

Exploring Fidel Castro Ruz's contribution to Language Education in Cuba through the analysis of his quotations

Estudio de la contribución de Fidel Castro Ruz sobre la educación en lenguas en Cuba mediante el análisis de sus citas

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ABSTRACT

Learning about Fidel Castro's pedagogical thought related to language education is truly necessary. The present paper explores Fidel Castro's contribution to language education through the study of some of his quotations related to language teaching and learning. Theoretical and empirical methods were used, such as document analysis, analysis – synthesis, induction – deduction, as well as interviews to teachers and surveys to students, observation, mathematical percentage calculation in quantitative processing and the analysis and qualitative interpretation of information. The results include the systematization of basic concepts about the study of a personality, as well as some

RESUMEN

Aprender sobre el pensamiento pedagógico de Fidel Castro relacionado con la educación de las lenguas es realmente necesario. El presente trabajo explora la contribución de Fidel Castro a la enseñanza de las lenguas a través del estudio de algunas de sus citas relacionadas con la enseñanza- aprendizaje de idiomas. Se utilizaron métodos teóricos y empíricos como el análisis de documentos, análisis-síntesis, inducción-deducción, entrevistas a docentes, encuestas a estudiantes, observación, cálculo porcentual matemático para el procesamiento cuantitativo y el análisis e interpretación cualitativa de la información. Los resultados incluyen la

guidelines for contributing to integrate pedagogical ideas by Fidel Castro into the teacher education curriculum, so as to enhance trainees' interest and knowledge about it. The conclusions summarize the weaknesses identified and highlight the foundations that support the study of Fidel Castro's legacy as well as, the system of tasks to enhance learning about his contribution to language education.

Keywords: English; language education; contribution of a personality; Fidel Castro; teachers-to-be

sistematización de conceptos básicos sobre el estudio de una personalidad, así como algunas pautas para contribuir a integrar las ideas pedagógicas de Fidel Castro en el currículo de formación, con el fin de mejorar el interés y los conocimientos de los estudiantes. Las conclusiones sintetizan las debilidades identificadas y resaltan los fundamentos para estudiar el legado de Fidel Castro, así como las sugerencias y tareas para analizar su contribución a la educación en lenguas.

Palabras clave: Inglés; educación en lenguas; contribución de una personalidad; Fidel Castro; futuros docentes

INTRODUCTION

Fidel Castro Ruz was the architect of the Cuban Revolution. He led all the sociopolitical, economic, cultural and educational programs in Cuba since 1959. The historical leader was systematically incorporating his educational philosophical thought into his praxis as a politician (Valdés, 2023). The comprehensive education of the Cuban people was among his priorities, that is why in 1961 a massive literacy campaign was carried out to reduce illiteracy almost to zero percent as the path to true freedom and to turn Cuba into a country with high levels of knowledge.

He was also the most critical person to assess the difficulties and advances in society. Therefore, he was constantly encouraging new programs to increase the cultural level of the people, starting by the scholarship program that began just after the end of the literacy campaign till the educational programs under the so called battle of ideas. For Fidel the role of the teacher was paramount, so he said "What is the most important thing for a Revolution that hopes to radically change the life of a country and build a new society? It is the teacher, comrades; the teacher is the most important thing in a Revolution." (Castro, F, 1962). As part of the pedagogical legacy of the historical leader, this thought comes to

highlight the need to train teachers under the revolutionary principles that support the Cuban education, and studying Fidel Castro's pedagogical thought can make a great contribution to the formation of teachers, and the education of English teachers is not an exception, much more so, if we consider the importance that Fidel gave to foreign language teaching and learning throughout his speeches, as it has been revealed in studies by Plasencia (2009) and Enriquez (2016, 2022).

English language teachers-to-be not only need to develop communication skills but also educational-cultural content to be the educators that our society demands to seed values and contribute to the formation of the new man. Hence, helping them to learn about the pedagogical thought of Fidel Castro, and particularly in relation to language education is very important and necessary in contributing to educate their moral, cultural and patriotic values. Consequently, the author has decided to study our Commander in Chief's inspirational quotations related to language education and explore how they can be integrated into the teacher education curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

A literature review helped the author to have an overview of the major approaches for historical pedagogical studies, such as that related to the contribution of a personality (Buenavilla, 2024, Batista, A. et al, 2024). The study was conducted using theoretical and empirical methods.

An important method for this kind of study following Batista (op.cited) is the biographical method to study Fidel Castro Ruz's life and revolutionary work. Without understanding his outstanding and unique personality as politician and state leader, it is impossible to analyze his contribution.

Historical-logical helped to understand the development of Fidel Castro's thoughts in relation to language education revealed in the selection of speeches provided in the multimedia by Plasencia (2009), whereas, systematization contributed to understand concepts and methodological proposals from different studies on Fidel Castro's pedagogical contribution by Barrabia, O. (2007), Plasencia, M. (2009) and Enriquez, I. (2016, 2022), Valdés (2023).

Through document study the content of official documents, syllabi and other bibliography were analyzed, allowing the study of the contribution of Fidel Castro to the Teaching Learning Process of English, so through analysis and synthesis a number of quotations from previous paper by Plasencia and Enriquez were examined to choose the most appropriate ones for the selected disciplines in the curriculum. Induction-deduction contributed to make generalizations and draw conclusions as to the weaknesses identified in the present study and the potential of using quotations by Fidel Castro after processing the information. Moreover, comparative analysis was also very useful to examine quotations in different speeches, as well as to study the contents in Didactics of Foreign Language Education and Integrated English Practice. To determine the guidelines and design the tasks to enhance English language teacher trainees' knowledge about Fidel Castro's contribution for language education, the systemic approach was used to establish the interrelations among them.

Empirical methods were used to diagnose the current knowledge of teachers and trainees at the Faculty of Foreign Language Education about Fidel Castro Ruz's contribution to language education. Teachers were interviewed to learn about their knowledge on the legacy of Fidel Castro to the Teaching Learning Process of English, whereas, teacher-to-be were surveyed with the same purpose using a random sampling, that consisted on 30 professors and 100 students from the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the University of Pedagogical Sciences "Enrique José Varona" from a population of 48 Professors and 291 students. Observation of students' responses to the tasks was also used. Mathematical percentage calculation was used in quantitative processing and the analysis and qualitative interpretation of information.

The instruments used included, firstly, an interview with teachers to determine how they incorporate quotations and references from Fidel Castro Ruz's legacy into the Integrated English Practice and Didactic of Foreign Language Education subject programs, followed by a survey of students to investigate their knowledge of Fidel Castro Ruz's legacy in English language education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When undertaking the study of historical personalities, it must be taken into account that adolescents and young people take, as behavioral patterns, people whose performance they admire, and whom they would like to resemble, so that they become role models for their lives. Hence, there is a need to bring the student closer to the knowledge of the life of these personalities in such a way that these figures become social models of action and that can be selected by the student as examples for their social behavior.

Following this line of thought, it is necessary to take into account the importance to project the approach to historical personalities in a comprehensive way, so that the student knows the whole unfolding of his activity in time and space, in such a way that this affective approach to the personality under study is produced.

According to the Dictionary of Philosophy “personality” is defined as: Man as a social individual, individual as a member of society (...). The very existence of man as a social being necessarily presupposes the interaction of men, not only the action of social conditions and other individuals on the given individual, but also the inverse influence.

Personalities do not arise spontaneously: they are the result of a process of evolution in the necessary relationship between human beings. Necessary relationship between human beings as individuals and society.

It is also necessary to clarify what is meant by contribution of a historical personality. According to Odalys Barrabía it is:

The ideas and practical actions that impulse, stimulate, clarify and lead the transformations of an area or sphere of the life of a country, region or state. This contribution is implemented consciously and involves the theoretical and methodological ideas and practical actions that will influence of the improvement of a specific area (in this case the educational one) causing the generation of new reflections and ways of acting of the people implied.

Other important concepts for this study are language education and tasks

The definition by Enriquez is more applicable to the present study, therefore, it is the one taken as reference. Language education refers to the teaching and learning of a language,

typically with the goal of developing proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing, as well as contributing to the comprehensive formation of students' personality (Enriquez, I. 2022).

Task is defined by Nunan (2004), as a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focus on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right.

Diagnosis of the current knowledge of teachers and trainees about fidel castro ruz's legacy for language education

- Seeking to obtain an overview of how teachers perceive the influence of Fidel Castro's contribution in the field of foreign language teaching and learning, an interview to teachers was conducted. It can be highlighted that the majority of them identified specific elements of Fidel Castro's thinking in foreign language learning, and although they consider them relevant, they do not apply them in their pedagogical approach to teaching. It is important to explore specific strategies that teachers can employ to promote cultural awareness and intercultural understanding in the context of teaching in line with Fidel Castro's legacy in order to influence the development of well-rounded citizens through foreign language education and reflect it in their own teaching practices.
- To assess students' overall knowledge of Fidel Castro's contribution and its importance in the educational sector, specifically in foreign language learning, I conducted a survey of students, where I can summarize that despite students being able to identify and mention some of the most prominent actions or achievements of Fidel Castro in the Cuban Education sector, their perception of the influence of Fidel Castro's legacy in this field is not sufficient or satisfactory. Additionally, they demonstrate a lack of interest in expanding their knowledge about Fidel Castro's legacy and its relationship with education and foreign language teaching.

- The findings evidence the need for determining guidelines for contributing to integrate pedagogical ideas by Fidel Castro into the teacher education program curriculum, so as to enhance trainees' interest and knowledge about it.

A proposal for guiding the integration of Fidel Castro's quotations into the curriculum:

1. Examine a selection of speeches or a selection of quotations to identify the ones most relevant to the subjects, contents and/or learning goals.
2. Begin by providing students with an excerpt from one of Fidel Castro's speeches where they can find a quotation
3. Organize the students into pairs or small groups to identify (a) key quotation(s) in the speech.
4. Have the students analyze and interpret the implicit meaning and significance of the quotation expressed by Fidel Castro.
5. Have then discuss how the identified quotation can be integrated into English language instruction. They should consider lesson plans, classroom activities, or discussions that can incorporate Fidel Castro's ideas effectively.
6. Conclude the activity by emphasizing the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and ideas, such as those of Fidel Castro, in their future careers as English teachers.

Sample tasks

Tasks were designed for the disciplines DLE and PILI VII and VIII (4th and 5th year). The following are presented as sample activities piloted with a group of students:

Didactics of Foreign Language Education

Tema 1: Los contextos en que se enseña inglés en la educación general en Cuba: primera infancia, la primaria, la secundaria básica, el preuniversitario, la enseñanza técnica y profesional y adultos, educación superior y formación de docentes.

Title: "Exploring Cultural Perspectives in Foreign Language Didactics: Reflecting on the Ideas of Fidel Castro".

Objective: The objective of this activity is to enhance students' understanding of Fidel Castro's quotations and ideas, and their ability to recognize, interpret, and integrate them in the context of English language instruction.

— Sequencing:

1. Begin by providing students with the following excerpt from Fidel Castro's speech where they can find this quotation:

"Una razón más. Y algunos recordarán lo que decíamos cuando estuvieron visitantes del Caribe, que los únicos que hablan inglés no son los ciudadanos de Estados Unidos; habla inglés y francés el Canadá, hablan inglés muchos países, vecinos nuestros, del Caribe. Y por eso nosotros en nuestras escuelas no debemos olvidar el estudio del inglés."

2. Organize the students into pairs or small groups.

Instructions:

- I. Identify and highlight key quotations from Fidel Castro's speech. (The students identified the previous one.)
 - II. Analyze and interpret the implicit meaning and significance of the quotation expressed by Fidel Castro.
 - III. Discuss how the identified quotation can be integrated into English language instruction. They should consider lesson plans, classroom activities, or discussions that can incorporate Fidel Castro's ideas effectively.
3. Conclude the activity by emphasizing the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and ideas, such as those of Fidel Castro, in their future careers as English teachers. Highlight the value of cultural awareness and understanding for effective language instruction.

— INTEGRATED ENGLISH PRACTICE VII

Componente comprensión de lectura y presentación oral (Comprender diferentes tipos de textos dialogados y monologados sobre temas diversos acerca de la actividad cotidiana, académica, laboral, investigativa, sociopolítica y cultural).

Title: "Oral Presentation on Fidel Castro's Quotations and Ideas in Integrated English Practice".

Objectives:

1. To train future English teachers to deliver an oral presentation in which they recognize, mention and interpret the implicit meaning, and
2. To integrate quotations and ideas by Fidel Castro within the context of English language instruction.

— Sequencing:

1. Provide the following quotation from Fidel Castro:

"Por razones conocidas, sobradamente conocidas, estábamos en un período que sentíamos alergia hasta por el idioma. Pero no dejaría de ser eso, por muy explicable que sea, una falta con relación a la cultura, no dejaría de ser un acto de incultura."

2. Organize the class into 4 groups:

- I. Ask students to analyze the quotation by Fidel Castro.
- II. Students will have to interpret the meaning of the given quotation and discuss its implications in the context of language instruction.
- III. They will write a collective essay about it and then one member of each group will present it in front of the class.

Each group will have a different task:

- a) Group 1: An analysis of the recognized quotation highlighting the significance in the context of language instruction.
- b) Group 2: A comparison of quotations and ideas from different speeches by Fidel Castro, emphasizing the connections to language and culture.
- c) Group 3: An interpretation of the implicit meaning of the given quotation and a discussion of its relevance in language instruction, considering the impact on cultural understanding and communication.

- d) Group 4: A demonstration of how relevant quotations and ideas from Fidel Castro can be effectively integrated into their academic works, showcasing specific examples and explaining the rationale behind their inclusion.
- 3. Conclude the activity by highlighting the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives, such as those of Fidel Castro, in language instruction. Emphasize the value of critical thinking, cultural awareness, and effective integration of quotations and ideas in their future teaching practices.

Through the tasks, trainees were introduced to the legacy of the historical leader Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro Ruz. First, to identify specific elements of Fidel Castro's thinking in foreign language learning, for them to apply it in their pedagogical practice, by exploring specific strategies to promote cultural awareness and intercultural understanding of foreign languages from Fidel Castro's legacy, so as to influence the development of well-rounded citizens through language education and reflect it in their own teaching practices. Teachers-to-be increased their knowledge, their perception of the influence of Fidel Castro's legacy is now better. They demonstrated interest in learning about Fidel Castro's legacy, as they read quotations since the early years of the

Revolution. Through the activities, they asked and answered questions, gave opinions, shared with classmates and expressed recognition and admiration towards the attitudes and values that our Commander showed throughout his life.

CONCLUSIONS

The systematization of the study has shown that there are sufficient theoretical and methodological foundations that support the study of the legacy of Fidel Castro Ruz in Language Education in Cuba. The instruments applied to learn about the current situation showed that there are weaknesses in the study of the legacy of Fidel Castro Ruz in Language Education in the Faculty of Education in Foreign Languages. So, a system of tasks was developed to enhance learning and understanding of Fidel Castro's thinking on language teaching and learning. The piloting of the tasks evidenced their feasibility to be implemented, and the procedures used stimulated appreciation and interest in the study

of the subject and contributed to education in the study of the legacy of Fidel Castro Ruz in Language Education in Cuba.

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