

Ecology, Cultural Awareness, Anti-Racism and Critical Thinking: Integrating Multiple Perspectives in Foreign Language Teaching

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Abstract

This paper aims at presenting a critical approach to teaching ecological, postcolonial and ethnic minority topics in the (foreign language) classroom, describing the need to interrelate these three issues in both research and teaching. It illustrates how Western utilitarian perspectives on both humans and nature must be counterbalanced with alternative stances, such as those provided by indigenous views of reciprocity. With regard to teaching scenarios, it suggests the use of multi-text selections in line with the principle of presenting multiple perspectives on global issues. It suggests that two seemingly contradictory teaching/learning objectives can be combined: bolstering up students' empathetic skills in understanding ecological and interculturally relevant issues on the one hand and becoming critically aware of textual strategies employed to manipulate readers. We use the hitherto less frequently observed example of the demands of the Chilean indigenous minority of the Mapuche to illustrate how different positions published in the English language on the Internet can be used in the foreign language classroom to discuss the issues at stake here: the inextricable interrelatedness of ecological exploitation of natural resources with processes of sociocultural and economic marginalisation and oppression of ethnic minority groups and their worldviews across the globe.

Keywords: Indigenous studies, postcolonial criticism, interculturalidad, ecopedagogy, EFL teaching/learning.

Resumen

Este artículo busca presentar un acercamiento crítico al tratamiento de la ecología, el postcolonialismo, y las minorías étnicas en las clases de lenguas extranjeras, describiendo la necesidad de establecer una relación entre estas tres temáticas en la investigación y la docencia. Se muestra cómo las perspectivas utilitaristas occidentales sobre el ser humano y la naturaleza deben de contrarrestarse con imaginarios alternativos, como, por ejemplo, aquellos basados en perspectivas indígenas en torno a la reciprocidad. Respecto a los escenarios de enseñanza, se propone el uso de selecciones de textos múltiples, siguiendo el principio de la presentación de diversidad de perspectivas sobre temáticas globales. Así, objetivos de aprendizaje aparentemente contradictorios pueden ser combinados: fomentar, por un lado, las habilidades empáticas de los alumnos para comprender las problemáticas ecológicas e interculturales de mayor relevancia en la actualidad, mientras, por el otro lado, inspirar una conciencia crítica en torno a las estrategias textuales empleadas para manipular a los lectores. Nos apoyamos, así pues, en el ejemplo de las

demandas de las comunidades Mapuche en Chile para demostrar cómo diferentes posiciones publicadas en internet, en inglés, pueden utilizarse en las aulas de lengua extranjera para discutir sus implicaciones. Estas son la relación intrínseca entre la explotación de recursos naturales con los procesos de marginalización sociocultural y económica, la opresión de grupos minoritarios y las cosmovisiones de los mismos desde perspectivas procedentes de varias partes del mundo.

Palabras clave: estudios indígenas, crítica postcolonial, interculturalidad, ecopedagogía, enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera.

The Need to Combine Ecocritical and Postcolonial Perspectives

Charting the trajectory of ecocritical or ecopedagogical publications over the last decades, it becomes clear how an erstwhile seemingly homogeneous academic field has evolved into a complex, multidisciplinary and internally stratified area of theories, approaches and scholarly practices. In his pioneering 1995 study *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell identified the field of ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” (430). Nearly a decade later, Love pointed to the significant impact ecocritical viewpoints had already had on literary studies and pointed to the need for further change: “[t]eaching and studying literature without reference to the natural conditions of the world and the basic ecological principles that underlie all life seems increasingly shortsighted, incongruous” (13). Moving beyond the analysis of literary texts, ecocriticism gradually started to influence all academic fields in the humanities such as cultural studies, pedagogy and beyond (Cohen 10). Feminist and gender studies approaches have been intertwined with ecological perspectives, and academic discussions of the age of the Anthropocene have been accompanied by the insight that the devastating and all-pervasive impact of human activity increasingly poses a multitude of ethical, epistemological, economic, sociocultural, political and, last but not least, educational challenges (Mayer and Wilson, Bartosch and Grimm, Bartosch, Eisenmann et al.).

With regard to the approach suggested in this article, we refer to a significant contribution to ecocritical debates made by Huggan and Tiffin’s prominent study *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Pleading strongly for an incorporation of postcolonial into ecocritical perspectives, the authors describe the common ground shared by both critical stances:

[I]t requires a broader *ecological* perception of natural-cultural relations on several different levels – including the planetary level – than has tended to be the case in much ecocriticism until now. Postcolonial approaches remain helpful here in ensuring that the ongoing struggle for global environmental justice is pursued; that cultural differences are taken into account in building bioregional models of sustainability and resilience; and that new ways of thinking about the human – also thinking beyond the human – are developed that recognize imbrication of social and ecological factors in [...] [a neoliberal] age characterized by the conspicuously uneven distribution of natural resources, the forced displacement of animals and people, and routine abuses of transnational corporate power. (Huggan and Tiffin viii)

Claiming that literary texts appear to be the “proper subject of postcolonial ecocriticism” (Huggan and Tiffin x), the critics point to the specific role of postcolonial literature as being “more likely to show the conflicts that arise when different forms of advocacy are brought together, e.g. by examining the social, cultural and political factors at play in the eviction of local (indigenous) people reserves and wildlife parks” (Huggan and Tiffin viii). However, there is definitely much more to combining an ecological with a postcolonial perspective, as we will lay out in this article. A perspective which links both approaches can and may serve to provide a contrastive foil to entrenched, “naturalised” Western or Eurocentric perceptions of the crucial relation between humans and nature. In a critical as well as a pedagogical context, this dual perspective can raise a number of general epistemological, ethical and moral issues. It can also cast a light on concrete political, socioeconomic and ecological grievances and calamities. It is exactly this “questioning” of established Western perspectives that is at the heart of our suggestions for educational contexts at the school or university level here.

The “Western Perspective”—a Short Look back in History

In the following we will briefly outline the need to question lopsided rational and utilitarian attitudes toward nature and humans as one of the legacies of the Renaissance turn toward logocentrism and rationality (Volkmann, “Homo oeconomicus”). Commencing with a short look at the paradigm of utilitarian stances, this view on humans and nature was first prominently traceable in the work of Renaissance philosopher Francis Bacon. In his essays (1592), he wrote about the ways in which the rational mind creates a circumstantial and “disenchanted” perspective on how nature can be subjugated to the demands of humans (e.g., in “Of Nature”). In the Age of the Enlightenment, London author Daniel Defoe appears as Bacon’s true heir by recommending—in his non-literary texts—to take possession of all those parts of the world that are not yet in the hands of the West, and to use all maritime domains for the advancement of the English nation. It is in his *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-6) that Defoe offers an exemplary economic survey of Great Britain on the verge of the Industrial Revolution. While most descriptions focus on urban development and the prosperous growth of industry, it is most striking how the rural areas are perceived: they are seen through the lens of an observer who is merely interested in economic growth and development, wondering how certain areas can contribute to the enormous economic advancement of the nation. What Adam Smith described in detail in his *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) two generations later is shown here as becoming manifest in the flows of trade gravitating toward the metropolitan centre of London. A description of the natural scenery observed in Lancashire serves to illustrate this commodifying gaze, which is only interested in how nature can be used for human advancement. It reveals how the observer surveying this area devoid of human beings takes the stance of a *homo oeconomicus*. What the observer first and foremost perceives is the absence of any traces of trade and natural resources; thus this area is associated with images of infertility and barrenness, and as being in need of cultivation by man.

This part of the country seemed very strange to us, after coming out of so rich, populous and fruitful a place, as I have just now described; for here we were, as it were, locked in between the hills on one side high as the clouds, and prodigiously higher, and the sea on the other, and the sea it self seemed desolate and wild, for it was a sea without ships, here being no sea port or place of trade, especially for merchants [...]. Nor were these hills high and formidable only, but they had a kind of an inhospitable terror in them. Here were no rich pleasant valleys between them, as among the Alps; no lead mines and veins of rich ore, as in the Peak; no coal pits, as in the hills about Hallifax, much less gold, as in the Andes, but all barren and wild, of no use or advantage either to man or beast. (Defoe 549)

The economic perspective, manifest in Defoe's utilitarian gaze, also shapes and forms the view on the desert island which becomes Robinson Crusoe's habitat in the eponymous novel (1719). Here, the natural Other essentially exists to be owned and utilized. Crusoe's depiction of Robinson's life on the desert island appears emblematic of what cultural critic Max Horkheimer dubbed the "instrumental rationality" of the Enlightenment, which is expressed in the "desire of man to subjugate nature" (Horkheimer 17; our translation). And Crusoe's relationship as the self-appointed "Master" with his servant Friday, the "savage", is reminiscent of Horkheimer's insight that "the history of human effort to subjugate nature is also the history of how humans were and still are subjugated by humans" (Horkheimer 104; our translation).

We have used the example of Daniel Defoe's writings to illustrate the interconnectedness of the exploitation of nature and humans in what the Frankfurt School of Horkheimer and Adorno identified as the darker side of European concepts of cultural progress and enlightenment (see also the pioneering study by Merchant). It seems superfluous to state that such ideologies were and still are the shaping forces behind political, socioeconomic and ecological developments in the eras of (neo)colonialism, (neo)imperialism and globalization. A growing sense of discontent with this instrumental, utilitarian and hierarchical approach has become tangible with the waning influence of Eurocentrism in the wake of decolonization. In the following, we therefore want to outline the potential to address this discontent by exploring and working with alternative perspectives and worldviews.

"Indigenous Wisdom"—an Alternative Perspective

Clearly, the utilitarian worldview outlined above has produced catastrophic ecological and social consequences at a worldwide level. These now constitute an urgent call for considering alternative views of the relationship between the human species and nature. Among these perspectives, we can find teachings originating in American indigenous wisdom, brought to Western readers by authors such as Elicura Chihuailaf, a Mapuche bilingual poet born in Chilean national territory, and Robin Wall Kimmerer, professor of environmental biology and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, living in upstate New York. Both authors have chosen the essay genre to share autobiographical events of their lives in-between cultures, wisdom drawn from the oral traditions of their ancestors, and the experience of deep communication with the natural world. When looking at their texts—Kimmerer's collection of essays *Braiding Sweetgrass*, and Chihuailaf's two separately published essays *Recado confidencial a los chilenos*

(*Confidential message to the Chileans*) and *Nuestra lucha es una lucha por ternura* (*Our struggle is a struggle for tenderness*)—common themes emerge from different indigenous experiences: The texts shed light on the possibility to rethink and reshape human action with regard to planetary survival, while also allowing a deep insight into the mechanisms of epistemic violence exerted in postcolonial societies (Spivak).

What the culture of capitalism conceptualises as *natural resources*, to be exploited and turned into commercial goods, takes on a different meaning when seen as *gifts* from Mother Earth to be grateful for, within a *culture of reciprocity*. Here, “duties and gifts are two sides of the same coin” (Kimmerer 115), which has consequences for the individual:

Just as all beings have a duty to me, I have a duty to them. If an animal gives its life to feed me, I am in turn bound to support its life. If I receive a stream’s gift of pure water, then I am responsible for returning a gift in kind. An integral part of a human’s education is to know those duties and how to perform them. (Kimmerer 115)

The responsible use of these gifts of the earth stands in stark contrast to the speculative exploitation of “raw materials” and mindless production of waste within the cultures created by Western capitalism. Chihuailaf puts it like this:

Itro Fil Mogen is the centre of our philosophy and means totality without exclusion, integrity without fragmentation of all that is alive, of life itself. It is biodiversity, the Westerners now tell us. We are merely a small part of the Universe, just another part of Nature – the Earth – from which we conceive our Word. Just another part, with all the essential implications this has for reciprocity. This is why, they tell us, we must take from the Earth only that which is necessary for living. We are not utilitarian in the mystery of life. Thus, the Earth does not have a utilitarian meaning for us. We take from her what serves us in the brief passage in this world, without exhausting it, just as she takes us – little by little- to transform us into water, air, fire, greenness. (*Nuestra lucha* 12)¹

Both authors, in one way or another, refer to the ways in which colonial regimes and their contemporary versions in the form of Western science and multinational corporations have silenced, invisibilised, ridiculed, and brutally suppressed these other ways of knowing and understanding the world—a symbolic and epistemic violence that has been and still is paralleled with direct violence against native inhabitants—human and non-human—of ancestral lands (Galtung).

Kimmerer, as a young botanist whose “natural inclination was to see relationships, to seek the threads that connect the world, to join instead of divide”, when taking “reductionist, mechanistic” botany classes at a U.S. university, learned that “[p]lants were reduced to objects; they were not subjects. The way botany was conceived and taught didn’t seem to leave much room for a person who thought the way I did. The only way I could make sense of it was to conclude that the things I had always believed about plants

¹ *Itro Fil Mogen* es el centro de nuestra filosofía y significa la totalidad sin exclusión, la integridad sin fragmentación de todo lo viviente, de la vida. Es la biodiversidad nos dicen hoy desde la cultura occidental. Somos apenas una pequeña parte del Universo, una parte más de la Naturaleza – la Tierra – de la cual aprehendemos nuestra Palabra. Una parte más con todo lo esencial que ello implica en la reciprocidad. Por eso, nos dicen, debemos tomar de la Tierra sólo lo necesario para vivir. No somos utilitarios en el misterio de la vida. Así, la Tierra no tiene un sentido utilitario para nosotros. Tomamos de ella lo que nos sirve en el breve paso por este mundo, sin esquilmarla, así como ella nos toma – poco a poco – para transformarnos en agua, aire, fuego, verdor. (All translations of Chihuailaf’s work in this article are ours.)

must not be true after all” (42). Her capacity to adapt to the expectations of the scientific community was praised in a recommendation letter that exemplifies the mix of racism and sexism that seems to have been acceptable in U.S. academia not so long ago: “She’s done remarkably well for an Indian girl” (Kimmerer 43).

Chihuailaf takes a similar perspective as he writes from the midst of disputed territories—the Mapuche homelands which were largely passed over to European settlers during the 19th century, or more recently sold to multinational forestry companies, and have increasingly been turned into soil-draining monoculture eucalyptus and pine plantations. This form of ultra-efficient farming has devastating ecological effects on large strips of land—including neighbouring Mapuche properties—due to the plantations’ massive consumption of underground water. Chihuailaf explains how the “politics in the service of established power” have imposed an official culture, aiming to strip indigenous peoples of their cultures, so it must be taken into account that the “so-called global societies feel a great fear that we ‘original’ peoples project the future on the basis of imagining ourselves, culturally speaking” (Recado 43). The Spanish original reads as follows:

En tal sentido, me dicen, hay que tener en cuenta que la política al servicio del poder establecido es también un agente ‘culturizante’, en el entendido de la imposición de una cultura oficial, es decir, desculturizante. Y, junto a ello, que las llamadas sociedades globales sienten un gran temor a que los pueblos ‘originarios’ proyectemos el futuro sobre la base de autopensarnos culturalmente. (Recado 43)

Another point of convergence between both authors is their explicit wish to share their knowledge and point of view with the non-indigenous population, so all can benefit from the gained wisdom, learn from it, and contribute to a more hopeful future:

Let’s talk, I ask you. In the tenderness of our ancestors we have a whole wisdom to win. (Recado 14)²

And when Kimmerer asks the famous Onondaga Faithkeeper Oren Lyons whether she would be allowed to write about the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address, which she compares to a kind of “Pledge of Allegiance” to gratitude, he replies: “It’s supposed to be shared, otherwise how can it work? We’ve been waiting five hundred years for people to listen. If they’d understood the Thanksgiving then, we wouldn’t be in this mess” (Kimmerer 116).

With this insight comes a call for action. As Kimmerer demonstrates through the scientific methods acquired in her work as a botanist, responsible human action actually plays an essential role in the ecosystem—an idea quite contrary to the common impression most of her students seem to have, namely that “humans and nature are a bad mix” (Kimmerer 6). Instead, human intervention guided by an indigenous interpretation of sustainability actually keeps forests and meadows thriving, more so than if left to their own devices. And Chihuailaf complements:

And remember that: ‘the Earth does not belong to the People. Mapuche means People of the Earth’, they tell us. We consider ourselves its sprouts, its sons and daughters. Ñuke Mapu / Mother Earth gives us everything that we need to live. And they tell us: ‘What son,

² Conversemos, les pido. En la ternura de nuestros antepasados tenemos toda una sabiduría por ganar.

what daughter does not get up grateful to defend his or her Mother when she is humiliated?' Our struggle is a struggle for tenderness. (*Nuestra lucha* 12)³

For young people nowadays, many of whom might “not even imagine what beneficial relations between their species and others might look like” (Kimmerer 6), the powerful ideas contained in indigenous wisdom may certainly create hope. This is where the idea of teaching “global issues” (Lütge) as part and parcel of teaching English as a foreign language comes into play.

Critical Intercultural Issues in English as a Foreign Language – on a Global Scale

The expansion of the English language through colonial and globalising historical developments, as well as globalising tendencies in education in general—as part of globalisation itself—have turned English into a standard school subject, a core piece of most compulsory educational curricula around the world. Becoming thus inserted in a multiplicity of local contexts, it has apparently changed its status: from being one of several possible foreign-language subjects, it is now often seen as a basic skill, alongside literacy in learners’ mother tongues, numeracy, or computing skills (Graddol). However, its presence on the school curricula is suspicious of an ideological charge toward a Western utilitarian worldview, as Philipponson critically states: “‘Global’ English is a project to establish English as the language of neoliberal empire serviced by global finance whatever the consequences for other cultures and languages” (9).

This poses a challenge to those who are engaged with English as a foreign language and at the same time committed to some form of critical pedagogy, in a wide range of global contexts, to resist linguistic and cultural imperialism (Canagarajah) and to find “decolonial options” (Kumaravadivelu). One of the questions is how to create space for counter-discourses (Pennycook) and teach “a decolonized, local English that values traditional indigenous knowledge systems over neocolonial global influences which are often associated with English” (Rodrigues et al. 2). In line with this approach, the proposal outlined in this contribution favours the “articulation of alternative or subaltern voices and histories in English itself, the language of colonial imperialism”, in order to “combat the power of the discourses that reproduce the effects of colonialism today” (Rodrigues et al. 6).

Within the curricula for English as a foreign language in these diverse contexts, the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence has turned into an important learning objective (Grimm et al., ch. 7). In some cases, it is the first, maybe even the only curricular spot in which intercultural learning objectives for all learners are formulated. An example of this is the Chilean national curricular framework, where intercultural competence first appeared as a learning aim for all Chilean students in the context of English as a foreign language in 2013. It is defined as “the skill to interact with people

³ Y recordar que: ‘la Tierra no pertenece a la Gente. Mapuche significa Gente de la Tierra’, nos dicen. Nos consideramos sus brotes, sus hijos e hijas. La Ñuke Mapu / Madre Tierra nos regala todo lo que necesitamos para vivir. Y nos dicen: ‘¿Qué hijo, qué hija, agradecido / agradecida no se levanta para defender a su Madre cuando es avasallada?’. Nuestra lucha es una lucha por Ternura.

from other cultures and / or to function in a cultural context different from one's own, be conscious of it, respect the practices and customs of other people and behave in a way that is adequate for that particular culture" (MINEDUC 244).⁴ This view of the intercultural dimension of language learning parallels what Medina-López-Portillo and Sinnigen have observed for the U.S.-American context, and what might be true for European curriculum design, too: "There is a developing consensus around the idea that intercultural competency refers to the individual skills, knowledge, attributes, behaviors, and attitudes needed to interact successfully with people from different cultures" (250). In Latin America, however, the term interculturality (*interculturalidad*) has a different connotation: Here, "[i]ntercultural concepts are embedded in indigenous-led social movements in different parts of the continent whose concept of interculturality is communitarian and egalitarian and recognizes the need for decisive political action" (Medina-López-Portillo and Sinnigen 250). This "decisive political action" has translated, in some countries (the paper cites Bolivia and Ecuador as prominent cases), to the inclusion of environmental rights into newly written Constitutions. These are based on the foundations of indigenous principles such as "good living", which is also present in Mapuche practices (*küme mongen*) and related to the concept *itro fil mogen* explained by Chihuailaf (see above). The driving force behind these political processes is the need to overcome economic injustice and cultural marginalisation inherent in Latin American societies, which discriminate especially against people of Indigenous and African descent. These inequalities are inherited from colonial times and were reinforced by the European descendants who governed the newly founded nation states during the 19th and 20th centuries, based on a system of cultural hegemony and economic exploitation.

As Dietz and Mateos Cortés point out for the case of Mexico, an increasing diversity of concepts related to interculturality and intercultural education can be found in international academic exchange (ch. 2). These concepts have started to migrate, entering a dialogue with each other: Some have undergone processes of hybridisation (García Canclini), some seem to have real potential of empowering deprived sectors of the population and decolonise education through collective action, while others might actually reinforce the status quo by leaving the development of intercultural competences in the realm of individuality (Dietz and Mateo Cortés, ch. 3). In Europe, current discussions on interculturality also include political aims—such as Byram's education for intercultural citizenship, which includes a clear interest to counter racism and discrimination (180). In Latin America, however, this is a central concern: several proposals for intercultural education have an explicit focus on making asymmetric power relations visible so as to challenge and eventually overcome them (Tubino). This idea is reflected in Fajardo's model for intercultural education in Latin America, which is an example of these hybrid developments of concepts. Her model is partially inspired by the Common European Framework of Reference and the work of Catalonia-based scholar Cantero. Following these European proposals, Fajardo's model also revolves around

⁴ The Spanish original text reads as follows: "la habilidad para interactuar con personas provenientes de otras culturas y/o funcionar en un contexto cultural que no es el propio, ser consciente de ello, respetar las prácticas y costumbres de otras personas y comportarse de una forma adecuada a esa cultura determinada."

knowledge, attitudes and skills for individual students to acquire. Nevertheless, she substantially makes a plea for students to learn to “analyse and recognise communicative patterns and behaviours that carry manifestations of racism, sexism, xenophobia, prejudice, and discriminations in general” (31). She also suggests that students develop these skills on the basis of an “intercultural formative canon” (32), which takes into account the oral traditions of the indigenous peoples of their context.

This “stronger” form of intercultural learning, which involves entering a dialogue with indigenous ways of knowing, may not be a mainstream consideration for the construction of EFL curricula yet. However, we believe that English as a foreign language—in a variety of local-global teaching contexts—can make a contribution to the exposure and analysis of discriminatory and invisibilising practices which inflict epistemic, social and environmental violence in a globalised world. At the same time, it can provide a space for indigenous voices to be heard, and in this way, contribute to a dialogue between different proposals to build a sustainable relationship between humans and nature (Leff).

Teaching Critical Perspectives with Multiperspective Material—the Example of the Mapuche in Chile

Language education, as proponents of a critical pedagogy claim, can be seen as especially important for the politically engaged endeavour of sensitising learners to the struggle of other communities and minorities, as a critical approach to “(foreign) language/culture education and [...] intercultural communication/interaction implies a critical use of language(s), a critical approach to one’s own and other cultural backgrounds and a critical view of intercultural interaction” (Phipps and Guilherme 3). Focusing on minorities and marginalised or oppressed perspectives as we suggest here is, of course, highly political; it foregrounds and inherently favours alternative and indigenous voices. Crucially, in doing so it invites critical analysis of dominant worldviews. Nonetheless, it can be argued that tackling global issues in the foreign language classroom always asks for a decisively critical approach, which always entails the

addressing [of] radical concerns, the abuses of power in intercultural contexts, in the acquisition of languages and in their circulation. And this work is never just neutral. [...] Indeed, we all of us live in worlds which are ‘supercomplex’ [...] not just complex; these worlds require our active engagement and our creative practice as intellectuals. (Phipps and Guilherme 1)

When it comes to foreign language teaching, the shift away from seemingly clearly defined major target cultures to different indigenous or minority groups who use English as a lingua franca is necessary to redress the lopsided representation of cultures and the uses of English that still prevails in textbooks and wider parts of EFL teaching (Eisenmann et al. vii). Introducing the Mapuche, their use of language, their culture and their ongoing struggles to EFL teaching can therefore be seen as paradigmatic; our approach could also be used for dealing with indigenous peoples and the clashes between traditional

ecological and Western-utilitarian worldviews in other areas of the world, in response to calls for a deeper, less shallow environmentalism in EFL (e.g., Stibbe). However, it must be kept in mind that the Mapuche's quest for regaining their land, their open conflict with multinational corporations, as well as the racialised prejudices about their claims and the discriminatory politics used against them need to be seen as unique (Crow, Lepe-Carrión), and their communities as well as communal experiences are highly heterogeneous. As the largest minority group in Chile, the Mapuche have faced a long history of colonisation, (socio-)natural disasters and structural racism in increasing conflicts with the Chilean state (Atallah et al.) that are rooted in the specific colonial history of Southern Chile. This area is marked by historical tensions between the Mapuche indigenous communities, the descendants of European settlers who were invited by the Chilean State during the 19th century in order to help integrating the South into Chilean national territory, and multinational companies that have more recently started large-scale monoculture plantations of non-native trees for the timber and cellulose industry, transforming the traditional sustainable farming landscape into "green deserts" (World Rainforest Movement). Due to the philosophy of *itro fil mogen*, as explained above, the Mapuche have a contrasting approach to cultivating land—which is why much of the structural racism and Othering of the Mapuche still draws on the colonial notion that they are unable to "farm efficiently" (Lepe-Carrión 65).

A multiperspective approach to their current and ongoing political struggles can serve as an exemplary way of engaging with the interface of minority experiences and political as well as environmental activism. As this topic clearly requires some pre-existing knowledge of global topics, transculturality and ecological issues, it may not be suitable as a point of departure for teaching critical perspectives on ecological and social matters. Rather, it can serve as a continuing challenge for students to reflect on possible ways of engaging with these issues themselves. One possible way of encouraging these encounters is the use of multi-text selections, i.e. the inclusion of a variety of texts that present different and possibly contradictory perspectives on a certain issue (as the example below will demonstrate).

By applying the multiperspective approach to the specific indigenous group of the Mapuche, two complex teaching and learning agendas can be approached (Glas and Volkmann): firstly, by using the little-known example of the Mapuche, it offers profound insights into the various ways in which ecological matters are inextricably intertwined with economic, cultural and social issues of asymmetry, discrimination and ecological as well as sociocultural injustice worldwide. Secondly, it can combine the seemingly contradictory objectives of encouraging an empathetic connection with an oppressed and marginalised social group and, at the same time, honing skills of critical reflection by teaching the thorough and, most importantly, critical analysis of polyphonic material. Especially when complex global issues such as ecological matters and their social implications are in focus, the multiperspective approach can include both literary and non-literary texts. These authentic texts—or excerpts from them—can engage the learners in a debate about the differing potential and functions of textual formats and genres. By working with a variety of texts, a pedagogic double-bind may thus be solved

(Volkmann, "Antinomies"). On the one hand, teachers want to enable empathetic perspective-taking with minorities and the experiences of the oppressed. On the other hand, educators want to teach analytical skills and enable learners to unearth ideological forces behind literary and non-literary texts and other media products. Encountering different texts that include various perspectives, learners are exposed to different perspectives and invited to analyse how various textual and narrative strategies have helped to form their opinion. In short, they may come to an understanding of how different textual or rhetorical strategies aim at manipulating their understanding of the issues presented in the text. While analytical skills are facilitated and critical thinking enabled, this method still leaves plenty of room for critical reflection, learners' opinions and debate.

The conflict about the Mapuche's claims to land offers rich material for applying the multiperspective approach: multifarious sources offer a great variety of different forms of non-fictional and fictional texts—the discourse about the systematic exploitation of forests and land in Southern Chile has long left the Chilean territory and has partially migrated to the Internet, where English serves as lingua franca. For the Mapuche, the Internet—including social media as well as international English-speaking and bi- or trilingual websites—has become a highly relevant site to voice and present their own version of reality beyond the scope of their own community and the Chilean peoples (Salazar). Rather early on, the Mapuche found the Internet to be an invaluable tool for them to draw international attention to their problems—increasingly combining it with social media to report on their plights. This is especially remarkable when keeping in mind the production of dominant versus alternative worldviews: instead of accepting the debate *about* them, the Mapuche have actively engaged in claiming their place in discourse formation instead (Salazar, Trupp and Budka 218). By introducing not only political issues, but their music, rituals, dance and cosmology, "they have vehemently embraced the Internet as a viable tactic for building a counter-hegemonic discourse that has started to impact the national sphere" (Salazar 23).

Naturally, both members and non-members of the social group partake in the discourse: the Mapuche as an indigenous group (and, at the same time, environmental activists) on the one side of the debate, neoliberal stakeholders and business representatives on the other side. The latter's view of the conflict is widely represented in official media outlets, business magazines and finance blogs. Consequently, highly conflicting acts of meaning creation can be observed and a broad variety of arguments, presentation of interests and political as well as personal agendas can be discerned from posts on social media, blog entries, and newspapers or online magazines. In this authentic material, various narrative techniques, modes of visualisation, and other discursive formations can be identified. But as challenging as diving into this complex conflict may appear, it is a highly valuable exercise in order to hone the skills necessary for analysing these texts with regard to their respective potential to create meaning and thus to establish a consistent narrative. Therefore, when choosing the multiperspective approach to introducing indigenous perspectives, the careful selection of texts is of crucial importance for a constructive and valuable debate among the learners. Ideally, they are

challenged not only to understand the texts presented to them, but also to weigh the arguments and position themselves. Only when the learners are enabled to analyse the texts in terms of their formal and narrative devices, rhetoric and line of arguments, can the process of negotiating and constructing meaning be critically reflected upon.

Using Multi-text Compilations and Multiperspective Approaches: Potentials and Challenges

One example for applying this approach has been recently suggested in a teaching unit (Glas and Volkmann) that turns a polyphonic selection of non-fictional texts from the Internet into engaging teaching material. Including different points of view, this selection presents the (inter-)cultural and environmental implications of contemporary Mapuche life in Southern Chile. Here, the interrelatedness of ecological issues and discrimination against indigenous peoples and cultures becomes very obvious. The texts that were written in the English language and selected from the Internet include (1) an interview with the poet Elicura Chihuailaf for a US American literature journal, in which he speaks about the Mapuche worldview and experiences with people and nature that have flown into to his poetic creation; (2) a website for foreign investors, which warns of Mapuche attacks on forestry companies; (3) an interview with a young Mapuche activist on a speaking tour in Canada, published on an English-speaking platform about Mapuche issues based in the Netherlands, informing an international readership about their long-standing struggle to self-govern in order to liberate their traditional homelands from unsustainable forestry practices pursued by multinational companies in their region. Other, more recent news could be added, including the story of the infamous death of young Mapuche activist Camilo Catrillanca, who was shot in the back of the head by a Chilean police officer in 2018, to show the multiple faces of cultural and ethnic discrimination linked to the persecution of environmental activism. By including these different perspectives in the teaching unit, the students are encouraged to combine the analytical skills that are required for working with different narrative forms and structures as well as the ability to recognize and weigh ‘insider’-perspectives, marginalised voices and reflect on the processes of establishing discourses and counter-discourses.

With these ambitious teaching objectives in mind—empathetic perspective-taking, informed analysis of global and ecological issues, analytical skills and critical reflection—literature is frequently regarded as the prime source for encountering and taking different perspectives, as we have stated at the beginning of this article. Huggan and Tiffin deliberate in the preface to the second edition of *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*:

Perhaps postcolonial ecocriticism [...] requires a more pluriform conception of environmental consciousness and acting-in-the-world than that contained in worlds of imaginative literature, though one of the distinct benefits of reading literature is that it adds singularity to specificity, while another is that literature has an enduring capacity to combine multiple, often conflicting perspectives, and to operate across numeral temporal and spatial scales. (ix)

These mentioned qualities of imaginative literature can also be put to use in teaching ecological and social issues by presenting learners with a well-balanced combination of a wide range of texts (fictional and/or non-fictional) in order to provoke critical comparison of these conflicting perspectives. When intertextual encounters with a rich variety of text forms and voices are enabled, processes of meaning-making and perspective-taking may evolve, different perspectives discerned and opposite opinions weighed and evaluated (Grimm et al. 185, Delanoy; for a large variety of useful literary texts see Bartosch).

However, even when several perspectives are included in this selection of texts, foregrounding the concerns of minority and indigenous groups in countries that are far away from the classroom offers a number of potential pitfalls and inner conflicts for both learners and teachers. Learners, on the one hand, “may be tempted to surf on the sea of texts rather than reflecting on critical issues”, as Grimm et al. (185) put it, when offered a broad variety of literary as well as non-literary texts from different perspectives. Here, the very idea behind the multiperspective approach might undermine the favoured outcome—namely, the critical reflection of perspectives presented in the material and the successful transfer of a global issue to the life and reality of the learners. Instead of fostering these skills, multiperspective teaching may come across as indifferent, or even as “a relativistic ‘anything goes’ approach according to which differences between accounts come down to little more than differences between subjective truths and the politics utilising them”, as Kello and Wagner (208) warn with regard to multiperspective history teaching.

For teachers, this means that they must have a comprehensive knowledge of the topic so as to avoid superficial engagement with the texts under discussion. Only if this is the case, can they counter morally problematic utterances found in the material—based not solely on personal preference or one’s own political agenda, but on sound arguments. This is of particular relevance because—as we have pointed out earlier—teaching issues that concern ecological matters, exploitation, social injustice or matters of discrimination or racism can and should not be seen as value-neutral and thus requires a positioning of the teacher. A recent study about multiperspective teaching in history education—a field in which this teaching strategy is widely employed and already recommended in teaching frameworks—has shown that multiperspective teaching presents a complex challenge to teachers, especially when the topics taught are morally sensitive (Wansink et al.). This certainly does not apply to historical subjects only, but may well be transferred to including issues of discrimination, racism and oppression in foreign language education. Apart from acquiring sound knowledge of the topic, the teacher further has to engage in the act of balancing critical analysis of texts, her or his own set of values and favoured perspective, and the initiation and moderation of a hopefully vivid debate among the learners. When it comes to finding and preparing their own arguments for the debate, teachers are challenged to find the right balance between, on the one hand, fostering critical reflection and exposing the dynamics of oppression and inequality, and, on the other, “preaching down” or moralising and running the risk of losing the learners’ attention and will to engage with the topic. With regard to the latter, the risk of merely

trying to trigger the “correct response” of the learners has previously been criticized as a pitfall of ecological education (Parham 9)—a point that should be kept in mind. In order to avoid the pitfalls of both “anything goes” and “preaching down”, it seems most fruitful to focus especially on the ongoing critical reflection of the processes involved in meaning-making. One possibility could be to create a framework of criteria for evaluation:

We propose that teachers should enable students to investigate moral perspectives [...] by providing them a framework of disciplinary criteria to evaluate and discuss on which underlying values and epistemologies moralities are based [...]. Such a framework also can be used by students to reflect on their own criteria for reliable knowledge and moral judgments in the present. (Wansink et al. 519)

In EFL teaching, this framework can include ideological, cultural or religious backgrounds. In addition, it should focus on textual analysis and the assessing and evaluating of narrative devices that bring across text-inherent epistemologies and moralities. Here, the potential of the multiperspective approach to ecological and social issues becomes obvious: learners are empowered to realize which perspective is part of a hegemonic and thus widely recognized worldview, and which perspective belongs to those of the oppressed and marginalised. As we have outlined over the last pages, foregrounding these alternative worldviews and thereby exploring the dynamics of counter-discourses can be seen as a highly rewarding perspective for educational settings. We believe that the method of contrasting, comparing and challenging multiple perspectives on ecological crises, on the exploitation of resources, racism and discrimination is a beneficial approach to teaching “global issues”. It can help to create cultural awareness and foster an ability for critical thinking that reaches far beyond the classroom and the learners’ and teachers’ cultural context.

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