



UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA

FACULTAD DE FILOLOGÍA

GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES

Trabajo de Fin de Grado

Fostering Sociopolitical Consciousness Through CLIL

*A Case Study of *The Hunger Games**

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Signature

ABSTRACT

This work highlights the importance of deliberation of social and political concerns in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. Adopting content and language integrated learning (CLIL) as a teaching methodology in a joint reading of a dystopian novel prompts the readers to critically analyze its main themes enhancing the learner's cognitive and metacognitive skills. Moreover, following the reading with creative group activities exercises their collaboration and communicative skills thus employing the 4C's of learning. This essay proposes *The Hunger Games* trilogy as a way to foster sociopolitical consciousness and encourage social action by comparing wealth inequality, political intimidation and power abuse in the fictional world of Panem with current real-world problems.

Key words: *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, *Mockingjay*, Suzanne Collins, Politics, Sociology, Dystopian Literature, Young Adult Literature, Foreign Language Learning, Teaching Methodologies.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo destaca la importancia de la deliberación sobre las preocupaciones sociales y políticas en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). Adoptar el aprendizaje integrado de contenidos y lenguas extranjeras (AICLE) como metodología de enseñanza en la lectura conjunta de una novela distópica, anima a los lectores a analizar críticamente los temas principales, potenciando así las habilidades cognitivas y meta cognitivas del alumno. Asimismo, proseguir la lectura con actividades creativas grupales ejercita las habilidades colaborativas y comunicativas aplicándose las 4 C's del aprendizaje. Este ensayo propone la trilogía de *Los Juegos del Hambre* para fomentar la conciencia sociopolítica y motivar a la acción social mediante la comparación entre la desigualdad de bienes, la intimidación política y el abuso de poder en el mundo ficticio de Panem con los problemas actuales del mundo real.

Palabras clave: *Los Juegos del Hambre*, *En Llamas*, *Sinsajo*, Suzanne Collins, Política, Sociología, Literatura Distópica, Literatura Juvenil, Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras, Metodologías de Enseñanza

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1. INTRODUCTION

Implementing a discourse around social and political issues in the classroom seems to have a lot of controversy around it. Some teachers believe it is best to leave this topic to be address in the household while other vehemently support the need to approach such key issues. Nevertheless, the engagement on sociopolitical matters on social media platforms have increase in the recent years. The discussions are being held in public platforms where online public deliberation is taken place in an unrulred context. Tackling these questions in the classroom could led to a conducted deliberation where students can learn the facts and listen to other points of view in a supervised context.

Using *The Hunger Games* trilogy as a framework in a content learning integrated language (CLIL) context could raise social and political awareness in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. CLIL is ‘a dual-focused educational approach in which a second language is used for the learning and teaching of content and language’ (Coyle et Al, 2010, p.1). The first language of the learner is used sparingly by teachers to assist communicative, cognitive and metacognitive skills. Thereby, both languages are in constant interaction in the learner’s mind. In an EFL classroom, it has been repeatedly made the mistake of preparing student for the next quiz and not the real world. This has led to an ineffective way of learning English. In Spain, the washback effect of English testing proved that 80.4 per cent of teachers would change their methodology of teaching to devote more practice to oral production (Amengual, 2010). Moreover, in a study regarding the syllabus of first year of Bachillerato (Cerezo, 2007) it was concluded that grammar and repetition of structural activities in textbooks are more common than communicative activities. Furthermore, a study on the Valencian community, showed that very few secondary education centers have used CLIL in EFL classrooms regardless of the teacher’s agreement that it would be a positive way of reinforcing the student’s language skills (Guillamon & Renau, 2015). In this same study, teachers recognized that in order to achieve these outcomes, aspects such as the scarcity of CLIL material and the lack of governmental involvement have to be fix. As teachers, it is a duty to seize upon former mistakes made in the education system.

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins is a trilogy that tells the story of Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark both 16-year-old teenagers whom are the designated tributes to represent their district in the annual Hunger Games. In Panem, a post-apocalyptic USA, The Hunger Games is a competition where teenagers from 12-18 years old must fight to death in remembrance that rebellion is punished and their lives are always at stake. *The Hunger Games* provides criticism and reflection on contemporary moral, ethical, and political issues by creating an exaggerated, imagined, and unjust society. Although young adult (YA) dystopian books seem to be set in a different universe, most of the social issues depicted in the novels are being experienced nowadays. Thus, this work advocates towards YA dystopian literature being used within a CLIL context in an EFL classroom. By examining *The Hunger Games*, students will achieve sociopolitical consciousness through the critical analysis of the political and social forces shaping society and one's status in it (Osuagwu, 2019).

2. ACQUIRING SOCIOPOLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH LITERATURE IN EFL

The aim of using dystopian literature in an EFL classroom is to teach students how to think and articulate ideas respecting social and political issues that affects them and those around them. It is well known that English is the international language for science, business, literature, politics, and social affairs. Countries in which English is their first language, such as the USA, tend to cause a domino effect on the rest of the world. Therefore, their sociopolitical decisions also tend to affect both developed and developing countries. This illustrates that regardless of one's political involvement, politics affect us all. In this sense, it becomes increasingly important to learn how to express one's beliefs and personal views on such significant matters. In our current day and era, students tend to be well aware of the sociopolitical environment due to the globalization that social media has brought into their daily lives. Own to the fact that these topics are already being constantly brought up into their attention in unregulated spaces and discussions, cultivating a balanced and respectful discourse in the classroom will help them gain awareness on how to properly approach these issues in the future.

However, there seems to be a confusion that in order to have this dialogue, there has to be a debate between the parties involved. The main purpose of having this

discussion in the classroom is so that student can engage in deliberation, often confuse with the term debate. Deliberation is collaborative, open-minded, encouraging and builds a learning relationship between people whereas debating creates a close-minded attitude with a determination on being right and builds a competitive exchange (Walker & al., 2012). Therefore, based on these characteristics, educators should encourage a deliberative discussion rather than a debating approach in their classroom.

Nonetheless, we should take into account past instances where students have expressed their views against deliberating about social politics in order to determine the best way of approaching such issues. The New York Times (2019) conducted a study where students shared their opinions on teaching politics in the classroom. While the majority of the responses acknowledged the importance of talking about such matters, others disagreed. Some of the main arguments against were that they wish the professor would refrain from disclosing their own political views. It appears to be that knowing the teacher's political alignment led to biased lessons. Others commented that they would have found it more helpful if politics have been presented in a factual way. Others argued that politics should not be a group discussion because it forced them to express their opinion when they do not wish to share or change their way of thinking.

It seems that while some students do not feel comfortable engaging in sociopolitical discussions, others have a problem with their opinions being frowned upon due to bias in the classroom. Deliberation should be moderated by an educator who can counterevidence inaccurate information. As teachers, the main aim is to listen and respect the students desire to express or not their personal views. Addressing social concerns in the classroom, fosters a space where students can be the ones bringing the ideas into the classroom becoming the main focus of the lesson. Students usually go to class to listen to their teachers speak on a subject and more than often go home without having dissected the information given to them. In this sense, sharing different views regarding real issues in the world could help students in shaping their own opinions and taking different perspectives into consideration which is a social competence not only useful in the classroom, but also in life.

3. WHY USE YA DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE IN A CLIL CONTEXT?

Margaret Atwood also known as the ‘Prophet of Dystopia’ believes dystopia literature is a way into the future. In one of her masterclasses, she said “if you’re interested in writing speculative fiction, one way to generate a plot is to take an idea from current society and move it a little further down the road” (Atwood, 2020). YA dystopian literature has often been overlooked under canonical works regardless of the benefits that contemporary fiction can bring into the EFL classroom. The main purpose behind this genre is:

To construct a deeper understanding of the human condition by exaggerating its flaws and imagining the consequences of them being taken to an extreme. In this way, though the genre ostensibly presents stories that are set in the future, young adult dystopian fiction is best understood as inviting the reader to wrestle with, and interrogate contemporary problems and issues. (Connor, 2014, p.141)

Moreover, most of the texts in the EFL student books are rather referential and not representational. Having an abundance of referential language and material limits the spectrum of metacognitive and cognitive abilities that the learner can develop. According to González and Borham (2012) adopting CLIL as a theoretical framework in EFL “provides the opportunity to work with authentic materials and, consequently, achieving a greater potential in the enhancement of students insights into authentic foreign perspectives”.

The Hunger Games trilogy could be used to study themes concerning social and political issues in the target language for the sake of keeping content and language heavily interrelated. The language is determined by the content that the fiction novel brings into the classroom. It has been proven that students who learn a language to learn content are more motivated than students who learned the language as a mere subject (Halbach, 2018). Speaking activities in CLIL using subject-specific vocabulary are essential to develop the listening and communicative abilities in regards to the content that is being targeted. Reading *The Hunger Games* and deliberating on morals and ethics in politics encourages cooperative learning within the students. Thus, setting the ground for a deeper understanding and interest in sociopolitical awareness.

However, CLIL is also susceptible to encountered challenges in the EFL classroom. In a lecture by Cambridge University (Halbach, 2018) it was emphasized that educators should ensure that the chosen text has an English level from which the student could not only comprehend but learn about the context subject. Furthermore, teachers must incorporate different strategies such as the 4C's communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking at the same time to accomplish an effective learning experience. It also should not be ignored the need to focus on form. Structural and grammatical features should be taught in the context when they are used. For example, the professor could highlight the text's linguistic features used by Katniss and Peeta when they denounce their disagreement with the economic situation of their District. The educator can look more into the how they express their dissent, what grammatical features are used and how can the learner replicate these structures.

In this sense, studying *The Hunger Games* in a CLIL context provides the learners with rich and intelligible content that does not requires a deep background of the issues being address in the trilogy to be understood. As Hintz states "YA dystopian fiction provides a promising vehicle to depict adolescents' political and social awakening and their mediation with the authority of adults and inherited institutions, exploring the way individuals position themselves in reference to a wider collective" (2002, p. 254). Through a guided text analysis, on both the linguistic features and content subject, student could accomplish to reproduce what they have read into their daily lives in both their first and second language.

4. HOW CAN *THE HUNGER GAMES* TRILOGY LEAD TO A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AWARENESS?

Suzanne Collin's trilogy comprises *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, and *Mockingjay*. These books have often been referred as the trilogy that marked the generation of dystopias during the 2010's. All the books of the trilogy were instant New York Times Bestsellers and over 50 million copies had been sold globally appealing to both teenagers and adults from all around the world (Scholastic, 2012). Such phenomenon speaks volume of the emotional climate of the young readers around the globe. In an interview with Collins, she revealed that "the sociopolitical overtones of the Hunger Gamer were very intentionally created to mirror the current and past world

events including the use of hunger as a weapon to control population” (Blasingame and Collins, 2009). In an era where globalization is stronger than ever, the trilogy of *The Hunger Games* resonates with the concerns of a society that seems adamant to participate in social criticism. By exploring the social ills within the classroom, the teachers are allowing the students to have a voice inside the classroom while also preparing them for similar encounters outside the classroom. For instance, in 2018, 64 per cent of young people in the UK regarded social media as an important platform to exercise social change (Heathman, 2018). In May 2021, over three hundred young people from ninety-three nationalities met virtually at the Youth Forum of United Nations on “Countering Corruption through Collaboration: Youth Perspectives and Engagement” (United Nations, 2021). Moreover, on March 2023 Tiktok exploded with protests after it was announced the probability of banning the app in the USA. Youth from all around the country believed the app was one of the few social media outlets that truly gave them a worldwide view of the sociopolitical climate around the world (Maheshwari & Holpuch, 2023). It can be attested that society is using media resources to condemn the malpractice of social justice. This is the reason why critical literacy in the classroom should be prioritize so that teenagers can be equipped to evaluate their world and help create a more auspicious politics for the future (Bland, 2018).

4.1 DEVELOPMENT OF THEMES

For the purpose of this study, three major themes will be analyzed: wealth inequality, political intimidation and power abuse.

- Wealth Inequality

Collins depicts poverty and wealth inequality through the citizens of District 12 “where you can starve to death in safety” (Collins, 2008, p.5). The readers survey the lack of basic needs in District 12 through Katniss’ eyes who turns to illegal haunting to keep her family from starving. She is able to escape to the forbidden woods since they only get “two or three hours of electricity in the evenings” (Collin, 2008, p.4). Moreover, the books present a duality of socioeconomical conditions where the wealthy has too much and the poor too scarce. Once Peeta and Katniss are taken to The Capitol they are face with a disparity and inequality of opportunities. The upper classes whom

live in The Capitol seem completely out of touch with the extreme poverty other districts have. This is also illustrated in the abundance of food with which the main characters are presented “the basket of rolls they set before me would keep my family going for a week “(Collins, 2008, p.51). In *Catching Fire*, Katniss and Peeta are told that if they are full and wish to continue indulging on the feast, they can take a shot that will make them throw up so that they can fill their bodies again “not from some illness of body or mind, but because it is part of the fun”. (Collins, 2009, p.37)

- Political Intimidation

President Snow exercises power and control over Panem by instigating fear through cruel and manipulative dictums. Katniss repeatedly remarks how powerless she feels against the system (Collins, 2008, p.15). Peeta also verbalizes his concerns regarding lack of control and the government turning him into a monster “I don’t want them to change me in there. Turn me into some kind of monster that I’m not” (Collins, 2008, p.135). He states that his last act of defiance will be to keep being true to himself and avoid murdering other tributes. In the second book, they are forced to do a victory tour around all the districts in order “to remember the iron grip of the Capitol’s power each year, [they] are forced to celebrate it” (Collins, 2009, p.3). In the last book, a new authoritarian figure is introduced who states that the end justifies the means. Katniss describes her political intervention as “even more controlling than the Capitol” (Collins, 2010, p.26). Moreover, Katniss realizes that she now is the face of the rebellion and consequently her act of rebellion in the 74th hunger games gave her a power she never knew she could possess (Collins, 2010, p.49). Her rebellious act inspired the masses to react against political intimidation which makes her a menace to those in control whom resorted to different ways of subduing her.

- Power Abuse

Panem’s society is forced into submission due to the governments’ use of violence and brutality to suppress any act of rebellion. Katniss says that during the hunger games they will be watching “full coverage of each and every killing” (Collins, 2008, p.150). Moreover, in *Catching Fire*, President Snow describes the Quarter Quell, “as a reminder to the rebels that their children were dying because of their choice to initiate violence” (Collins, 2009, p.79). After being forced to participate in such wicked

acts, Katniss realizes that the districts are being pit against each other and decides to cease fire. She is tired of being control by the corrupted system “we blew up your mine. You burned my district to the ground. We've got every reason to kill each other. So do it. Make the Capitol happy. I'm done killing their slaves for them” (Collins, 2010, p.100).

4.2 CLASSROOM APPROACH

This section will exemplify how wealth inequality as a theme could be approach in an EFL classroom using CLIL as the teaching methodology. The teacher aim would be to raise awareness of wealth inequality and develop higher-level critical thinking skills by encouraging students to question their advantages and disadvantages in contrast with other social classes. They will exercise reading and note taking skills, practice speaking and persuasive discussion skills and promote collaborative group work. This issue could be address by teenagers and adults with a CERF level B1 and above. In order to analyze the inequality of wealth, learners will read different extracts from *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins after having done an individual reading at home.

The lesson would be divided into three sections: pre reading, while reading and post reading. During the pre-reading students will be given a “Privilege Checklist” adapted by the University of Washington from Peggy McIntosh (see appendix 1). They will check those conditions they feel identify with. If most of the classroom belong to the middle class, then the majority of the group will relate to the conditions being described. Finally, ask the learners if they will describe themselves as “poor” or “wealthy”. While reading, the class will revolve around the five first chapters of *The Hunger Games* but essentially focusing on chapter five. Ask the students to take notes and highlight the phrases that Katniss uses to describe The Capitol’s wealth. If needed, the class can watch the first ten minutes of the movie *The Hunger Games* so that the students can have a visual support of the dystopian world. Post reading, students will have to answer broad questions about the text (see appendix 2). The teacher should encourage students to think of different points of views and reflect on their own opinions in small groups before sharing their thoughts with the class. The teacher should explain that knowing our privileges will help acknowledge the inequality that

exists in society. Therefore, making a difference in the way we behave and value daily life conditions.

After the lesson the teacher could ask the class to do a social action project. The prospect of addressing a real problem in the world will motivate and empower the students (Morrell, 2002, p.76). An example of this could be doing an appeal to the world. An appeal, in this context, will be defined as a manifesto asking for help or support, on grounds of reason, justice and common humanity. In this activity, learners would be prompt to advocate for change and denounce inequality of wealth in their area. This activity will allow them to use the resources studied in class to make an impact in the real world. For instance, they could manifest their feelings on inequality through a piece of creative writing (González & Borham, 2012) which could be posted anonymously on social media. The teacher will encourage the students to teach others about the privileges and conditions of their daily lives that are being taken for granted.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this essay, we have justified how relevant it is for students to participate in deliberation concerning social and political affairs. It has been illustrated how YA dystopian literature gives an insight into a narrative that bridges current sociopolitical issues within a fictional society with real issues taking place in our society. This literature prompts students to question their morals and beliefs. Dystopian novels allow the readers to examine the reactions of fictional characters to the injustices of their oppressive societies and relate themselves to current issues that are not as futuristic as the books might portray.

By adopting CLIL to teach sociopolitical issues in an EFL classroom, students will be involved in a process of learning where they will “interrogate the world, unmask ideological and hegemonic discourses, and frame their actions in the interest of the larger struggle for social justice” (Darder & Al., 2009, p.18). This work suggests *The Hunger Games* trilogy as a case study while also providing a CLIL approach for an EFL classroom. Themes such as wealth inequality, political intimidation, and power abuse were proposed as topics that could be further explored by the students and reinforced by doing a social action project.

In this sense, it becomes essential to put English at the center while analyzing YA dystopian literature so that learners are obliged to reflect and use their language resources in order to understand, communicate and develop sociopolitical consciousness. Thus, fostering awareness towards sociopolitical matters could eventually encourage students to stand for what they believe is right and cause twice an impact as bilingual speakers.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1:

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack first appeared in *Peace and Freedom Magazine*, July/August, 1989, pp. 10-12, a publication of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Philadelphia, PA.

"Privileged Checklist" (adapted by *The University of Washington*)

- I have usually had access to healthcare.
- I can afford to visit a healthcare professional multiple times per year.
- I have access to transportation that will get me where I need to go.
- New products are designed and marketed with my social class in mind.
- I have knowledge of and access to community resources.
- I can update my wardrobe with new clothes to match current styles and trends.
- People do not assume that I am unintelligent or lazy based on the dialect I grew up speaking.
- Regardless of the season, I can count on my home remaining a comfortable temperature.
- I know that I will be able to go to the grocery store when I need to and will be able to buy healthy foods that I want.
- Whenever I've moved out of my home it has been voluntary, and I had another home to move into.

- I decide what I want to study and have a job in.
 - My decision to go or not to go to college wasn't based entirely on financial determinants.
 - I have a safe and reliable place where I can study.
-
- Appendix 2:

Post Reading: Broad Questions

1. How would you describe the terms "poverty" and "wealth" after reading the text?
2. What does the people from District 12 lacked?
3. Can you think of a similar situation that portrays this inequality in real life?
4. Do you believe the government is responsible of the poor conditions the people live in or is it a responsibility of the individual?
5. What could be done to help people in these types of conditions?
6. What can you as an individual citizen do about it?