)

## Context:

- 1200 students at the Teacher Training University of Ecuador (non-English degree)
- From underprivileged families (stipend)
- Little or no knowledge of English
- Expected to reach B1 level (subject matter teachers)
- Not enough time-tabled English classes to encourage communication

# Solution = extra-curricular activities

- Importance in an EFL situation (for communication)
- Examples: singing club, creative writing club, UNAE's Got Talent competition, etc. – by staff during lunch break
- Film Club: by volunteers on Saturdays
- Purpose: engage students in global issues

# Conceptual framework: Sustainable development goals

(UN SDG Summit September 2015)



# Let's talk about it

Can you identify 3 global issues / sustainable goals that would be appropriate to discuss in your own context?

# Global issues affecting the local (Ecuadorian) student body

- Poverty (SDG: No. 1)
- Quality education (SDG No. 4)
- Gender equality (SDG. No. 5)
- Inequality within the country (SDG. No. 10)
- Inclusivity (SDG. 16) – 16.5 m = 10% indigenous people (14 distinct minority groups: Kichwa, Achuar...)



# Response to the challenge: Extra-curricular activities

## The English Film Club

- Saturday morning activities
- Facilitated by native speaker expats (from Canada and the US)
- Films chosen: Pay It Forward, The Freedom Writers, Landfill Harmonic

# Mini quiz

- What might have been the consideration when choosing these films?

# Logistics / Session structure

- Publicity: emailing students and their teachers, posters, word of mouth
- Pre-screening activities in small groups led by facilitators
- Screening of the film with English subtitles
- Post-screening activities: reflection



# Pay It Forward



- Pre-screening activity: asking students to recall random acts of kindness (RAKs)
- Examples: helping collect and deliver donations after the 2016 earthquake, visiting orphanages before Xmas
- Diana's story: ...***In March this year Antonella was so ill with a bad flu that she had to stay in hospital. There were two other small children in the room with her. I met one of the two mothers there. ...*** their situation

# Post-screening

- No time for more activities, but World Kindness Day coming up (asking for examples, nudging)
- Looking for further opportunities to connect:
  - *Approaching writer (Catherine Ryan Hyde)*
  - *Identifying the official site*
  - *Publishing Diana's story*

# Exchanges – Catherine Ryan Hyde

*“On your own Facebook page, would you be prepared to host a couple of stories, like: I received a message from Ecuadorian teacher trainees, here's their story... They would be so excited and so proud...”  
(11 Nov 2017)*

*“I would always be happy to post PIF stories on my Facebook profile and author page. Any time.” (11 Nov 2017)*



# Diana's story

- Final version: re-written and carefully edited

*“I made some soup, rice and fruit juice and I took it back to the hospital. I was worried that they may not accept what I made for them. But they were happy to accept the food. They thanked me and looked happy. I was pleased that I was able to help.”*

# Diana's story cont.

- Anything to add?

*P.S. Unfortunately, I heard that their little girl of three months died a couple of days later. I am very sorry, and would like to meet them, but I have no way of finding out who they are and where they live.”*

Owning the story (and its ending)



# The Freedom Writers Diary



# The Freedom Writers Diary

- Pre-screening activity: historical background
  - Hispanics in Los Angeles, the Holocaust
- Post-screening activity: facilitator/student representative setting up Facebook page
- Same student writing a letter to Erin Gruwell
- Published among the guest posts of the Freedom Writers Foundation official FB page

# Engaging with the real world

*Dear Teacher Erin Gruwell. My first name is Marlon, my last name is Suquitana. I live in Ecuador. I am studying at the University called UNAE (Universidad Nacional de Educación del Ecuador). ... First, I want to tell you that I have seen your movie, the Freedom Writers. The scene of the cartoon caught my attention. Also, when you told a student “I know who you are”.*



# Reflection

- Teacher trainees' own reality: large classes, under-resourced classrooms, etc.
- The perspective: underprivileged students sensitised to global issues

# Landfill Harmonic



# Making connections

- Pre-screening: making music with household items
- Screening: in Spanish with English subtitles
- Post-screening: donations for a new music school at Cateura
- Transcribing Favio Chávez' TED talk in Amsterdam
- Future plans for facilitators (glocal aspect)
  
- Reflection: clean water and sanitation (SDG No. 6) – landfill site flood area

# Exchanges – Favio Chávez

*“Buenos días, Favio, estoy dando un webinar sobre temas globales en clases de inglés: educación, oportunidades iguales, el ambiente. Voy a mencionar como es posible usar el documentario de Uds para comprender algunas dificultades en el contexto de Americana Latina. Buena suerte, siempre leo las noticias de sus conciertos y éxitos.*

*Saludos de Hungría,  
Elizabeth... (22 May 2018)*

*Mucha gracias Elizabeth Mis mejores deseos para Usted (22 May 2018)*



# Looking at the bigger picture: Positioning yourself and your country

Introducing the Human Development Index  
(United Nations Development Programme)

- **Health:** life expectancy
- **Education:** years of schooling
- **Standard of living:** GNI (gross national income)

## Ranking

- **Ecuador:** 89 out of 188 (high)
- **Paraguay:** 110 out of 188 (medium)

**(based on the 2016 Human Development Report)**



# Recipe – add your own ingredients

- Take an issue that can be presented in an “authentic”, engaging manner
- Create a sequence of activities to introduce, process and reflect on the issue
- Find the means of connecting the issue to your students local reality
- Reach out and go beyond the immediate classroom reality – act on it
- Communicative purpose: information gap, debates, discussions, emotionally charged, headline

# Season 2

- Sustainability: teachers / volunteers / facilitators
- Students setting time aside
- Funding and logistics: DVDs bought and sent from the US
- “New” films lined up: Dirty Dancing, What’s Eating Gilbert Grape, The Mission, 1492 and Slumdog Millionaire
- Bridging the gap: Peace Corps volunteer planning to start a Pay It Forward movement on campus

# Landfill Harmonic in Canada

28 May 2018

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/landfill-harmonic-orchestra-performing-regina-1.4681331>



# Sources and resources

- **Maley, A., & Peachey, N. (2017). Integrating global issues in the creative English language classroom.** London, England: British Council.  
[https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/PUB\\_29200\\_Creativity\\_UN\\_SDG\\_v4S\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/PUB_29200_Creativity_UN_SDG_v4S_WEB.pdf)
- **Erin Gruwell's TED talk:**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Thd8xw\\_poNo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Thd8xw_poNo)
- **Favio Chávez' TED talk**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsfOvJEdurk>
- **Facebook: UNAE English Film Club**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/165078764236084/>
- **EFL Magazine interview**  
<https://www.eflmagazine.com/interview-with-elisabeth-bekes-efl-teacher-and-so-much-more/>
- Session plans and activity sheets are available on request

# Thank you

