

Developing empathy and intercultural communication in English language classrooms? An Investigation into English Language teachers' perspectives on incorporating empathy and intercultural awareness in the English as a Foreign Language classrooms in Spain

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Abstract

This paper aims to present a project on using Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) to teach Intercultural Communication and Empathy to Spanish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Young Learners of 11-12 years old. Empathy and Intercultural Communication are tightly related (Portera 2008) and are pioneered in the European funded project DIALLS (Dialogue and Argumentation for Cultural Literacy Learning) (Maine 2021). While the foundations of the DIALLS project combined dialogic practices and cultural literacy materials, it did not extend to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. This paper attempts to bridge the gap by developing lesson plans and materials to teach Empathy and Intercultural Communication in Spain. In order to evaluate the materials, twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 Spanish EFL teachers. The findings include: the Spanish EFL teachers tend to (a) consider empathy as a positive value to strengthen cooperativeness and group cohesion, (b) have positive attitudinal changes on Empathy and ICC after the discussion on lesson plans and materials, and (c) have positive views on the developed materials.

Keywords: CLIL; Communicative Competences; ESL; Tolerance; Young Learners