

English lesson, an alternative to develop culture in Cuba Junior High School

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Abstract: This investigation focus attention over didactic activities applied to foster the development of a general culture in Junior High School students through English subject. It was supported by the theoretical reference from the historical cultural conception enriched by the researchers: Fernando Ortiz and Pablo Guadarrama. At the same time, this investigation answers the deficient treatment of this topic carried out by family, community and school. Therefore, the objective is to elaborate a set of exercises to develop a general culture through the English lesson in Junior High School. This research was carried out thanks to 120 students from ninth grader and two professors, which were considered the population of this work. This investigation is very important because the exercises allow to develop a general culture in Junior High School students and solve the problem detected. Also, this is the first time these activities are applied in Secondary School.

Key words: culture; development.

Introduction

"Access to knowledge and culture does not mean by itself the acquisition of ethical principles, but without knowledge and culture we cannot access to ethics." Castro Ruz (2003).

In the training process, the unavoidable culture-ideology-education relationship must be kept in mind, which means understanding that there can be no divorce between the effort to achieve a general culture and the education of the personality.

Since the end of the nineties, the country has been immersed in a conceptual renewal in the field of culture, a strategy developed in response to the neoliberal globalization process that has been overwhelmingly unfolded by the dominance of transnational corporations. This strategy constitutes a new stage in the cultural process developed in the country in January 1st, 1959, and today under very peculiar internal and external conditions involves a diversified and deep work in the formation of each and every one of the members of Cuban society."

The English language subject in the Cuban National Education System responds to the political, economic, social and cultural importance of foreign languages nowadays. The country maintains cooperation and exchange relations with a large number of countries, in the political, scientific, technical, educational, cultural, and sports fields, among others. The exchange of delegations, technicians and students increases every day; with Cuban citizens, participation in seminars, conferences and international events grows; The sources of information in the English language are increased.

Dr. Rosa Antich de León (1986) advanced her practical-conscious approach by creating the favorable conditions for the teaching of a language in a different context. Teaching trends required profound changes in the treatment of the four linguistic skills and their interrelation dynamics.

The English course in the ninth grade has been designed to reinforce the general curriculum of secondary school and the general education of students in an active and cooperative environment, where habits and skills are gradually formed through a process that includes not only study and practice, but also creativity, problem solving and risk taking when learning the foreign language.

In the initial diagnosis applied, it was observed that the students presented many limitations to define the concept of culture, as well as the classes were purely content, rejecting this content to relate it to other subjects from literary, artistic, linguistic, ethical and aesthetic approaches.

The following insufficiencies determined the causes that originated the scientific problem: insufficient influence on the part of the school, the family and the community to contribute to the cultural development of the students, the English classes are purely content and the teacher does not take advantage of this space to develop the inter-subject relationship, the educational work and the development of the political-ideological

work as fundamental elements in the classes, so the following question is asked: How to contribute to the development of a general culture through the English lessons in Junior High School?

The objective of this investigation is to develop a set of exercises to contribute to the development of a general culture through the English lessons in Junior High School.

The research was made possible by the 120 ninth-grade students, who constitute the chosen population, and two teachers, who worked directly with the groups. 45 students were taken as a sample, representing 37.7% of the population. Both professors reported as a sample of the investigation. The group was intentionally selected.

Epistemological characterization of general culture. Philosophical dictionary (1973) refers that: Culture comes from the Latin culture: cultivation, elaboration. Set of material and spiritual values, as well as the procedures to create, apply and transmit them, obtained by man in the process of historical-social practice. In the strictest sense of the word, we usually speak of material culture (technique, production experience and other material values) and spiritual culture (results in science, art, literature, philosophy, morality and instruction).

The Encyclopedic Dictionary (1998) addresses culture as: "intellectual or artistic development of a civilization. Set of elements of a material or spiritual nature, logically and coherently organized, beliefs, art, morals, law and customs, all habits and attitudes acquired by men in their capacity as members of society. A set of creative productions of man that transform the environment and this in turn has an impact on it".

Culture in this broad sense is formed together with the acting subject and includes its activity and its products.

The acting subject permeates the created cultural object with its subjectivity in its transforming activity, to the same extent that it produces and reproduces its own cultural life. In this regard, different criteria can be given such as the following:

The objective concept of culture to which Guadarrama (1990) refers, is useful for the study of the phenomenon in its entirety, seen as: the complex set that includes knowledge, belief, art, morality, law, custom and all other capacities and habits that the man acquires as a member of society.

Guadarrama (1990), It is the interconnected set of forms of human behavior, of existing regulations in a social environment that cause activities that can be fleeting, such as ritual dance, or that are translated into persistent objective that matter for human knowledge, such as a basket, a book, a tool, a shield; these regulatory forms tend to constitute a totalized or global system, a social whole, a coherent principle. Each of these manifestations form a network of major interconnections and religious or political or economic regulations and establish criteria identification that give rise to study the authenticity of culture.

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The research assumes the criteria of Don Fernando Ortiz, who establishes precise directions for the concrete analysis of the identity phenomenon, where it is perceived in its dynamics as an active process of permanent creation and reconstruction, guarantor of the inclusion of differences in the face of identity, unity, an aspect that is materialized in identity traits and values, whose uniqueness is expressed in national and local realities in their relationship with the national, regional and global historical evolution, a question that points towards the perception of identity as a process of interaction between the macro and the micro in the socio-historical sphere.

Ortiz fernando (1997) The image of the creole ajiaco symbolizes the formation of the Cuban people. Above all, an open casserole, that is Cuba, the island set on the fire of the tropics (...) and thus the Cuban ajiaco has been boiling and cooking, over a lively fire or a clean or dirty embers that varied in each era; according to the human substances that were thrown into the pot by the hands of the cook, which in this metaphor are the events of the story. At all times the Cuban people have had, like the ajiaco, new and raw elements that have just entered the casserole to cook; a heterogeneous conglomeration of diverse races and cultures, of many meats and crops, that agitate, intertwine and disintegrate in the same social hubbub; and there, in the depths of the pot, an already settled mass produced by the elements that, when disintegrating in the historical boiling, have settled their most tenacious essences in a rich and flavorfully seasoned mixture that already has its own character of creation; miscegenation of cuisine, miscegenation of races, miscegenation of culture, dense broth of civilization bubbling up in the Caribbean hearth.

This Ortiz conclusion captures the essence of Cuban cultural identity, and maintains its validity due to the subject matter of the identity process.

Set of proposed exercises.

Activity # 1

Title: Dance as a hobby.

General objective: To express criteria about different types of dance in order to enrich students' cultural horizon.

Time: 90 minutes. The whole period will be devoted to work with the searching-solving exercises, oriented to foster students' culture.

Methods: explanatory, illustrative: it shows video-sequences.

Teaching aids: computer, board, pictures, slides.

Procedures: This activity will be inserted in Unit # 4, from the English program "Hobbies". After the first class the teacher will assign these exercises in order to develop students' likes about dance. They will watch carefully the kind of music and the technical movements performed by dancers in the multimedia; as well as the dancing genders exhibited in the video.

Typology: recognition, reproduction and production exercises.

Control: one – peer work, pair work and group work.

Evaluation: The students that solve just the first exercise will be evaluated with grade (6), the ones who solve the first and the second exercises will get grade (8), and the students that solve all the exercises will grade (10).

1- Which are the types of dance present in the list?

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| a) – reggae. | d) ---tango. |
| b)—ballet. | e)—heavy metal. |
| c)—pop funk. | f)—tapping. |

Objective: identify types of dance in order to reinforce students' knowledge about dance.

2- Read the following dialogue.

A: Hi! Lucy. How have you been?

B: I'm fine. How about you?

A: Pretty good. Lucy, have you seen the performance entitled The Swans' lake?

B: No, I have not, but Alicia Alonso, our best classic ballerina, was a professional performing those kinds of representations.

A: You are right; I would like you to see her performing it.

B: It would be great! Well, Jane I have to go now. See you later. Bye.

A: Bye.

2.1 Select from a magazine, newspaper or any other material some pictures showing types of dance you like the most.

Find in the dialogue:

- a) The title of a classical piece of ballet:
- b) The most famous ballerina in Cuba:
- c) A kind of profession:

d) The action of executing a dance in ballet:

Objective: To reproduce the dialogue in order to check students' pronunciation, intonation and rhythm, fostering their knowledge about different types of dance by answering.

3- Answer these questions dealing with dance.

- a) What do you know about dance?
- b) Why was it created?
- c) Do you like to perform any style of dance in the future? Why?
- d) What does dance project?

Objective: To increase students' cultural knowledge in regard to dance and its impact to life.

Activity # 2

Title: Important personalities.

General objective: To summarize Nelson Mandela's labor in order to reinforce students' historical knowledge about important world personalities.

Time: 90 minutes. The whole period will be devoted to work with the searching-solving exercises, oriented to foster students' culture.

Methods: explanatory, illustrative: it shows a picture.

Teaching aids: computer, board, pictures, slides

Procedures: This activity will be inserted in Unit # 7 "Important Personalities ", the teacher will support the second activity with the students' workbook drills on page 39, and exercise 11 on page 41.

Typology: recognition, reproduction and production exercises.

Control: one – peer work, pair work and group work.

Evaluation: The students will get a (6) if just the first exercise is done appropriately. They will get (8) if the first and the second exercises are done. Finally, they will get (10) if all exercises are correctly done.

1- Select from the list where Nelson Mandela is from.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| a)—Nicaragua. | d)—Venezuela. |
| b)—Greece. | e)—South Africa. |
| c)—United States. | f)—Cuba. |

Objective: Identify the country where Nelson Mandela is from in order to reinforce students' knowledge about him and his political impact in masses.

2-Organize the following ideas about Nelson Mandela from the video.

- a)— He was the most famous political prisoner in the world.
- b)— He was one of the most important personalities of 20th century.
- c)— Nelson Mandela was born on July 18th, 1918.
- d)— He became the first South African black president.

Objective: To recognize the chronological order of the ideas in order to check students' comprehension about Nelson Mandela.

3- Answer the following questions about Nelson Mandela.

- a) Who was Nelson Mandela?
- b) What was his profession?
- c) Which were some of Mandela's actions to defend human rights?
- d) How many years did he serve in prison?
- e) Was his political action an act of courage? Why?

Objective: To increase students' knowledge about Nelson Mandela and his political life.

Activity # 3

Title: The Ozone Layer.

General objective: To get conscious of the necessity to protect the ozone layer in order to reinforce students' environmental culture.

Time: 90 minutes. The whole period will be devoted to work with the searching-solving exercises, oriented to foster students' culture.

Methods: explanatory, oral explanation, illustrative: it shows video-sequences.

Teaching aids: computer, board, documentary and slides.

Typology: recognition, reproduction and production exercises.

Control: one – peer work, pair work and group work

Procedures: This activity will be inserted in Unit # 8 “The Environment”. After the second lesson the teacher will assign these exercises conceived to develop students' cultural environment.

Evaluation: The students will get a (6) if only the first exercise is done correctly. They will get (8) if the first and the second exercises are done appropriately. Finally, they will get (10) if all exercises are correctly done.

1- Circle the correct place where the ozone layer hole is located.

- A) ---- Great Britain.
- B) ---- Africa.
- C) ----- Antarctica.
- D) ----- Japan.
- E) ----- Argentina.

Objective: To identify the region where the Ozone Layer hole is located in order to reinforce students' knowledge about this important impact to life on Earth.

1- Imagine you are metaphorically the ozone layer, so you are asking man to protect you. Dramatize the following dialogue. Be original.

Character A will play the role of the ozone layer and character B will play the role of man.

A: Hello, I would like to introduce myself, my name is Ozone Layer.

B: Oh! Hi, nice to meet you miss, I'm man.

A: Nice to meet you too. Man, I need your help, during the last years I've felt so weak due to the chemical pollutants that you are sending to the atmosphere.

B: But, what can I do? I cannot stop industries, I need to get money, the war is one of the capitalist countries' hobbies, so I think I can't help you.

A: Let me tell you, Sir, maybe you can not see your children's growth, because I'm the one who gives you life. Think over, what is more important to you, money, war or life?

B: Well, if it is for my children's health, I will change this polluted world for a better one. I promise you.

A: Thanks for all, bye.

B: Good bye.

2.1 Imagine you are the man who is going to transform the polluted environment. Express through a drawing the world you wish for living.

Objective: To reproduce the dialogue in order to check students' pronunciation, intonation and rhythm, fostering knowledge about life on Planet Earth through the video.

3-Taking into account what you have learned about the Ozone Layer, answer these questions.

- How is the ozone layer formed?
- Which are some of the atmospheric pollutants?
- Point out on the map where the Ozone Layer hole is located.
- Why is it important to preserve the Ozone layer?

Objective: To deepen on the importance to preserve the Ozone Layer for the future of the planet.

Activity # 4

Title: Travel Time.

General objective: To narrate the historical event carried out in La Demajagua sugar mill in order to reinforce students' historical knowledge about this important event.

Time: 90 minutes. The whole period will be devoted to work with the searching-solving exercises, oriented to foster students' culture.

Methods: explanatory, illustrative: it shows pictures.

Teaching aids: computer, board, pictures, slides

Procedures: This activity will be inserted in Unit # 9 "A trip Around the Country ", the teacher will support this unit using this historical place of Granma Province. He will use some pictures in order to reinforce students' knowledge. The class will be devided into groups in order to have them work collectively.

Typology: recognition, reproduction and production exercises.

Control: one – peer work, pair work and group work.

Evaluation: The students will get a (6) if just only the first exercise is done correctly. They will get (8) if the first and the second exercises are done appropriately. Finally, they will get (10) if all exercises are correctly accomplished. A set of cards will be used to enrich students' historical background by detailedly explaining general information and facts of all historical dates included in this exercise.

1- What date belongs to the beginning of the Cuban independence fights in "La Demajagua"?

a) -- 13 / 3 / 1957.

b) -- 15 / 3 / 1878.

c) -- 4 / 3 / 1960.

d) —10 / 10 / 1868.

d) -- 25 / 3 / 1895

Objective: To identify the correct historical date in order to reinforce students' knowledge about Cuban history.

2- Say true or false according to the visual material.

a)—Carlos Manuel de Céspedes was the owner of "La Demajagua" sugar mill.

b) — on October 10th, 1869 a great number of Eastern patriots were organized.

c) — Céspedes announced the slaves that they were free.

d)—the declaration of October 10th, was a document of Cuban patriots.

Objective: To identify correctly true or false statements in order to check students' comprehension from the Web Site.

3- Answer the following questions about "La Demajagua" sugar mill.

- a) Who was the owner of this sugar mill?
- b) What happened to Céspedes when he moved to Manzanillo?
- c) What do you think about his attitude?
- d) What happened on October 10th, 1868?

Objective: To increase students' knowledge about Cuban history by answering questions about the Web Site.

Analysis of the results

To the extent that the set of exercises was applied, it was observed that the students were gradually overcoming their deficiencies, proof of this is that when performing the second evaluative test there was a better result.

The students did a study and analysis of the most important aspects of culture that were worked on in the set of exercises and developed the activities where they were able to make judgments, criteria, drew up their own conclusions, showing greater interest in the study of the English subject.

They showed interest in sociocultural knowledge. In general, the students came to identify with what is representative of the general culture, they were able to define concepts, make evaluations, write short texts, reach conclusions and become aware of the historical moment in which they live to achieve a general culture. They felt like part of the investigative process, as active participants and builders of their own history.

Comparative results from the test applied.

Initial

group	1 st law level	%	2 nd middle level.	%	3 rd high level	%
Experimental group.	27	60	9	20	9	20

Final.

group	1 st law level	%	2 nd middle level.	%	3 rd high level	%
Experimental group.	3	6.6	2	4.4	40	88.8

As the previous tables reflect, there is an extraordinary advance in the level of knowledge of students about general culture achieved during the final pedagogical test. Attending to the categories of the low, middle and high level. The results can be considered satisfactory, because in the group, in the initial diagnosis 27 students were located in the low level, representing 60%, not being so in the final pedagogical test that 3 students were located for 6.6%. At the middle level, in the initial diagnosis 9 students were located for 20% and

in the final pedagogical test 2 students were located at this level for 4.4%. At the high level, in the initial diagnosis 9 students were located for 20% and in the final diagnosis, 40 students were located at this level, once the final diagnosis was applied for 80%.

Conclusions

- The set of exercises constitutes a didactic-methodological resource that allows us to deepen, in a harmonious and practical way, the most varied interpretations of universal culture.
- The set of exercises guarantees a higher affective and cognitive performance, while enriching the general culture of the students of the ninth grade.
- The final pedagogical test used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposal reveals the viability of the set of exercises and the possibilities of application in the pedagogical practice of the general Basic Secondary school.
- The set of exercises on general culture constituted a didactic resource, whose effectiveness was appreciated in the sociocultural value that it provides to ninth grade students, basing on the basic contents of the study program of the English subject.

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