

In the search for social justice: implementing critical pedagogy in the language classroom

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Abstract: *This article narrates the experience of three professors in their journey towards the implementation of critical pedagogy in the English language classroom. It describes the Think, Share, Act (TSA) project whose main objective is to raise social awareness in students by providing them with opportunities to get involved in social projects of their interest. The TSA was created by professors Chaves, Solano and Villalobos in the Language School at Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica, during the first term of 2009. Based on Paulo Freire's Pedagogy and the principles of Holistic Education, this paper illustrates how the learners were encouraged and guided to do research and fieldwork with the purpose of taking action in society. Likewise, it explains how the TSA project generated an innovative methodology to accomplish students' transformation into social reformers. In this regard, this research shows that learners can definitely develop language skills while becoming critical citizens.*

Key words: *Critical pedagogy; English teaching; social justice.*

INTRODUCTION

A little boy in Canada who saved money for a well in Africa and grew up to found Ryan's Well Foundation profit organization (2007) to help support water projects in Africa is an instance of how one person can make a difference. In an ever increasingly interconnected world, an education that awakens such a spirit in students has become more and more necessary. However, are values like solidarity being promoted in higher education, and more specifically, in English classes and English teaching preparation programs in universities in Costa Rica? This is the issue we would like to address in this paper.

It is often the case that most professors of English are perceived as people who guide instruction of a language and therefore dedicate exclusively to the teaching of grammar, linguistics, or pronunciation, and who administer tests. This view of English teaching professionals as uni-dimensional and shallow, as entities who own knowledge and deposit it in their students, is due mostly to the fact that English teaching and learning is commonly regarded as a skill to be obtained and to be passed around. Frequently observed as an occasion for cultural exchange and for better and increased opportunities to find a good-paying job, English teaching and learning are not commonly viewed as a tool to make the world a better place. As a matter of fact, governments around the world perceive English teaching programs as a way to account for the recent demand for English teaching professionals.

Nevertheless, speaking English can be the road to reach higher ideals. It can provide access and power to communicate a message of peace and justice; it can allow educators to teach learners to grow up as kind, responsible, aware human beings; it can provide students with the opportunity to make a difference in society. Even though students are being trained to learn content, to pass standardized tests, and to abide by oppressive systems, schools should be regarded as places to challenge the social stratification of society and to encourage the possibilities for social change. A way to do so is to implement social justice projects in the language classroom.

As challenging as it may seem, the process of implementing critical pedagogy in the English language classroom is not only necessary but a journey worth going through. Therefore, language teaching professionals should develop social justice issues in language classrooms in order for students to become critical thinkers and social reformers. Encouraging leadership, conflict resolution, problem solving, critical thinking and character development skills is instrumental to increase social awareness among young people.

Three Costa Rican educators would like to share their journey and experiences in their quest to help language students find their inner social advocates. The challenges, controversies

and fulfillment derived from this process will be portrayed and explored. It is our goal that by incorporating social justice issues within the academic curriculum of English language courses at *Universidad Nacional*, Costa Rica, the students can perceive themselves not only as language learners but also as agents of transformation of oppressive social structures.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since its beginnings in 1973, the *Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje* (ELCL) at *Universidad Nacional* has had an outstanding role in the training and preparation of professionals in the areas of linguistics, literature, second language teaching, and translation in Costa Rica (ELCL Official Website). According to the ECLC Official website, the main orientation of the majors in the English Department is the proficiency and teaching of English. In fact, both Bachelors' programs (BA) offered at ELCL offer a curriculum based on linguistics, academic reading, oral expression, composition, pronunciation and culture of the target language, among others. In the case of the BA for English Teaching in Secondary School, courses on the areas previously mentioned add up to 82% of the total academic load, while they add up to 61.8%, in the BA for English Teaching in the Elementary School. The rest of the courses are usually courses in education, mostly on planning, curriculum, diverse populations, and theories of learning, which in the case of the latter make up 23.6% of the entire course load. The remaining course load includes courses in the humanities required from all students in the university, and optional courses (Courses of Study, *Sistema de Gestión y Descarga de Documentos Electrónicos*, English Department, ELCL Official Website).

As can be seen, unless the students themselves choose to explore areas other than linguistics, issues on social justice and reform in English teaching majors and English courses are kept on the margin. The reasons for this are often that 1) critical thinking and reflective activities are supposed to be carried out by all professors in all courses in all majors in order to comply with the university's overarching goals of social responsibility,

and that 2) there is an underlying assumption that issues of social justice are to be exclusively dealt with within the social sciences majors (Sociology, Journalism, International Relations, and others).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Philosophical, methodological and pedagogical foundations to the approach of language education from a humanistic and critical view can be found in the work of Paulo Freire and of the Holistic Paradigm to education.

Freire's Critical Pedagogy

“A liberating educator challenges people to know
their actual freedom, their real power.”
(Shor; Freire, 1987, p. 173)

For Freire, education is the vital component of humanization; a tool to recognize that reality is a process undergoing transformation and not a fixed unavoidable condition. Freire's humanistic and libertarian education highlights the role of educators in the creation of a class that encourages reflection, promotes critical thinking and dialogue, and most importantly, prompts to action. This, to ultimately illuminate the classroom as a place “where students and teachers practice anticipating a new social reality” is our main proposal (Shor; Freire, 1987, p. 185).

For Freire, in order to brighten reality, a dialogic relationship “where the teacher and the students *both* have to be learners, *both* have to be cognitive subjects” (Shor; Freire, 1987, p. 33) is essential. Dialogue often requires love, humility, faith in human kind, hope, and critical thinking, but teaming intellectual work with collaboration makes it easier for both to travel the path that “... integrate[s] the students and the teachers into a mutual creation and re-creation of knowledge” (Shor; Freire, 1987, p. 8). So, even though the teacher is the one who draws students to explore social issues within their reality, the students'

knowledge, life experiences and potential to contribute to change the world also enrich the educators' perspective of the issues being analyzed.

It is clear then that "liberatory education must be understood as a moment or process or practice where we challenge the people to mobilize or organize themselves to get power" (Shor; Freire, 1987, p. 34); the kind of power that can transform lives. According to Freire, critical pedagogy seeks reflection, but it also seeks action. However, it does not seek the kind of action that becomes plain activism, but action derived from deep thought (Shor; Freire, 2005, p. 88). Action, then, becomes a culminating dimension of liberatory education: the possibility to commit to transformation by acting upon those realities that marginalize and oppress others. In this view, "education as the practice of freedom... denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world" (Shor; Freire, 2005, p. 81). The world is to be transformed by all men and women together.

Nevertheless, English teaching in Costa Rica has continued to resemble what Freire calls *banking education*. Narrative in nature, "the outstanding characteristic of this... education, then, is the sonority of words, not their transformation power" (Shor; Freire, 2005, p. 71). Thus, content is emphasized over critical thinking. The main efforts lie on assuring students' command of the language: its pronunciation and grammar, or in training massive amounts of speakers to teach the language, but a much needed liberatory view of language education is very rarely put into practice.

The need for the implementation of critical pedagogy in the English classroom is then clear. As stated by Freire (2005, p. 80),

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist, and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.

An English classroom that ignores the importance of humanistic and libertarian principles is providing training for its masses but is neglecting nurturing the potential of each student to become an agent of change in the world. In the words of Shor and Freire (1987, p. 36), "Our task, the liberating task... is to illuminate reality".

Holistic education

A way to lighten reality in the English classroom is to follow Holistic Education principles closely. In the Humanistic Educational Paradigm, learning experiences help students create their own understanding and use knowledge in order to learn how to learn, to solve problems, and to face the challenges of this century. The purpose of Humanistic Education is to provide a foundation for personal growth and development so that learning will continue throughout life in a self-directed manner (DeCarvalho, 1991).

When educators and learners comply with this view of teaching and learning, they develop values of understanding, respect and tolerance. This humanistic perspective guides students to achieve language goals in a more social and emotional environment.

Nowadays, humanity is immersed in a world where reality is transformed daily; this demands new methodologies and strategies in language teaching for a more well-rounded education, which can satisfy the needs of the learners to adapt to the new changes and challenges of this century. Since the Holistic Paradigm in education views learners as creators of the learning process, they are constantly participating in activities for interrelation, exchange of knowledge, dialogue and reflection. In fact, students take part in experiences which stimulate their senses and pleasure to feel as active participants of their own learning. They learn from the acts of auto organization and auto construction of knowledge which help them develop the feeling of achievement in acquiring a foreign

language, discovery of interests and freedom in using their own learning styles.

Learning experiences in the Holistic Paradigm

The Holistic Paradigm leads to learning experiences which are enjoyable, meaningful, engaging, life enriching and useful. They also have a specific purpose for language development and improvement, motivation, attitude change, interaction and creativity. Humanity has begun a new era that surpassed the old paradigm of fragmentation, control, regulations and schedules. Holistic education is essentially a democratic education, concerned with both individual freedom and social responsibility. It is education for a culture of peace, for sustainability and ecological literacy, and for the development of humanity's inherent morality and spirituality. In a holistic environment, imaginative and original learning experiences allow students to enjoy self-creation since they take an active role in the learning process. As stated by Morin (2003, p. 45), "the human mind opens to the world. The opening to the world is revealed by curiosity, interrogation, exploration, search, and passion to know and learn." Holistic learning is organized around relationships among students and their environment while empowering them to engage in the teaching/learning process. Stack (2008) summarizes that Holistic Education:

- is concerned with the growth of every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potentials;
- is a quest for understanding and meaning. Its aim is to nurture healthy, whole, curious persons who can learn whatever they need to know in any new context;
- recognizes the innate potential of every student for intelligent, creative and critical thinking;
- recognizes that all knowledge is created within a cultural context and that the "facts" are seldom more than shared points of view. It encourages learners to critically approach the cultural, moral and political contexts of their lives;

- values spiritual knowledge. Spirituality is a state of connectedness to all life, honoring diversity in unity. It is an experience of being, belonging and caring.

Learning occurs when the pedagogical process is “meaningful for students just when there is a reconfirmation of the complex system of the brain/mind” (Assmann, 2002, p. 40). Within this new paradigm, learning has become life; as a result, learning experiences help transform reality that turns into an atmosphere of freedom and love for learning, according to Gallegos (1999).

The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole. (Krishnamurti)

According to Greene (2005, p. 101), “we are looking for a future social vision of a community more humanistic, more pluralistic, fairer and happier.” Holistic Education teaches human development to create integral and global learners whose life expectations will make a better world to live in. They also promote learning for living, for being a holistic individual who views life with enthusiasm, curiosity and love for learning. Students are considered as a whole: needs, interests, motivation, and their wish to succeed. Also, it sets high expectations for students as able of accomplishing goals and objectives. In fact, the purpose of Holistic Education is to prepare students to meet the challenges of living as well as academics.

Within the new Humanistic Paradigm, the proposed learning-teaching process stresses the use of information from theories of multiple intelligences, cooperative learning, constructivism, communicative language teaching and neuro-linguistic programming. These approaches view learners as creative and critical thinkers who use their own learning styles, develop metacognitive skills and use their great potential for success. Students learn best when they are actively involved in the process and this results in more satisfaction towards the class.

Cooperative learning, especially, has been a successful teaching strategy used to motivate students work in groups since

they find more support, help, correct themselves, work with enthusiasm and improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Learners need to learn to develop social skills to respect different points of view, to express themselves, to develop critical thinking skills about topics related to their reality and the world. They also need to develop empathy to become socially aware individuals who understand what others feel and suffer. This was the way the *Think, Share, Act* (TSA) project was initiated, with a purpose to get students involved in social justice concerns as they learn the language.

EXPLANATION OF THE PROJECT AND METHODOLOGY

TSA objectives, procedures and assignments

The mission of the *Think, Share, Act* project is to create social awareness in students at *Universidad Nacional* so that they feel the need to become change agents. Its main objective is to make both, teachers and students of English as a Foreign Language, conscious of taking the responsibility and challenge of not only teaching and learning the basic language skills, but using them to make a difference in this world.

The TSA project requires professors to previously plan their classes to be able to incorporate the necessary evaluation and methodology. Besides, they need to prepare themselves by reading a lot about social justice and looking for materials that can be useful in classes and at the Awakening Gatherings. Finding their inner social advocates is crucial for professors since they are the ones encouraging students to become change agents and in order to do this, they need to be good role models to follow.

Since the beginning of the semester, students participating in the TSA project are told what they have to do. By working in subgroups, students need to reflect on current situations in communities, schools and families and come up with a social issue they would like to take action on. Then they have to do

research on it in different sources and design a proposal with a possible action plan to implement the possible ways to make a change. Students are asked to choose a name for their projects, a logo and a slogan that can identify their main objective.

While working on their projects, students need to document their participation in the different activities through pictures, video clips, notes, interviews, surveys, etc. With all this material, students create a documentary in which they narrate their experiences, challenges and insights. These documentaries are in English and they last about 10 minutes. All of them are presented at the Closing Ceremony to be held at the end of the semester and to which all participating students and professors are invited.

Besides making the documentaries about their social projects, students also participate in the different activities done in class through discussions and written reactions after listening to songs, watching movies, reading articles, and so on. During the semester, they always have an opportunity to share what they are doing in their projects and to get their classmates' help and support. Because of this, the growth of social conscience in students is pretty big. It is not the professors telling students all they have achieved, but it is the students themselves noticing it.

Description of students

The students participating in the *Think, Share, Act* project during the first semester of 2009 were from different courses, programs and majors:

- Integrated English I: English Teaching in the Elementary School Major;
- Integrated English for other Majors II: International Relations Major;
- Pronunciation Vowels: English Major.

The students in two of the groups were in their first year of college while the others were in their second year, but it was only the second English course they had taken. For this reason, their level of English was low but it definitely improved during the four months of classes. Despite the differences between

courses, the teaching and learning of social issues was possible as well as the evaluation, which varied according to the dynamics and methodology of each course.

Description of the projects

Along the semester, students had to write a proposal about their final projects with diverse information which guided them through the process. The procedure to work on their social projects was the following:

Procedure:

1. Work in groups of four.
2. Reflect on current situations in your community, classroom, school, neighborhood, family.
3. Choose the issue you would like to take action on.
4. Do research on the issue you chose. Look for information about similar issues on the internet, newspapers, interviews, documentaries, movies, songs, pictures, magazines, books, etc.
5. Make a portfolio with all the material you use and produce during the project (pictures, movie clips, handouts, notes, interviews, recordings, websites, etc.).
6. Design a proposal with solutions to this problem.
7. Take action: Implement the possible ways to make a change. Organize your community, classroom, school, neighborhood, family; create a video; create a website/blog; write an article for a local newspaper. Document your participation in these activities. You must be able to prove you took action.
8. Present the final project to the audience with a documentary of about ten minutes. Be prepared to share experiences, challenges, insights and suggestions.

The proposal should look like this:

(Taken from Global Call to Action/Peace Jam)

Project Name: Choose a name for your project. This name can be anything you want, make sure it relates to what you intend to do.

Project Name: _____

Project Location: List the name of the city, town, community, neighborhood, or school where you plan to carry out your project.

Project Location: _____

Issue: Select the kind of issue this project will address.

Issue: _____

Problem Statement: What specific problem will your project address?

Statement: _____

Research: Do research about the causes and possible actions you can take. Summarize the research your group did.

* Did you read news articles or books on the issue?

* Did you interview experts/other people?

* Did you observe the problem yourselves?

* What facts or data did you gather?

Root Cause of the Problem: What have you learned about the causes of the problem?

Causes: _____

Action Plan: Tell in detail what you plan to do.

* What exactly is your group going to do?

* What are the goals for this project? Tell us about your service goals (what you hope to accomplish) and your learning goals (what you hope to learn).

* What is your plan to make this happen? Tell us step by step what you plan to do.

* How do you plan to keep the project going? Is this project going to last weeks, months, or longer?

* How do you think this project will make a difference?

CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE JOURNEY

Working on a social project is not easy, especially when it is the first time doing it. For this reason, there are several challenges that professors and students have to face while becoming part of the *Think, Share, Act* project. First there are the students among themselves; they need to maintain good interpersonal relations and show respect and tolerance towards each other. Besides, through self-reflection learners need to become leaders who are able to deal with conflict resolution. While working on the projects, students' sensitivity of social issues increased as well as their appreciation of life, family and opportunities. Therefore, students demonstrated a commitment towards their social concerns which was shown by fundraising and constant help, even after the semester was over and students were no longer required to do anything for the course.

In terms of the professors, they need to provide a lot of guidance and maintain good communication with the students through the whole semester. Students' expectations of an English course are usually learning how to listen, read, write and speak in that language; however, they rarely think they will do something to make a difference in the world. It is thus the professors' responsibility to motivate and encourage students to understand how learning English should be more than being able to communicate in it. All this creates a strong bond between the professors and the students, the first ones becoming role models to be followed.

Since the *Think, Share, Act* project was created and carried out for the first time this year, there were many challenges the professors had to face. One of the most difficult challenges was the funding this project required. After having asked for sponsorship to different important companies in Costa Rica, one of them, Café Britt, provided us with the necessary refreshments for the second Awakening Gathering. Moreover, financial support was requested from different departments at *Universidad Nacional* and two of them gave us a positive answer. With this support, besides the refreshments provided, during the Closing Ceremony students received a participation certificate along with

a pin from the university. Other challenges faced were getting the support from the administration and faculty and the collaborative teaching needed since all professors at the TSA project need to agree on the evaluation and methodology to be used in their courses.

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

In order to carry out this project, several qualitative research methods were used. The following is a description of the data collecting process: instruments and techniques.

Observations

The professors kept a record of the students' work by asking them to give oral presentations and talks about their projects in class as well as through e-mails. The students showed pictures and video clips of their work; they were given continuous guidance through the whole process in order to work as a team in their own subgroups which allowed them to build better interpersonal skills and important values such as tolerance and leadership.

Written reports

For writing, the learners also kept blogs where they included information about their projects. They gave vent to their creativity to narrate their experiences and the learning process. In addition, they constantly worked on their blogs by adding photos and a description of their initiatives.

Awakening gatherings

Throughout this process, co-curricular activities in the form of gatherings awakened students to discover, while learning and practicing English, their inner advocates and to share and reflect on the actions of exemplary young people. In these Awakening Gatherings, students talked about their

projects, they also watched movies, learned about other initiatives that raise social awareness and then discussed their impact on their lives.

Documentaries

The students were required to make a documentary of about ten minutes with their experiences, challenges, insights and suggestions about their work. In their videos the students introduced themselves, commented on their efforts and contributions and discussed their challenges and accomplishments. Finally, in the Closing Ceremony, students enthusiastically participated in the presentation of the documentaries they created using programs such as Windows Movie Maker. For most students in this first semester, it was the first time they ever made a video, so this provided them with a lot of challenges but satisfaction at the same time. A feature that makes the TSA a remarkably special and successful project is the joy with which students' effort and work is celebrated at the end of their journeys and the feeling of togetherness, family, and community that this generates. One example of a project documentary can be found on:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ThinkShareAct>

Questionnaires

At the end of this first semester, students were asked to fill out a survey about the experience of working on the TSA project. Most of them, 90% of 60 students, expressed their satisfaction and motivation in carrying out a project like this. Indeed, the TSA project has had a tremendous impact on professors and students who have been involved in it due to the fact that they have changed their lives by empowering themselves to help others and contribute to change society. Also, the students expressed that now they live appreciatively for what they have everyday and also sympathize with others who need their generous contributions. The impact of this project has gone beyond expectations since both professors and students want to

continue the journey to dedicate their time to those social causes that deserve to be changed and to be better. There is a deep commitment to continue pursuing for what their hearts are claiming to do: to become advocates of social injustice and to make the difference by contributing with our immeasurable efforts to change unprivileged realities into a more dignifying way of living.

***Survey on students' reactions and attitudes
towards the TSA Project***

1. What did this project mean to you?
2. How did you commit to this project?
3. What efforts did you make?
4. How did this project help you improve your English skills?
5. Would you like to continue doing this kind of project?
Why?
6. What kind of satisfaction do you feel about the completion of this project?
7. Should all the students from UNA get involved in this kind of projects? Why?
8. Have you ever participated in a project like this? Which one?
9. How much English did you learn through this project?
Why?

Students' insights

Overall, students felt the project brought a new perspective to their lives. They demonstrated satisfaction and pride of their work during the project. Their reactions to having participated in the TSA project can clearly be appreciated in the following comments:

I am really grateful with my teacher for giving me this opportunity to change the world even a little bit and I really hope that other students can live this experience because is excellent to help people and give them love!!!! -Sofia-

This project was the difference in this semester, and of course I love it, I think that work with children, specially when you know that the children come from broken homes or problematic families and you can do something for them, is amazing, I have never felt something like that and I wish that we could keep working with this because for me was an amazing experience for me, and I am sure my classmates loved it too. -Jonathan-

It is very important to point out that *Universidad Nacional* is viewed as a humanistic university where students go beyond the traditional expectations of just learning what is on a course syllabus. By having been involved in the TSA project, Carolina believes she had a good opportunity "...to do something important for our communities; and also put in practice the values that the *Universidad Nacional* proclaim." Hazel agrees with that since she expressed "...this social project is only the beginning of the new style life in our university."

One of the objectives of the *Think, Share, Act* project is to provide students with opportunities to improve their language skills, and this can be confirmed by what Priscilla said: "The social project 'Remembering our grandpas' also improves my writing skills and besides it enhances my speaking skills." Moreover, she thinks that

...the most essential thing; it made me a better person. Worked with old people taught me values, taught to be patient, to appreciate the life that I have, to believe that I can make a difference in people's life and taught me things that nobody could ever teach me in a class, I just can learn it by myself.

Working for a good cause makes people feel they are making a difference and that regardless of how hard they work, their effort is worth it. This is exactly what students participating in the TSA project experienced:

So after finished this project I felt very pleasant and satisfied because of all the laughs and happy faces that the elders

showed us that our effort and dedication really worth it. - Priscilla-

...I think that this project make a difference not only in the children and their families life, because of the activities we did, it was more impressive to them how to women, one of them in a wheelchair is capable to get involved in a community despite the physical disabilities. -Mariana-

I think the TSA project had an enormous value, not only to see the needs of others but to feel them. It taught us that with little, we can do a lot. It was worth it, I love the TSA! -Verónica-

Especially insightful was the following comment. This student chose the social project as her topic in a composition requested in one of her tests. Her reflection on how the project “illuminated” her idea of what higher education is was certainly an indication of the reach of the TSA project.

Social Project: A Lesson of Life

In this semester, in the english course, the teacher told us that we should made a social project. In the begginig I did not want because I thought I did not have time for to do it, but, when my classmates and I were planning the activity I thought that it was a good experience. When we began to go to San Rafael and we began to know the kids, I was thinking ‘This very different experience for me’ because I did not like the kids in these age and I was talking with some kids and they told a lot of family’s problems and why they need to go there. In this moment I learned that the university is not just for study a career, moreover, is for grow up as a person.

Maria José Jara

CONCLUDING REMARKS

“To anticipate tomorrow by dreaming today.

The question is as Cabral said,
Is the dream a possible one or not? If it is less possible,
the question for us is how to make it more possible.

(Shor; Freire, 1987, p. 187)

By carrying out different social projects, language learners go beyond the traditional expectation of achieving the English skills to just communicate. Students turn into more sensitive human beings who commit to make the world a better place to live in by helping others. The *Think, Share Act* project started with the inspiration of becoming agents of change in the field of education by looking forward to changing students' attitudes towards a way of becoming social advocates. The objective was accomplished since both professors and students developed ideas in order to improve Costa Rican society in a way that they become more aware of the needs of other people; therefore enhancing sensitivity, leadership, decision-making and motivation to take action.

As educators, we should encourage our students to be critical thinkers and social reformers, and this is precisely what the TSA project is doing in our classrooms. According to the Statute of the University (Chapter 2, Article 3), Universidad Nacional "has to promote and generate proposals of social transformation and the integral development in order to build a prosperous, fair and free society." Therefore, we found the way to contribute to this quest, and we feel proud of making this happen for the first time in our school, since the project will set a model for others to pursue the journey.

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Título: *Em busca da justiça social: implementando a pedagogia crítica na aula de língua inglesa*

Resumo: *Este artigo narra a experiência de três professoras e mentoras, Chaves, Solano e Villalobos, ao colocarem em prática a pedagogia crítica na aula da língua inglesa no ambiente universitário. Ele descreve o projeto Think, Share, Act (TSA) que objetiva criar consciência social nos estudantes ao envolver-se em projetos sociais de seu interesse. O TSA foi criado na Escola de Línguas da Universidade Nacional, Costa Rica, durante o primeiro semestre do ano 2009. Baseado na Pedagogia de Paulo Freire e nos princípios da Educação Holística, este trabalho ilustra como os aprendizes foram motivados e guiados para fazer pesquisa e trabalho de campo com o propósito de tomar ação na sociedade. Também explica como uma metodologia inovadora foi gerada para lograr a transformação dos estudantes em reformadores sociais. A esse respeito, esta pesquisa apresenta que os aprendizes definitivamente podem desenvolver as habilidades da língua enquanto tornam-se cidadãos críticos.*

Palavras-chave: *Pedagogia crítica; ensino de inglês; justiça social.*