Safe and happy children: the magic of teaching English in a multisensory classroom - Dr. Yasna Yilorm Barrientos

Inequity, social, cultural and academic segregation, profit, competition, discrimination and teaching to the test have reduced Chile to what is known as an Educational Apartheid (Waissbluth, 2013), mainly characterized by the fact that children attend schools depending on their families’ income. According to several researchers (Waissbluth, 2013; Yilorm & Acosta 2016), the majority of these students share similar life experiences such as: unemployment, malnutrition, overcrowding, dysfunctional families, delinquency, child labour, and alcoholism, among others. It is worth mentioning that children who live in poverty experience aggressive behavior caused by extreme suffering and by being rejected by the economic and social system they belong to (Kwon, cited in Yilorm & Acosta, 2016). Social vulnerability indexes show that affective behavioral conditions and critical incidents in classrooms with socially vulnerable children are frequently observed. It is a fact that most of the students find it challenging to deal with matters such as: self-regulation of emotions, motivation, problem identification and solving, sequential planning, mental flexibility, fluency, memory and metacognition levels (Antich; Acosta; and Navarrete, cited in Yilorm & Acosta, 2016). However, in spite of the existing living and learning realities, research has also stated that socially vulnerable students should be recognized as skilled and motivated beings (Jadue, cited in Yilorm & Acosta, 2016). This recognition will obviously require a profound change of paradigm. All students have their own capacities and teachers need to accept students’ previous knowledge and respect their thoughts and emotions in order for them to undertake their teaching / learning process in a more positive way (Yilorm & Acosta, 2016).

The webinar (June 23rd 2018 – see the IP&SEN website if you missed it) shows how methodological strategies such as games, magic, art therapy, music and critical thinking can help create inclusive classrooms (Yilorm & Acosta, 2016). On one hand, games do not only entertain students, but also constitute a necessary activity to reach personal wellbeing (Martínez, 2013). Games demand a high level of concentration, which requires students to disconnect from reality. This condition allows all the participants to experience relaxation and low affective filters (Yilorm & Acosta, 2016). On the other hand, magic
tricks, songs, painting and coloring, as well as reasoning and problem solving, contribute not only to the construction of a positive atmosphere, but also relax students, make them focus, express their emotions and develop values such as love, generosity and empathy. Consequently, the teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language is understood as a social and interactive, formative, holistic and integrative process of communication. Students enjoy their learning process more and are responsive to favorable learning conditions in which problem solving satisfies their needs (Acosta, cited in González, 2009).

Contrary to traditional teaching practices that focus on the mechanical reproduction of contents through the integration of the four skills, inclusive practices consider students’ experiences, promote active participation and offer multisensory teaching experiences, since the process of understanding and perceiving information, of acting and sharing emotions, differs from one student to another.

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**References**


