

Opening a Window to the World: Content-based Instruction, Cultural Capital and Critical Pedagogy in an Undergraduate EFL Teaching Program

Abriendo una ventana al mundo: aprendizaje basado en contenidos, capital cultural y pedagogía crítica en un programa de licenciatura en lengua inglesa

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Abstract

This descriptive-interpretative case study examines the impacts on public university pre-service teachers' cultural capital when exposed to EFL content-based instruction, in this case teaching of the history of the Western hemisphere and related artistic expressions in a two-semester course at a public university in Colombia. After analyzing interviews with students, their writings as well as the researcher's field notes and interpreting them in the light of content-based instruction, cultural capital and critical pedagogy, it becomes evident that teaching history and related artistic expressions in fact increases students' cultural capital. This in turn fosters students' socio-political awareness.

Key words: *cultural capital, critical pedagogy, content-based instruction, teaching of the history of the Western hemisphere*

Resumen

El presente estudio de caso descriptivo-interpretativo examina los impactos en el capital cultural de estudiantes de licenciatura cuando están expuestos a la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera basada en contenidos, en este caso enseñanza de la historia del hemisferio occidental y expresiones artísticas relacionadas, en un curso de dos semestres en una universidad pública en Colombia. Después de analizar las entrevistas con los estudiantes, sus escritos y las observaciones de la docente e interpretar estos datos en el

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contexto de aprendizaje basado en contenido, capital cultural y pedagogía crítica, se hace evidente que enseñar historia y expresiones artísticas relacionadas efectivamente aumenta el capital cultural de los estudiantes, lo cual a su vez aumenta la conciencia socio-política de los estudiantes.

Palabras claves: *capital cultural, pedagogía crítica, enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera basada en contenidos, enseñanza de la historia del hemisferio occidental*

The general objective of this research is to understand the impacts on public university pre-service teachers' cultural capital when exposed to EFL content-based instruction about the history of the Western hemisphere and related artistic expressions. This objective emerged in the context of the education system in Colombia, where studying a B.A. in English or Modern Languages is usually limited to learning how to teach the four basic language skills and how to teach about the dominant cultural manifestations of the hegemonic English-speaking countries, leaving aside aspects like the cultures of former British colonies or a deeper understanding of the history of both groups of countries. Apart from this pedagogical limitation, the national program of bilingualism does not consider the widespread improvement of proficiency in a foreign language, in this specific case English, as a tool to transform the unequal education system in Colombia. In this context, and acknowledging the need for transformation, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1997), which is explained later on, contributes to understanding underlying causes of this situation. Once these causes are understood, alternatives can be proposed.

Public schools in Colombia usually give little importance to the teaching of world history and related artistic expressions. This can be seen, for example, in the little knowledge about these topics students coming from those schools generally have when they enter university, as could be observed in the questionnaire, which was carried out at the beginning of this research. In the case of the public university where this research took place the curriculum for those who are studying to become language teachers does not normally consider the teaching of history or related artistic expressions beyond the hegemonic English-speaking countries, that is, Great Britain, the United States, Australia and Canada, as can be seen in the respective curricula. This, in turn, leads to the perpetuation of a weak basis of general knowledge about world history and related artistic expressions and thus to a lack of references for social transformation.

From a sociological perspective, the knowledge of history and related artistic expressions belongs to what Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1986, 1997) would call cultural capital. As students from lower social strata – the ones who study at the public university where this research was executed - often do not have the same access to sources of cultural capital as students from higher social strata, it seems important for university education to help them in this process in order to interrupt the cycle of perpetuating education without a

sound cultural capital. The first research question then is whether teaching the history of the Western hemisphere and related artistic expressions can increase students' cultural capital.

Another area of interest of this research is the students' learning process of English through content-based instruction (henceforward CBI), in this case teaching/learning about the history and related artistic expressions of the Western hemisphere. Therefore, the second research question is whether learning focused on content rather than on form can increase the students' existing small cultural capital while inviting them to practice the four basic language skills. As will be described later, considerable research has been carried out on CBI. However, examining the relation of CBI to critical pedagogy and its impacts on cultural capital may open new perspectives for the teaching/learning process in the field of EFL teaching/learning.

This research was carried out as a descriptive-interpretative case study. The data obtained using several data collection instruments were analyzed following a grounded approach, as will be illustrated later on.

Literature Review

For this research study, three concepts are relevant in order to understand the role of teaching the history of the Western hemisphere and related artistic expressions using a content-based approach for pre-service language teachers' cultural capital. These are content-based instruction, critical pedagogy as a manner of social Reconstructionism, and cultural capital.

Content-based Instruction

Content-based instruction (CBI) has been discussed now for about forty years as an interesting alternative in the field of foreign language education. Related concepts are content-and-language-integrated learning (CLIL; see for example Dalton-Puffer, 2007) and sheltered subject-matter teaching (see Burger & Chrétien, 2001; Krashen, 1991). What the three concepts have in common is that a subject matter is taught in a language other than the students' mother tongue, and that the content of the subject matter is equally or more important than language teaching as such. According to Krashen (1991), "this encourages a focus on meaning, not form, and results in more comprehensible input, and thus more language acquisition" (p. 183). Although Krashen's theory is dated, his contribution to a better understanding of teaching input is still relevant. CBI creates an environment for contextualized learning where students encounter "useful language that is embedded within relevant discourse contexts rather than isolated language fragments" (Grabe & Stoller, 1997, p. 13). This, in turn, invites students to discuss and negotiate content through the foreign language they are learning.

CBI emerged out of various concerns, such as the frequently unsatisfactory results of traditional foreign language classes, the search for a truly communicative approach, the students' deficiency in academic language skills, the desire to use authentic and meaningful materials, and the fostering of critical thinking skills (Benítez Velásquez, 2012; Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Krashen, 1991; Short, 1991). There are several reasons to suggest that CBI can represent an answer to these concerns. One line of argument follows language acquisition research and Krashen's insistence on the importance of students being exposed to second-language input (Grabe & Stoller, 1997). A second line of argument takes up Vygotsky's concepts related to learning (Grabe & Stoller, 1997; see also Dalton-Puffer, 2007). Cummins' concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) constitutes a third rationale (as cited in Grabe & Stoller, 1997). Consequently, the use of complex language input in the form of subject-matter content can help develop students' CALP. A fourth point of view relates reading comprehension and academic skills like note-taking, summarizing and looking for specific information to CBI (Benítez Velásquez, 2012). In the words of Kasper (1995), "content-based courses help students make the transition from the secure and comfortable ESL program to the more rigorous academic curriculum" (p. 224). A fifth beneficial aspect of CBI is a possible increase in students' intrinsic motivation when learning a foreign language, due to the more complex content and activities (Grabe & Stoller, 1997).

There are, however, some potential drawbacks of CBI. Due to the focus on content rather than on how this content is taught, students may not learn enough complex grammar structures. Vocabulary may be another potential strain, as, depending on the subject matter, it may be quite specific. This may lead to students' finding it difficult to understand complex documents about other topics and their learning of only limited word fields. These problems, however, can be avoided or overcome by using a methodology that fosters students' oral and written language production and by giving feedback on recurrent language mistakes.

Cultural Capital

The concept of cultural capital is based on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) understanding of the three forms of capital: economic, social and cultural. Cultural capital, the one this study is concerned about, exists in three forms: 1) in its embodied state, 2) in its objectified state, and 3) in its institutionalized state. The embodied state of cultural capital consists of "widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion" (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 587; see also Peña Rodríguez, 2013). Embodied cultural capital is passed on mainly through socialization within the family and the education system, which largely explains why state-financed educational institutions perpetuate social inequalities in a class-determined society like Colombia's.

In a study about the relation between cultural capital and academic undermatch, Deutschlander (2017) distinguishes between general and college-specific cultural capital, where the former is understood as “a general resource that facilitates action within the education system, providing access to scarce rewards” (p. 170). He states that students from lower-income families do not benefit from general cultural capital to the same degree as do better-off students. Nevertheless, according to this author, college-specific cultural capital is equally distributed among the different family backgrounds. Besides, members of disadvantaged families can acquire cultural capital individually later in life, through personal efforts of self-improvement (Bourdieu, 1986; Deutschlander, 2017).

The objectified state of cultural capital refers to cultural goods such as paintings, books, machines, etc. which “can be appropriated both materially – which presupposes economic capital – and symbolically – which presupposes cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, para. 15). Here again the educational disadvantages of lower-income students become evident, not only in terms of general knowledge but also in terms of artistic expression. These may seem unnecessary for success on the labour market; yet, they illustrate history and are another way of understanding the world.

The most significant form of institutionalized cultural capital is academic qualification, or, as Peña Rodríguez (2013) calls it, “school capital” (p. 27). On the labour market, an academic qualification can be converted into money; the conversion rate, however, depends on the official recognition of the respective educational institution. In contrast to Lareau’s & Weininger’s (2003) inclusion of human capital or technical skills into the concept of cultural capital, in Colombia, where deficiently financed public universities coexist with high-ranking private universities, the origin of an academic title still determines its value. This phenomenon can also be called “the profit of distinctiveness” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 654).

To conclude, Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital and its implications evidence the need of increasing public-university students’ cultural capital so that, in the long run, the perpetuation of the unequal social and economic structure in Colombia is interrupted.

Critical Pedagogy: A Manner of Social Reconstructionism

One of the founding fathers of critical pedagogy is undoubtedly Paulo Freire (1970) with his very inspiring book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”. Freire considers not only the educational context but also the broader social, political, and economic context to achieve thorough social transformations. In this sense, he encourages learners to question the established and taken-for-granted truths and presentations of reality in order to understand and transform them in a liberating process. This liberation process takes some time as the oppressed have incorporated the oppressor within themselves; that is to say the oppressor has “colonized” the minds of the oppressed so that they usually underestimate themselves. At the same time, they believe in their supposed inferiority and in the superiority and

invulnerability of the oppressor. However, once the oppressed perceive that transformations are possible, a process of change takes place in their taken-for-granted convictions.

Freire's concept of teaching and learning is based on dialogue, a process of mutual learning between the learner-teacher and the teacher-learner, and the dialectical cycle of reflection-action-reflection-etc. – all this contrary to the widely accepted “banking model” of teaching, where the learner is considered an empty receiver of the teacher's wisdom. In order to maintain the power of the “banking model”, its advocates have to convert reality into a myth, present an alienated, static, unchangeable reality so that the learners remain passive and convinced that the only option they have is to come to terms with this reality and to adapt to it. This is achieved through the socialization process at school, university, in the families, through religion, among others, what Althusser (1970) called the ideological State apparatuses, and what can be related to Bourdieu's aforementioned concept of cultural capital in its embodied form. The alternative to this “banking model” of education is problematizing education. Freire's alternative model invites to constantly discover reality and leads to a critical insertion into this reality, whose comprehension becomes less and less alienated.

As regards a critical stance developed in the course under study, it is important to take into account Auerbach's (1995) perspective on curriculum development. He states that this task is not apolitical but “inherently ideological in nature, with significant implications for learners' socioeconomic roles” (p. 9; see also Canagarajah, 2000; Grundy, 1987). To be coherent with the aforementioned, teaching implies either to adopt a political stance or to follow a “hidden agenda” included in a given curriculum. The course studied here invited the students to assume their roles as political subjects; thus, it followed Richard's (2001) understanding of learning and teaching as a way of “social reconstructionism”, that is, “teachers must empower their students so that they can recognize unjust systems of class, race, or gender, and challenge them” (p. 118). Once students have acquired more cultural capital, which in the case of the present study would mean more knowledge about history and related artistic expressions, they have tools to become aware of critical situations in their own society and, hopefully, feel compelled to transform them.

Methodology

This case study is framed within a qualitative research paradigm and follows a descriptive-interpretative approach. As this research is of a qualitative and descriptive nature, it allows for subjectivity in the contributions of the participating students as well as in the interpretation on part of the researcher. Taking reality as a social construct, qualitative research accepts its subjectivity, because it highlights “empathetic understanding” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 33). In qualitative research human behaviour is understood as situational and context-bound and is observed in its normal environment (Creswell, 2003), in this case the classroom. This setting, where students, as

well as teachers, come from different backgrounds, where they have different motivations, beliefs and hopes, is especially interesting for a descriptive-interpretative case study.

The research design contemplated five stages. First, during the first semester of this two-semester course several data collection instruments were applied (see description below). Next, at the end of that semester, the data obtained were analyzed preliminarily and the instruments to be applied in the second semester were adapted as necessary. Third, in the second semester, more data were collected and analyzed in a fourth step. The fifth stage consisted of writing this article.

Context and Participants

The present research was carried out in a two-semester advanced English course for students of the B.A. in Modern Languages and English/Spanish at a public university in Bogotá where most students belong to the lower social strata. At this university, for the 7th and 8th semester the students choose an “Emphasis” course, a course in which the teacher designs content, methodology, materials and evaluation of the course. In this case, the course was designed to cover the history of the Western hemisphere from the Middle Ages to the late 19th century, including related artistic expressions, and organized in seven thematic blocks during the two semesters. The topic of the history of the Western hemisphere from the Middle Ages to the 19th century was chosen since, first, it is related to the evolution of the English language; and second, because the history of the Western hemisphere includes the history of Latin-America, of which aspects were included in the course. As artistic expressions, especially painting, architecture and music, accompany and illustrate history, they were incorporated into the course. Besides, they should be part of the cultural capital of lower-class students, as they are of the cultural capital of upper-class students.

The methodology applied was that of a *German seminar*, that is, pairs of students prepared a topic according to the course programme, which was then presented and discussed in class, ideally with all other students having prepared themselves as well and participating. It is noteworthy that neither content-based learning/teaching nor the method of a German seminar held entirely in English are common at the language department of the university where this research took place.

The participants in this study were 17 male and female students aged 21 to 26, out of 25 students registered in the course. According to the data obtained in the questionnaire, almost 60% of them had studied at a public school prior to entering the university. 47% of their parents finished secondary education, while 24% hold a B.A. or B.Sc. title. One third of the participating students work and study at the same time. The students who volunteered for this study were those 17 who completed the questionnaire applied at the beginning of the first semester, and who gave their consent to be interviewed later on. The

course, however, was carried out with all 25 students during the two semesters. The researcher acted as a participant observer (Merriam, 1998), as she was the course teacher.

Data Collection Instruments

In order to collect the data for this research, I used a questionnaire with open and closed questions at the very beginning of the course; two semi-structured interviews, one at the end of the first semester, one at the end of the second; observations and field notes taken during both semesters; and students' artifacts, that is, students' written reflections. At the end of the two semesters, the data obtained from the sources described above were compared and analyzed in a triangulation process in order to find answers to the research objective. Besides, the triangulation process helped to counterbalance the aforementioned subjectivity.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data gathered with the selected instruments were analysed following a grounded approach (Freeman, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Pattoon, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) using two complementary methods: looking for word or code frequencies; and coding. Then, related to the research objective, two categories with their respective subcategories emerged. They are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Categories and corresponding subcategories

| Categories | Subcategories |
|---|--|
| Impacts related to CBI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students realize a lack of autonomy in their learning process • CBI facilitates learning several things at the same time |
| Contributions to students' cultural capital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students realize their lack of general knowledge about history • To contextualize art gives meaning to it • Learning about history fosters socio-political awareness |

Results

In the following section, the findings are described in detail and related to the respective categories and subcategories. Accordingly, in the category "Impacts related to CBI" the following subcategories are illustrated: "Students realize a lack of autonomy in

their learning process” and “CBI facilitates learning several things at the same time”. The second category, “Contributions to students’ cultural capital” comprises the subcategories “Students realize their lack of general knowledge about history”, “To contextualize art gives meaning to it”, and “Learning about history fosters socio-political awareness”.¹

Impacts Related to CBI

This category relates to the impacts content-based instruction had on the students’ learning processes. It has two subcategories, which are described as follows.

Students realize a lack of autonomy in their learning process. Combining students’ efforts to improve their level of English and their learning about history evidenced that they are not used to the method of a German seminar, which centers on a content-based approach and presupposes a high level of autonomy on the part of the students. This, however, did not work out because most students did not prepare themselves for the class topics, as they mention in the following excerpts from interviews:

S2: Lo que pasa es que somos muy perezosos, casi nadie se prepara para la clase, entonces se nota que no leen, que no se preparan.²/ Interview, June 11, 2014.

S7: Nosotros muchas veces necesitamos el jaloneador que nos diga: esto es para tal día, porque si no, nosotros nos fresqueamos, pues, dejamos que todo ocurra.³/ Interview, November 14, 2014.

The fact that students say they need a “prodger”, someone who pushes them to study, could indicate that some teachers at school as well as at university still adhere to the “banking model” of education criticized by Freire. Most students are used to receiving prepared class contents instead of preparing themselves for class and discussing their own points of view. Yet, some students liked this method because it is contrary to what they usually experience, as evidenced below:

S3: Digamos que en tu clase yo no pienso mucho en la nota sino en lo que voy a aprender y en lo que tú nos dices. Uno se olvida del tema de la nota y ya, uno disfruta la clase. Cosa que no pasa en la mayoría de las clases en la universidad. Uno sólo piensa en la pinche nota, porque los profes se

¹ **S** and a number (e.g. **S1**) refers to the student with the corresponding code, **R** refers to the researcher. The excerpts are included in their original language; where the original language is Spanish, the translation can be found in the corresponding footnote.

² What happens is that we are very lazy, hardly anyone prepares for class. Then you notice that no one reads, that no one is prepared.

³ Many times we need a prodger, someone to tell us: this is for that day; otherwise we are too cool, well, we let everything happen.

encargan de eso, de meterle a uno ese temor académico.⁴/ Interview, November 14, 2014.

S5: Above all, in this course I write rather based on my opinion, from my perspective, from what I am than for something academic. I feel free in this course to do so.⁵/ Interview, November 7, 2014.

This second aspect suggests that content-based instruction, apart from generating awareness of a lack of autonomy, might create the opportunity for students to express themselves freely. These impacts, which are unrelated to the essence of CBI, are accompanied by another interesting impact, which is presented in the following subcategory.

Content-based instruction facilitates learning several things at the same time. In this course, CBI allowed students to learn various things at the same time. Thus, several students stated that acquiring new vocabulary through contextualized learning is one of the advantages of CBI. This characteristic of CBI is also highlighted by Grabe and Stoller (1997).

S9: Por ejemplo, digamos que uno quisiera irse a estudiar a Europa. Entonces esas temáticas, hombre, uno tiene cómo desenvolverse en Europa, con un vocabulario adecuado y no macheteando como dicen acá.⁶/ Interview, November 10, 2014

S15: [The course] has provided a new vocabulary and strengthened the abilities in the English language. It is not only relevant for the above, it is the use of the English language not only as teaching itself but as a tool to teach other subjects such as history, geography, science and more. / Homework, November 29, 2014

Among the activities carried out in class that called the students' attention was the interpretation of maps to illustrate historical processes, which was something they had never done before. Discussing them in English led students to negotiate content related to authentic and meaningful course material in the foreign language, which is another of the characteristics of CBI (Benítez Velásquez, 2012; Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Grabe & Stoller, 1997).

⁴ Let's say in your class I don't think much about the grade but in what I will learn and in what you tell us. You forget about the grade and you enjoy the class. This doesn't happen in most courses at university. You only think of the grade because the teachers just instill this academic dread.

⁵ Más que todo, en este curso yo escribo más con mi opinión, desde mi punto de vista, desde yo, que para algo académico. Tengo más libertad en este curso para hacer eso.

⁶ For example, let's say one would want to study in Europe. Then these topics, well, you are able to manage in Europe, with an adequate vocabulary instead of "hacking", as we say here.

Topic: Mercantilism. Interpreting maps engages them in group work, but they ask what countries are depicted, as on the maps some countries are without names. / Field note, August 12, 2014.

Altogether, most students appreciated the pedagogical usefulness of the CBI approach, especially when asked about their performance as future teachers. This can be observed in the following excerpts:

S12: It is not enough to know everything about grammar, speaking or reading texts correctly if it does not have valuable content to share with the students. / Homework, May 21, 2014.

S8: ... cómo se puede enseñar a los estudiantes una manera de leer en inglés pero que puedan aprender algo nuevo, sí, una variedad de temas que se pueden ofrecer en el espacio académico de inglés o de español y de la materia que uno esté dictando.⁷ / Interview, November 11, 2014.

To conclude, it can be stated that in the case of this study CBI helped students to recognize a low level of autonomy in their learning processes as well as to appreciate the space for discussions opened through this learning/teaching approach. Besides, through CBI students had the opportunity to simultaneously learn new vocabulary and skills like interpreting a map, and to reflect upon pedagogical issues.

Contributions to Students' Cultural Capital

In this category, three different areas of contributions evolved: students realized their lack of general knowledge about history, the meanings of art works and the fostering of socio-political awareness. These three subcategories are illustrated in what follows.

Students realize their lack of general knowledge about history. The recognition of their lack of general knowledge about history, even about Latin-American history, became evident in the students' answers in the first questionnaire, their reflections written as homework tasks at the end of each block as well as in the researcher's field notes and in the interviews. Here are three examples:

S12: Some issues of the Middle Ages as feudalism have been present from school, however, never taught with a purpose, only to meet the requirements, which is why these subjects are taught in a superficial way, leaving many gaps in the students. / Homework, April 17, 2014.

⁷ ... how to teach students a way to read in English but learning something new, yes, a variety of topics that can be offered in the academic field of English or Spanish and the subject one is teaching.

Topic: Music in the Renaissance. Most students say they have heard this music in movies, for example by Walt Disney. / Field note, May 8, 2014.

S1: El curso me ha hecho caer en cuenta que tengo muchas falencias en cuanto a cultura general.⁸ / Interview, June 11, 2014.

On the one hand, the students' answers in the first questionnaire related to this topic set the foundation the course could be developed on. On the other hand, the students' lack of general knowledge about history and artistic expressions is strongly related to Bourdieu's concept of the embodied state of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1997; Peña Rodríguez, 2013) as the majority of the students who participated in this research studied in schools where history frequently is not taught in depth and artistic expressions are reduced to teaching how to draw and paint on a basic level.

To contextualize art gives meaning to it. Including artistic expressions into each historical block (mostly music and painting, to a lesser extent architecture) generated a quite unexpected impact on some of the students participating in this research. This can be evidenced, for example, in the following field note:

Topic: Music in the Middle Ages (students listen to recorded examples as part of the presentation) Most students listen attentively; maybe they have never heard this kind of music before. / Field note, April 10, 2014.

Listening to pieces of music of different historical periods, analysing their characteristics and discussing how they express the feelings of the corresponding time even inspired some students to compare them to genres of music they are listening to today.

S1: Moreover, the music we listen to nowadays has got those principles included; for instance, the so-called "Speed Metal" incorporates sounds that do resemble that classic music. Hence, I could say that we are living in a Renaissance, too: we are starting to re-discover the arts and at least to include some elements into postmodern artistic expressions. / Homework, May 16, 2014.

Not only music but also paintings called some students' attention. Asked about the sense of discussing paintings in the course, some students commented that to put them into their historical context provided them with a new meaning:

S3: Y de verdad que es chévere contextualizar una obra de arte. (...) Pues, cuando uno conoce el contexto de una obra halla sentido. De lo contrario

⁸ The course made me realize that I am quite lacking general culture.

queda una cosa colgada en la pared que no significa nada para uno.⁹/ Interview, June 13, 2014.

S7: Yo pensaba que la historia no tiene nada que ver con cierto tipo de movimientos [artísticos]. Entonces, después uno se da cuenta que todo está ligado. (...) Y me enteré más de las obras, por ejemplo desde qué punto histórico salieron. Entonces creo que es mucho más motivante la obra como tal y a partir de esta obra la investigación que cómo tal el movimiento.¹⁰/ Interview, June 10, 2014.

This inspiring experience of discovering a new meaning in some pieces of music and paintings can also be linked to the students' lack of cultural capital in its embodied and in its objectified states (Bourdieu, 1986). Neither at school nor at home nor at university do students usually learn how to interpret music, paintings or architectural styles, which would confer onto them a sound endowment of cultural capital with respect to different artistic expressions.

Learning about history fosters socio-political awareness. This is the insight all students referred to in one way or another. Although in Bogotá the public university where this research took place is generally considered leftist, the participants of this research seem to have received little political education before this course.

Topic: Introduction. I present Marx's time line, the general phases in history. They don't know them. / Field note, February 26, 2014.

S3: Unas lecturas, por ejemplo el tema del capitalismo, marxismo, imperialismo, absolutismo, todo eso ha sido nuevo para mí y super-interesante. Nunca he sido muy receptiva con estos temas económicos, políticos, pero sí ha sido muy interesante todo, porque uno aprende de eso y cómo es aplicable en nuestro contexto.¹¹/ Interview, November 10, 2014.

As most students do not know about other possible political and economic systems, they do not usually question the existing political and economic order in Colombia. One could say that this political stance is not proper of a language teacher; however, teaching any subject, which means developing and following a curriculum, is an inherently political

⁹ And really, it's great to contextualize a work of art. (...) Well, once you know the context of a work of art, you find sense in it. Otherwise it remains a thing put on the wall which doesn't mean anything to you.

¹⁰ I thought that history isn't related to certain types of [artistic] movements. Then, you find out that everything is linked. (...) And I understood more about the works, for example, in what historical point they originated. Thus, I think the work as such becomes much more motivating and based on this work to research about the movement.

¹¹ Some readings, for example the topic of capitalism, Marxism, imperialism, absolutism, all this has been new for me and very interesting. I have never been very receptive to these economic, political topics, but everything has been very interesting because you learn from it and how it is applicable in our context.

activity which forces the teacher either to adapt his/her teaching practice to his/her own convictions or to submit to someone else's agenda (Auerbach, 1995; Canagarajah, 2000).

Second, during the course, students became aware that they and the society they live in are products of historical processes:

S3: Me parece muy interesante conocer la historia de todo el mundo. (...) Nos da cuenta lo que somos hoy en día. Todo ese proceso ha hecho de nosotros lo que somos hoy en día.¹²/ Interview, June 13, 2014.

S5: Desde ahí empecé a interesarme por la historia, porque las cosas no son de repente, no son como ahora mismo, sino por algún motivo son como son ahora. Y es eso lo que usted nos enseñó al principio del semestre. Por algo somos lo que somos ahora y hacemos lo que hacemos ahora. Y lo que hacemos ahora también va a tener una incidencia en el futuro. Y de eso trata la historia.¹³/ Interview, June 10, 2014.

These comments are also evidence of what Paulo Freire (1970) called problematizing education, that is, education that allows students to discover new aspects of reality and to comprehend the world surrounding them from an ever less alienated perspective.

The third aspect, students' evolving critical stance towards their own reality, goes in line with Freire's (1970) encouraging learners to question taken-for-granted truth and go beyond the common presentations of reality. The following excerpts illustrate this.

S7: El Énfasis lo que hace es ampliar la mirada, el horizonte de vista, mirar un poco más para'llá. (...). Eso hace en el estudiante que, yo como estudiante en este momento, es ampliar el foco de visión en cuanto que la historia se teje y yo soy parte de la historia. Y en ese sentido me involucro, y como me involucro, pues, me hace un agente participativo. Pero un agente crítico, un agente que se entera.¹⁴/ Interview, November 14, 2014.

¹² I find it very interesting to know the history of the entire world. (...) It explains what we are today. All this process has made of us what we are today.

¹³ From that point I started being interested in history, because the things don't come out of the blue, they are not just from now but for some reason they are as they are now. And this is what you have taught us at the beginning of the semester. It's for something that we are what we are now and that we are doing what we are doing now. And what we are doing now will influence the future. And that's what history is about.

¹⁴ The Emphasis broadens your vision, your horizon to look a bit further. (...) This makes that I, as a student at this moment, broaden my perspective in the sense that history is being constructed and I am part of history. And in this sense I get involved, and as I get involved, well, I become a participating agent. But a critical agent, an agent who is aware of things.

S5: I believe I can really make use of the movie ‘1492, Conquest of Paradise’ to create critical thinking about the conquest and answer some of the why’s and how’s that we may have. / Homework, May 17, 2014.

These comments demonstrate that students have become interested in going beyond taken-for-granted truth, in going deeper into facts they have learned only superficially, in asking “why’s and how’s” they had no opportunity to ask before, in short, in taking a critical stance towards their reality.

Conclusions

Bearing in mind that this research aimed at understanding the impacts on public university pre-service teachers’ cultural capital when exposed to EFL content-based instruction about the history of the Western hemisphere and related artistic expressions, it can be concluded that impacts occurred not only in the field of cultural capital but also with regards to students’ autonomy and their socio-political awareness.

First, as the students recognized, CBI is a useful tool to not only improve the four language skills but also to learn authentic content that is not always taught in a “pure” language class, which is one of the main advantages of CBI. Additionally, discussing authentic content in English, e.g. interpreting a map, allows students to practice real-life language structures in the foreign language they are learning. If this content is related, as in the case of the present study, in a broader sense to the historical and cultural context of the foreign language the pre-service teachers are learning, CBI acquires special importance for the pedagogical practice of future language teachers.

Second, students acknowledged that they are not used to studying in an autonomous way. Most students are used to some kind of “banking-model” education (Freire, 1970), where a “prodger” (S7, interview November 14, 2014) tells them what to do until what deadline. In the light of Richard’s (2001) concept of “Social Reconstructionism”, usually students are neither being challenged to question their realities nor to transform them, nor to be autonomous in their learning processes. Although this constitutes a well-known fact in education research, for the university where this research took place it is a valuable insight.

On the other hand, when students are invited to learn in a dialogical way that fosters their autonomy, they feel they can express themselves freely, without thinking about a grade. They can then relate historical events and processes to their own reality, thus obtaining references for social transformation and gaining a less alienated comprehension of the world surrounding them, which constitute two of the objectives of critical pedagogy.

Third, the aforementioned lack of autonomy can partly explain why the participating pre-service teachers evidenced little general knowledge about history and related artistic

expressions, as was acknowledged by them. Taking into consideration the concept of the embodied state of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1997; Peña Rodríguez, 2013), other reasons include the students' social backgrounds and their socialization processes, including the eleven years they spent in school.

Fourth, offering students a basic understanding of artistic expressions in their historical context can be an enriching experience for language students. Although Lareau & Weininger (2003) argue that new insights into these "high-brow" artistic expressions do not reflect an increase in cultural capital, one could also argue that to give a deeper meaning to a work of art and to put it into its historical context responds to Freire's (1970) claim to question given presentations of reality and empower students to appropriate for themselves new meanings they have discovered in these artistic expressions.

Last but not least, teaching English following a CBI approach under the perspective of critical pedagogy and giving pre-service language teachers the chance to increase their cultural capital raises their socio-political awareness in three different aspects: the students' increased awareness of their indifference towards political and economic issues; their emerging insight that history has made us what we are today; and the students' evolving critical stance towards their own reality. This increased socio-political awareness can empower them to understand themselves as political subjects, as "critical participative agents" (S7, interview November 14, 2014) who can begin to transform a reality they perceive as unjust so that someday the perpetuation of the unequal education system in Colombia may come to its end.

Thinking about further research, it would be interesting to accompany the students who participated in this research in a long-term case study in order to find out if the insights gained during this two-semester course have any impact on their ongoing learning process.

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