

Two of the most significant challenges that education currently faces are Globalization and the apparent ability of a person to learn almost anything through the internet. On the one hand, Globalization requires us to understand and integrate perspectives from outside our immediate environment. On the other hand, information about almost any topic is, nowadays, available through the internet. However, even the most curated information is rarely homogenous, and it is often part of the massive amount of data that people navigate daily. In a super-diverse world where contrasting views are lost in a sea of information, what is the role of education and how can teachers prepare students for the workforce as well as their personal lives?

I believe that education, when it is well-rounded, can grant the ability to perceive, acknowledge, and coexist with other people, cultures, points of view, systems, and processes. To foster a well-rounded education, a teacher must give equal weight to hard knowledge (Andrews & Higson, 2008), soft skills (King de Ramírez & Lafford, 2018; Schulz, 2008), and self-evaluation (Rawson & Dunlosky, 2007). In my teaching, I will integrate these goals through the use of critical thinking (Gokhale, 1995) inside a safe, technology rich (Resta & Laferrière, 2007), and collaborative learning environment (Barkley, Major, & Cross, 2014). Students in my class will become thorough analytical thinkers able to face real-world problems from a place of understanding and compassion.

While a safe and welcoming environment help students "[engage] in self-correcting behaviors, as they do not believe they will be punished for mistakes" (Turner & Harder, 2018), in itself is not enough to create the conditions for students to understand others. A student may be in a safe environment, protected by an information bubble that does not expose her to the otherness. In my practice, I will expose students to different cultures and ways of thinking by:

- Making use of collaborative learning with their peers.
- Fostering interactions with people from other cultures through technology.
- Integrating their learning process with their own local and professional communities (Clifford & Reisinger, 2018).

In my classes, students use collaborative learning in different ways but always paired with critical thinking. Recently, students in my advanced grammar and composition Spanish class read through [an interactive article](#) about a comparison between four countries with different policies regarding social distancing in the times of COVID-19: Mexico and the U.S. (mitigation) vs. Argentina and France (suppression). In pairs, they came up with their own questions regarding the article. Then, each student took a role just as if they were performing a post-hoc fact check for a newspaper: one student was in charge of fact-checking the policies in these countries while the second student was in charge of checking the trustworthiness of the data, as well as running the analysis on two additional countries of her choice. After this, both students had a virtual meeting to discuss their findings, draw their own conclusions, and share them with the rest of the class on a virtual forum. In addition to fact-checking the article, students exposed the merits and drawbacks of each policy and reflected on what their own communities could learn from the other countries. Once the whole class had the opportunity to share their findings and opinions, students engaged in an online discussion in the same forum where they contrasted their point of view with other groups (MacKnight, 2000). Students were instructed to keep an open mind and openly offer constructive and compassionate criticism in the forum. In this way, students integrated their knowledge of Spanish grammar and composition with critical thinking, group work, understanding of otherness, compassion, and self-evaluation.

Two follow-up activities included: (a) a statistical analysis that compared the fact-checking of all the groups in the class using a non-parametric test, and (b) an online interview with students from Spanish speaking countries about the policies in their countries and the effects of these policies on their communities. The statistical analysis served a double objective: first, it allowed students to self-

evaluate their understanding of the article in a more objective way than when they compared their analysis with others in the first activity, and second, to understand the importance that quantitative approaches have when trying to understand contrasting sources of information. The second follow-up activity helped students practice effective communication and listening skills, especially in relation to people outside their immediate environment. In my classes, this type of research activities can always be turned into infographics for extra credit. In these infographics, students do research about these topics in their own communities for example by conducting interviews, surveys or by looking at social media, and local newspapers. They then incorporate their findings in their infographics and distribute them among their own professional and home communities.

The activities above exemplify what I believe is an ideal classroom: a place that is student-centered, engaging, safe, inclusive, and where students can exercise their own creativity and freedom of expression, but are also linked to the students' communities. In an ideal classroom, students should feel the certainty that their individual points of view and experiences contribute to the joint development of knowledge. A classroom like this would become a space of genuine debate where both students and teachers can involve in what Immanuel Kant denominated "public use of reason", which "must be free at all times" (1784). As a space, a classroom must be designed with one thing in mind: for students to work with the least possible number of barriers. It must take universal design into account, it must be intuitive, and it must be flexible.

As a teacher, I will strive to promote this type of spaces both inside and outside my classes, for example, during tutoring or during extra-curricular activities. Having an open and productive space for discussion has helped me develop mutual trust between students and has helped me enhance my classroom teaching experience. As an example of this, in 2017, I created the first Online Spanish Club at The University of Arizona. For this project, I used the online platform Canvas to create an optional, informal meeting with the only purpose of practicing Spanish in an everyday context. The focus of this club was the discussion of a diversity of cultural and human problems introduced by some of the short films of the international film festival *Todos Somos Otros*. This was a space free of any criticism where I provided feedback or help only when students requested it. Through the club, students discussed science, art, and technology to find new ways of thinking about real-world international problems such as immigration or the international collaboration efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Students that attended the club meetings formed strong bonds between them and often brought to class what they learned.

In my career as a teacher for world languages have had the fortune to study and teach under the supervision of Dr. Carmen King de Ramirez whose educational philosophy has helped me become aware of the importance of a self- assessment, accountability and continuous education. From this experience and training, I have come to believe that the distinction between an online and a physical classroom needs to be re-conceptualized: the classroom has to be a space where students may enter at any time. In-person classrooms need to be extended through technology for remote access, and remote classrooms need to have a physical correlate within the student's own communities. I am confident that we are making progress in this area. Recently, Amazon Web Services (AWS) announced [Amazon AppStream 2.0](#) for education, which allows students to access applications through any computer independently from the operating system in their computers. This is a step in the right direction towards inclusivity and flexibility.

In the future, I hope I can contribute to the innovation of new teaching and learning methodologies using big data and computational linguistics for language teaching and the teaching of linguistics. I believe that machines can be extremely handy in automatizing repetitive tasks in education, for example, by creating individualized reports based on student performance in specific assignments, which will, in turn, help teachers design focus groups for teaching. If teachers could integrate these services into the existing or new online teaching platforms.