

**TEACHING ENGLISH IN AND ACROSS MULTIPLE CONTEXTS /
ENSEIGNER L'ANGLAIS DANS ET À TRAVERS DES CONTEXTES
MULTIPLES / PREDAREA LIMBII ENGLEZE ÎN CONTEXTE
EDUCAȚIONALE MULTIPLE¹**

Abstract: *The new educational system in general and the acquisition of a foreign language in particular can no longer be regarded as an insular topic, within limited boundaries and only syllabus based, but in a more dynamic way complying with society's needs. Demands of contemporary times in terms of education are much more versatile and prone to various analyses whose main purpose is to highlight that different subjects are being closely intertwined and work together in a well formed network. Learning a foreign language may be referred to as an accumulation of cultural background, civilization, history, geography and other fields that substantially contribute to its better understanding. Globalization, the constant movement of masses of people, the brain drain phenomenon have all created a complex structure providing language with a more privileged place in the learning system. The above mentioned ideas will bear witness to the work under way.*

Keywords: *syllabus, limited boundaries, demands, cultural background, brain drain.*

The terms *multidisciplinary interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity* emerged later in the current language, by the mid of the twentieth century. Pluridisciplinarity involves studying a topic from the perspective of several disciplines. For example, environmental ecology can be approached from the perspective of the following subjects: geography, chemistry, physics, biology, etc.

Interdisciplinary refers to the transfer of methods from one discipline to another. Transdisciplinarity entered the field of research and theory in 1980, after the previous organization of a seminar to Nice, where J. Piaget, one of the promoters of the concept, proposed adding the term *beyond the discipline*.

Starting from the need for curricular integration, psychologists propose a holistic constructivist approach, while scientists regard the concept of transdisciplinarity as a new worldview and reality. The underlying idea aims at organizing the curriculum in terms of inter / pluri and multidisciplinary perspective. The traditional boundaries of learning in one context, without cultural and historical correlations were overcome by an innovative approach designed to reconfigure the path of learning.

Pluricontextuality is a frequently used concept which allows learners to familiarize and respond favourably to different life situations. The capacity to understand and interpret diverse viewpoints on a given topic helps students to advance critical thinking and contributes to cognitive development. Interdisciplinary approach is guidance to solving ambiguities and understanding the causes and consequences of an issue. It also helps learners to evaluate the ethical dimensions of the issues explored. Ethics entails an objective analysis of phenomena in compliance with *good-bad, right-wrong* principles.

Integrating ideas into a more complex thinking system, recognizing the social impact of these ideas and acknowledging the significance of feelings and values contribute to making the learning process viable and authentic.

A foreign language didactics can also be viewed and developed by teachers working across multiple contexts. These contexts go beyond the learning environment itself and extend to out-of-school backgrounds (society, family, culture etc.) As already stated, the recent educational pillars put significantly less emphasis on knowledge and promote

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directions such as: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live with others, learning to be*.

People respond to, interpret and influence actions in contexts they engage in. Teaching across history has only served its school and curricular purpose, but today's globalized society reconsiders the act of teaching and gives it other valences. Any language springs up as a polycontextual resource inserted in diverse cultures.

English, for instance, is spoken in different communities, in many variants and therefore has become the main tool of cultural diversity. English is acquired both in school and out-of-school contexts. The latter may be regarded as innovative and practical outside the classroom or unsuitable for a curricular context. Students have been accustomed to being informed and familiarized with knowledge in school, but today's society has encountered numerous challenges that have substantially contributed to our evolution.

The traditional perspective of language learning within the educational system has been replaced by a large insight towards learning. Formal, informal contexts, family, the circle of friends and workplaces are all fruitful environments of enlightening. The advances in technology have also brought about the extension of communication in the virtual world. Computer-assisted communication has thus become the appanage of those working in or out-of-school domains. "Teaching needs to address not only a standardized or institutionalized discourse in EFL, but the many social languages that reside within this discourse." (Gee, 2004)

The same author refers to *discourse* as "ways of being in the world: they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes." (Gee, 1989. p.6-7). Therefore, learning is no longer a personal component, but extends to the whole educational community. The manifestation of our thoughts and needs in a specific context reveals how we relate to the world surrounding us.

In sociocultural terms, the learner establishes a special relationship with the world around him. Knowledge acquisition is in close relation with social interaction. It is only through participation in the speaking community that learners develop a broad horizon of how language mechanisms work. Outside contexts of learning provide us with new resources and opportunities for communication. Learners move between school, workplace, local community, online and offline.

Most European institutions that grant language certificates promote the idea that proficiency in English involves participation and management of multiple worlds. School contexts are formal, steady and curriculum-based, whereas out-of-school contexts are dynamic and maintained by the social environment. Although the two boundaries are difficult to establish, English learners should try to construct their discourse by making connections between them.

However, natural questions arise from here: *In what contexts can teachers be more productive?, To what extent do out-of-school contexts serve the purpose of the curriculum.* Debates on these questions are high and far from solving contradictory opinions.

The scholarly literature emphasizes harmonization of curriculum with external backgrounds in which the learner is engaged. The two are inseparable and cooperate according to the student's needs. Understanding these needs requires exploiting the students' intellectual potential in various environments of action. Productive interactions are those in which the teacher selects, exploits and categorizes elements from the learner's life world.

For instance, during my teaching career I have exploited numerous learning situations in and out-of school environments. One of them aimed at involving students in a hypothetical situation of witnessing a car crash. My overt intention was to find out how they react to such a situation, what emotional state they experience, what psychological impact the event has on them.

Previously, I had exposed them to a reading exercise about car crashes. Their performance while practising the reading skill was lifeless, boring and unspirited and they responded the very way I had expected. When confronted with a simulation of a car crash, things took a different turn. Surprisingly, they revealed a multitude of emotional reactions, which were indistinguishable in the traditional classroom context. Learners were not at all dynamic or productive in the classroom, unlike the outer context which generated unexpected outcomes. The students' communicative situation in the outer context is high-spirited and enriched with lexical elements, psychological insight and imaginative forms.

The role of the teacher in an out-of-school context is needed to handle activities and language skills that will serve students across multiple contexts. By this, both teachers and students acknowledge the increasing impact of linguistic diversity.

Conclusion

In this respect, English didactics should be regarded as a flexible practice that allows for a new interpretation of the world. Such practices need to be encouraged since they transcend the constraints of time and space and help us to work simultaneously and in mixed ways.

English didactics can be captured as a social practice in which learners and teachers design a knowledge domain that interferes with non-formal activities and situations. Learning and teaching in multiple contexts require that participants manage to interact in one situation and make this competence work in another situation. "There is a third place between standardization and pluralism, homogeneity and heterogeneity, where EFL didactics emerges as a boundary object translating between different social worlds and discourses while maintaining consistency in the form of a shared goal." (Star and Griesemer, 1989). "Meaning is not stored in the language but built as networks of interacting activity systems." (Engeström *et al.*, 1995)

English didactics is a conglomerate of history, culture and language acts. Learners have the capacity to adapt language to new communication opportunities, design and participate in activities that transcend classroom constraints of time and space.

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