

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, hemline

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
- **Erin Gruwell's TED talk:**
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

