

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND CLIL: EVIDENCE FROM LA ROSERAIE

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Abstract

Globalization with its positive and negative effects has changed borders and flows of people. With its 28 Member States, the European Union (EU) has also been affected by globalization in the form of refugee asylum and immigration. While some progress has been made towards the creation of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) that establishes shared standards for refugee protection in the EU, obstacles for its implementation remain. The evolving global context of conflict and displacement, coupled with failures by many countries to protect their citizens and mixed migration motivations are prone to continue to pose challenges in the asylum and immigration domain for the EU and its Member States, requiring a conjunct reflection on measures to overcome problems related to the hosting and integration of these refugees and immigrants. This paper aims to partially fill in this gap by offering a reflection based on a study case of a social organization- La Roseraie- located in Geneva, Switzerland, whose aim is to help in the social inclusion of refugees and immigrants. La Roseraie offers different activities to integrate this population, among which are the French as a foreign language (FFL) workshops rendered through the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. This study analyzes the approach used in the FFL workshops in regards to its role in the social inclusion of the participant population and also the perceptions of participants in relation to the role of the organization in their social inclusion.

Keywords: social inclusion, CLIL, foreign language education.

1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization with its positive and negative effects has changed borders and flows of people. With its 28 Member States, the European Union (EU) has also been affected by globalization with its mobility in the form of refugee asylum and immigration. While great progress has been made towards the creation of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) that establishes shared standards for refugee protection in the EU, obstacles for its implementation remain. The evolving global context of conflict and displacement, coupled with failures by many countries to protect their citizens and mixed migration motivations are prone to continue to pose challenges in the asylum and immigration domain for the EU and its Member States, requiring a conjunct reflection on measures to overcome problems related to the hosting and integration of these refugees and immigrants.

This paper aims to offer a humble, yet, relevant reflection based on a study case of a non-governmental association located in Geneva, Switzerland, whose aim is to aid the integration of refugees and immigrants there. La Roseraie was founded in 2001 with the aim of improving life conditions of immigrants and refugees in Geneva and offers a place for these people to come for information (or a cup of coffee or a snack) about basic rights and needs besides offering different activities such as French as a foreign language (hereafter FFL) workshops, sports activities, cooking workshops, picnics, assistance for CV preparation and excursions. All activities are offered free of charge and there is no need to register or undergo any other form of formal registration to attend and participate in the activities in the center La Roseraie. This paper focuses on one of the activities offered at La Roseraie, namely, the FFL workshops, analyzing their potential to build social capital [1], [2] and social inclusion through foreign language learning [3] and the role of the organization in the social inclusion of its participants.

2 SOCIAL INCLUSION

Immigration, understood as the movement of people from one country to another, motivated by various reasons, has become a more frequent phenomenon since the second half of the twentieth century due to globalization. The mobilization of people in this period has been in the direction of south-north with people going from Africa, Latin America and East Europe to the United States in North America and Germany, France, England and Switzerland among other countries in Europe. The

movement of people to the latter country is of special interest for this paper since it is where the study was carried out. According to some authors, [4] the increase of immigration in the western European countries can be explained by the demand for cheap work coupled with the aging of the population and the drop in birth rates in these countries. Another reason for this migration is the ease of communications and exchanges fostered by communication and information technologies (ICTs) and travel nowadays. The large number of immigrants and refugees attracted to the west European countries is also due to political and economic reasons such as the difference in development between the North and South hemispheres, the political and economic world restructuring that has been going on since the 70s, and finally the refugee crisis with civil wars and the collapse of socialism [5]. According to a 2014 report by the Economic Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD) the number of immigrants registered in countries belonging to this organization in 2013 was 3,824,000. It is worth highlighting that these are official figures that do not consider illegal immigrants who remain in these countries.

The focus of this study is Switzerland which has seen the arrival of a large number of immigrants mainly as a bypass of the economic crisis in the EU that previously received and absorbed more immigrants. According to the 2014 report of the Federal Immigration Office of Switzerland (available at www.typisch.ch) at the end of the year 2013 there were 1,886,630 legal foreign residents in Switzerland, representing approximately 23% of the population in the country. In the last year according to figures of the same organisation, 114,481 immigrants came from the EU countries of which 62% came looking for work in Switzerland. According to the same report, 34,123 people ensured their Swiss residence through processes started in countries like Italy, Germany and Kosovo. Finally, the same report indicates that 21,465 people coming from countries like Eritrea, Syria, Nigeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Afghanistan, Algeria, Kosovo, Sri Lanka and China, requested asylum in Switzerland.

In face of the immigration scenario in Switzerland, and considering people who are not recorded in the official figures, a question is raised, namely, that of how to socially include these people - especially those seeking asylum and those who are not in the labor-market society. Because of the lack of knowledge of the language spoken in the country of reception or as a result of not being in the labor market, immigrants are often socially excluded. Social exclusion refers to the difficulties experienced by people through a combination of problems such as lack of employment or skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime besides deficiency in health care and insufficient family support. There are populations where social exclusion can be identified, among which we can mention, the minorities, the disabled, the poor and also immigrants, on whom the present study focuses.

The concept of social exclusion or marginalization refers to the disadvantage perceived by some groups in society and was first used in France and has often been used in Europe and in educational disciplines such as sociology, psychology, politics and economics. We can define social exclusion as the process by which individuals or communities are systematically blocked or denied access to various rights, opportunities and resources normally available to members of different groups, which are fundamental to social integration of a particular group, for example, the right to housing, employment, health, democracy, education, among others.

The resulting alienation of social exclusion can be experienced by anyone who deviates from the perceived norm of a given population and who may be subject to social exclusion [6]. Conversely, the concept of social inclusion can be understood as the process by which individuals are included into a given society. Moreover, we can perhaps see social inclusion as a recognition that all people are part of society and should be able to deliver their contribution for its advancement.

Some authors [7] claim that the processes of social exclusion/inclusion are related to the existence of hierarchical positions in certain power groups and that there is an exclusion scenario where there is a mixture of social and philosophical geography that evidences economic, political and social powers that result in forms of oppression in society. To combat social exclusion some social projects are carried out in Switzerland that aim to assist materially, in the form of shelter, food or material support, or immaterial support, in the form of shelter and access to intangible assets (symbolic and cultural capital for Bourdieu).

The integration program of the cantons in Switzerland started in 2014 with the aim to support the integration of foreigners in different cantons in that country. One of the program's aim is to support the learning of the language spoken in the Canton by providing courses for foreigners, since there are four national languages (German, French, Italian and Romansh) and three official languages (all national languages except Romansh) in Switzerland.

In the specific case of the Canton of Geneva where the study was conducted, this integration program offers on its website various pieces of information for foreigners regarding French as a foreign language courses, translation services, cultural and sports activities, to name but a few. Among the organizations cited by the canton to aid integration is the one that will be analyzed in this study, the non-profit organization La Roseraie, created in 2001 by the Foundation "*Les réfugiés d'hier. Accueillent les réfugiés d'aujourd'hui*", under the name "*Centre d'Accueil et de formation de la Roseraie*" (Refugees of yesterday welcoming refugees of today). La Roseraie's mission is to welcome and support immigrants regardless of their origin or reason for migration, by providing information, support, guidance and shelter. Its staff is composed of a director, an educational coordinator and a hosting coordinator besides a team of around 50 people of whom 6-15 are trainees and between 30-35 are volunteers.

The objectives of La Roseraie are: to promote the learning of the French language for everyday life use in Geneva; to follow up on immigrants in the various activities regarding the participation of local life; to prevent social exclusion and vulnerability; to strengthen social bonds between the participants, the staff and visitors; to help participants learn skills that will help them live better in that context and build their autonomy in the future; to facilitate partnerships between public authorities and civil society in order to create projects of reconciliation between people.

The activities in the La Roseraie are carried out under the following principles: gratuity, flexibility, equity among people, participatory processes, coexistence and unconditional acceptance. According to the 2014 report of La Roseraie, the center was visited by 28,156 people in that year, considering the different activities that are held in the center. Among other data in the report we highlight the following: a total of 28,156 participants, comprising people from over 100 different regions with a range of more than 50 languages spoken among the participants. 886 French as a foreign language workshops delivered, 393 conversation workshops, 84 debates on the labor market of Geneva and also 770 documents were drafted, among those are CVs, ads and letters. Also according to information in the latest report in relation to the participants of the center we can observe an average of 190-200 people on a daily basis, all of whom are from different economic and educational backgrounds. The ages of the participants vary between 18 and 45 years old, 40% women and 60% men.

Given the mission and objectives of La Roseraie, this study aims to analyze its role in the fostering of social inclusion of immigrants and refugees in Geneva. With that aim, the study looks at different forms of social inclusion fostered by the organization's activities in general and in their French as a foreign language workshops in particular, discussing an approach to content and language teaching (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and the role of the organization in the fostering of social inclusion.

3 CLIL

The acronym CLIL stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning and refers to an approach used to teach contents through a foreign language or vice-versa, that is, to teach foreign languages through different contents. This approach has been used in Europe (Spain, Finland, Germany, Switzerland) in primary and secondary schools to boost bi and multilingualism and more recently it has also been used in universities as a strategy to become more internationalized, offering courses through English medium instruction (also known as EMI).

Following the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, the possibility of using this approach as a critical language teaching methodology has been raised in the premises that language teaching and learning can be used as empowering tools for critical thinking and global citizenship construction. Critical language teaching approaches relate to Freire's concept of critical pedagogy that aims to develop the ability of educational agents (teachers and students) to think critically about their world, becoming agents of their history and recognizing connections between their individual experiences and the social context in which they are immersed. In this paradigm, teaching is not the transfer of knowledge, but rather the creation of possibilities for its construction (Freire's Pedagogy of Autonomy). In this same work the author criticizes the *banking education* where teachers "deposit" contents in learners' accounts. According to Freire the aim of education is not to transfer contents but rather to help learners develop critical thinking about contents.

Following Freire, [8] suggests that a critical approach to foreign language (hereafter L2) teaching should involve teaching students to think critically but in another language. This simple statement may

seem obvious at first reading, but when we think of L2 teaching, that statement is anything but obvious. If you ask a Math teacher what he teaches the answer would be - Math! He may even be more precise about the contents he teaches by saying, for instance, that yesterday's class was about how to calculate the square root. The same applies to other disciplines. If we ask an English teacher what he taught in yesterday's class, he would probably answer something like: I taught the Present Perfect, or I taught how to make a hotel reservation, or even I taught the vocabulary for professions. Thus we see that most L2 teachers see the content they teach as being composed of discrete items (vocabulary) that once bonded (through grammar) to other items, express several meanings in another language.

In the above scenario, L2 teaching is closely related to teaching a foreign language in the "banking education" paradigm criticized by Freire, since it would suffice for a L2 teacher to deposit enough vocabulary and grammar in students' account to ensure that they had sufficient funds to master the foreign language. Using another metaphor, the content of a foreign language would be like a brick wall where the bricks are vocabulary items and grammar rules are the cement and in this view of language the role of the L2 teacher/instructor is to provide enough bricks and cement for students to build their L2 walls.

Unlike the banking approach described above, a critical approach to L2 teaching does not teach vocabulary or grammar in L2 but teaches critical thinking in and through a L2. Teaching a L2 critically involves teaching to think and act correctly, but in L2, such is the difference! The content of L2 critical education is not words and grammatical rules but relevant contents and values, taught through the medium of L2.

This approach has been used mainly in Europe and Canada and research carried out in this context indicates a significant role of language learning through CLIL on learners' attitudes and motivation towards the target language community (for example [9], [10] and [11]). Research also shows a positive correlation between motivation and attitudes towards the target language community for higher proficiency levels whereas negative attitudes are reported for lower proficiency levels [12].

Despite the widespread use of this approach in Europe and Canada as a way to promote bi and multilingualism, the potential of CLIL as a critical approach to foster social inclusion has not been dealt with in a scientific way, to the best of our knowledge. Thus, this paper addresses the possibility of using CLIL as a critical approach to foster social inclusion and with that aim, the study analyzes the French as a foreign language workshops offered at La Roseraie through CLIL as well as the perceptions of participants and staff in relation to the role of La Roseraie in the social inclusion of immigrants and refugees in Geneva.

4 METHODOLOGY

This study case aims at analyzing the potential of La Roseraie and of the CLIL approach to foster social inclusion of immigrants and refugees in Geneva. With that aim the study analyzes the overall program of La Roseraie as perceived by the staff and the participants and the French as a foreign language workshops offered at La Roseraie during the first semester of 2015 in particular.

The analysis is qualitative and data collection included interviews with the staff and participants and observations of the French as a foreign language workshops during the first semester of 2015. The workshops were organized around themes and a total of 25 themes were registered in the period of observation. The themes were: 1) garbage, 2) housing, 3) stress, 4) work, 5) human rights, 6) equality, 7) citizenship, 8) legal system, 9) elections, 10) marriage, 11) women's rights 12) salaries, 13) violence, 14) migration, 15) domestic chores, 16) gender, 17) daily habits/routines, 18) world map, 19) health, 20) self-confidence, 21) respect, 22) emotions, 23) visiting the doctor, 24) vulnerability, 25) traveling.

The workshops were offered in three classes according to participants' self-reported proficiency level in French (beginner, intermediate, advanced). The workshops observed were all in the advanced class where it was possible to see more interaction in French so as to analyze the role of CLIL in social inclusion. A total of 25 seats were made available in each class, and students had to line up to enter the classes. There were usually more students than seats available and those who arrived after the 25 seats had been taken could wait in the coffee room where there was a coffee table with three sofas and another table with some seats, books in French and wi-fi connection besides coffee, tea, water and snacks. There was no roll call during the workshops but a queue was always formed outside La Roseraie and when the doors were open for the workshops (twice a day, in the mornings from 9 to 12

and in the afternoons from 2 to 4:30) the seats in each class were taken in a come-first-sit basis. In each class there was a whiteboard and tables for 2 or 3 students and usually the chairs were arranged in a traditional way facing the teacher and whiteboard. Participants came from all continents but mainly from Africa. There was a predominance of male participants perhaps because it is easier for men to emigrate from Africa than for women.

The workshops were conducted by two instructors - one trainee and one volunteer who were usually native speakers of French. Some of the male instructors were enrolled as trainees in exchange for the military service in Switzerland which can be exchanged for a year of civil work. Others were enrolled as trainees as part of their social service degree course practicum. Many volunteers were enrolled with the aim of changing or advancing their careers since being a volunteer is very important in career advancement and placement in Switzerland where civil and social work are highly valued. Instructors had weekly meetings with the pedagogical coordinator of La Roseraie to plan workshops and activities. All French as a foreign language workshops were led by two people (usually one trainee and one volunteer) who were always different as they were in a different class every day.

These trainees and volunteers were also in charge of the other activities offered by La Roseraie such as the curriculum writing, the cooking workshops, the drama workshops and the Friday outings. Participation in all activities was free and optional so that anyone could participate in all or some activities whenever it was possible, without having to register or undergo any other registration procedure. Every Friday there was an outing planned, usually to parks, museums and other places of interest in Geneva. The aim of this activity was to help participants know the city and interact with its dwellers. The outings were always from 9 to 12 on Fridays and those who did not have tickets for the bus, tram or train were given tickets by La Roseraie. The outing always finished with a picnic, also offered free of charge by La Roseraie.

The French as a foreign language (FFL) workshops were offered on Tuesday and Thursday mornings and from Monday to Thursday in the afternoons. Monday mornings and Friday afternoons La Roseraie was close to outside public to have their staff meeting. Wednesday mornings it was also close to outside public for the pedagogic meetings. Apart from the times dedicated to the staff and pedagogical meetings, La Roseraie was open from 9 am to 7 pm offering support for immigrants and refugees through the many activities and a place to stay, connect, eat, drink and learn contents about living in Geneva in French.

The FFL workshops were usually carried out with the help of the whiteboard, where the person in charge of the workshop would usually write the theme of that day and any words or expressions related to that. Most of the time was spent on developing the "working vocabulary" for the theme of the day after which an activity in the form of discussion in small groups was made. By way of illustration we describe in what follows the steps carried out during one of the workshops observed:

Theme- Vulnerability

Trainee and volunteer enter class, greet participants, introduce themselves and write the theme on the whiteboard. They ask participants what "vulnerability" means and write expressions related to it and offered by participants on the board after the expressions are confirmed by the instructors. This vocabulary building is usually done by elicitation and confirmation and the people in charge of the workshop are responsible for guiding the discussion, confirming vocabulary and asking questions to trigger reflection and vocabulary building. All participants can speak but must raise their hands and take turns. After a one hour brain storm and vocabulary building around the workshop's theme, with the words and expressions written on the board and copied by the participants, the people in charge of the workshop divide the class in groups of 3 or 4 and ask participants to discuss the types of vulnerability that affects them and how they can overcome them. The workshop ends with an oral presentation of a member of each group, reporting on their discussion in front of the whole class.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding the role of CLIL in the FFL workshops and in the development of social inclusion, it was observed that all the discussions in the workshops aimed at triggering reflection, empowering participants with knowledge of contents and language related to everyday life in Geneva, in such a way that the language was both the means to understand life in Geneva and a way to enable participation in this community. Indeed, during informal interviews with participants it was observed that the FFL workshops were the most important action of La Roseraie and the reason why most of them had arrived in this organization in the first place.

In what concerns La Roseraie's role in social inclusion and as reported by the director of the organization during an interview, La Roseraie does a good job trying to combat exclusion and vulnerability of people who come to the center, considering the migratory process today and the fact that it has suffered an increase in recent years. The director considers the role of La Roseraie essential, firstly as a place of welcome for people where they can feel respected and recognized as human beings without any difference among them. Secondly, through the activities carried out in the center and which seek the integration of participants in the daily life of Geneva. According to the director, La Roseraie also helps its participants to be socially included by introducing principles of life in Geneva and Switzerland and by providing participants with a place to stay and connect during the day and also to gather information about everyday life in Geneva.

The role of La Roseraie in the social inclusion was also analyzed in the reported perceptions of the staff which comprised the volunteers and trainees in charge of the activities. According to reports of the staff collected during informal interviews, it is possible to suggest that there is a significant willingness to work with social projects and organizations like La Roseraie in Geneva, as perceived by the number of trainees and volunteers registered per year in the organization. Whereas most trainees seek this experience in exchange for military service or as a way to boost their professional careers once most companies in Switzerland value this type of experience in the curriculum of prospective workers; volunteers can be said to search this experience for internal reasons such as personal realization.

By way of illustration, we show the report of a volunteer staff who said that he had worked in a bank for 8 years before joining La Roseraie but he was not happy with his professional choice which was in conflict with his values. He then decided to quit his job and look for a professional experience which was in line with his values and aspirations and it was at this point that he joined La Roseraie. According to this volunteer, his experience at La Roseraie makes him feel useful and for a just cause for he is sensitive to the cause of migration, so debated in the current European scenario. In his own words, translated here: "My goal was to immerse myself in the social sector and migration to have a first experience and confirm my choice of reorientation. My goals were to work with training sessions and various activities like games, speaking face to face with a group, welcoming participants and presenting the center as well as referring participants to other activities. After four months spent at the center, I can say that this experience is extremely rewarding and beneficial. I feel in my place. I love what I do, I feel useful and in line with my values. I maintain a very good relationship with my colleagues and the participants. My presence at La Roseraie is a breath of fresh air and it's a new life. I like the running of the center and the way the activities are planned and carried out. Each member of the staff can bring ideas and propose activities. We all participate and exchange views, always in a supporting environment. Everyone is valued. I see a lot of smiles and there is a very positive atmosphere. In short, La Roseraie is great and I feel good about my work here and its role in the issue of immigration."

Another example of how La Roseraie helps the social inclusion of its participants can be observed in the reported perceptions of participants, collected during a collective interview carried out during one of the French as a foreign language workshops:

The trainee asked the group of participants in the class what were their expectations in relation to La Roseraie and which topics or activities were most useful to them. Though it was not easy for some participants to express their views because of their limited proficiency level in French, it was possible to observe the following perceptions: 1) La Roseraie is a place of exchange and coexistence and participants are very satisfied with the activities carried out there; 2) in relation to the FFL workshops, participants said that these workshops offered a possibility for them to interact in their own language with other participants and helped them to understand important issues related to life, health and work in Geneva as well as to learn some French; 3) participants also mentioned that La Roseraie helped them to feel valued and to develop their autonomy after their arrival in Geneva, offering support and a place to connect and refer to.

As can be seen both from the observations of the workshops and in the reported perceptions of participants, La Roseraie helps the social inclusion of immigrants and refugees through the support to develop connections and autonomy by helping participants to understand issues of everyday life in Geneva through the language spoken there and used as a medium of instruction in the workshops and other activities in the center.

6 FINAL REMARKS

This study aimed at reflecting about ways to foster social inclusion of immigrants by offering a study case of the role of an association, La Roseraie, and the CLIL approach used in it to aid social inclusion in Geneva. With that aim, the study looked at the different activities offered at the association in general and the CLIL approach used in the French as a foreign language workshops in particular. Results of the study suggest that the association has an important role in the social inclusion of the immigrant and refugee population in Geneva with the offer of a place to stay, connect and gather information as well as through the development of autonomy. The analysis of the CLIL approach used during the FFL workshops in La Roseraie shows that this approach is conducive of social inclusion in this context by helping participants understand issues related to everyday life in Geneva and Switzerland through the language as well as by using the language to relate to and improve life in that context.

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