

ojs.uv.es/index.php/qdfed

Rebut: 06.07.2023. Acceptat: 19.10.2023

Per a citar aquest article: Levine, Mark H. & León-Hermosilla, Julia. 2023. "Promoting Creative Writing and Global Citizenship by Means of Contemporary Anglo-Chinese Literature in Higher Education". *Quaderns de Filologia: Estudis Literaris* XXVIII: 171-199.

doi: 10.7203/qdfed.28.27059



Promoting Creative Writing and Global Citizenship by Means of Contemporary Anglo-Chinese Literature in Higher Education

Fomento de la Escritura Creativa y la Ciudadanía Global a través de la Literatura Anglochina Contemporánea en la Enseñanza Superior

MARK H. LEVINE, PH. D.
marklevine@foxmail.com
Minzu University of China

JULIA LEÓN-HERMOSILLA
leonjuli@hu-berlin.de
Humboldt – Universität zu Berlin

Abstract: In the current globalized age, the acquisition of intercultural competence has become a highly relevant tool. It is now more essential than ever to foster connections among diverse individuals, cultures, and nations. What is more, the 2030 Agenda emphasizes the need to promote this competence at all educational levels in order to encourage global citizenship, given the increasing global migration trends. Unfortunately, higher education often lacks the open-mindedness and critical thinking required, despite the longstanding existence of intercultural relationships. Therefore, our research experience proves how employing creative writing activities and travel literature in two subjects –Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature and Literature (2nd Language): English– at the Universitat de València (Spain) became an extremely successful tool to raise awareness and achieve equality throughout all the implied agents, their cultures and diverse backgrounds. This educational approach was implemented throughout the 2021-2022 academic year and significantly impacted various studies during the second semester. A didactic unit, centered on the book *Singing My China Stories to the World* (2021), was initially developed to nurture global citizenship and intercultural competence. Subsequently, it was integrated into a virtual session featuring the American author. The results of our research involved the analysis of the opinions and perceptions of 79 undergraduate students regarding migrant narratives and the significance of contemporary literature in enhancing their knowledge of intercultural competence and global citizenship.

Keywords: travel literature; intercultural competence; global citizenship; literary education; creative writing

Resumen: En la actual era globalizada, la adquisición de la competencia intercultural se ha convertido en una herramienta de gran relevancia, ya que actualmente es más esencial que nunca fomentar las relaciones entre diferentes personas, culturas y naciones. Es más, la Agenda 2030 hace hincapié en la necesidad de promover esta competencia en todos los niveles educativos para fomentar la ciudadanía global, dadas las crecientes tendencias migratorias mundiales. A pesar de que las relaciones interculturales llevan existiendo desde hace mucho tiempo, la enseñanza superior lamentablemente carece a menudo de una mente abierta y el pensamiento crítico necesarios. Así pues, nuestra investigación demuestra cómo el empleo de actividades de escritura creativa y literatura de viajes en dos asignaturas –Crítica literaria práctica aplicada a la literatura inglesa y Literatura (2.ª Lengua): Inglés– en la Universitat de València (España) se convirtió en una exitosa herramienta para sensibilizar y lograr la igualdad entre todos los agentes implicados, sus culturas y sus diversos orígenes. Este enfoque educativo se aplicó durante todo el curso académico 2021-2022 y tuvo un impacto significativo en varios estudios durante el segundo semestre. Inicialmente se desarrolló una unidad didáctica, centrada en el libro *Singing My China Stories to the World* (2021), para fomentar la ciudadanía global y la competencia intercultural. Posteriormente, se integró en una sesión virtual protagonizada por el autor estadounidense. Los resultados de nuestra investigación consistieron en el análisis de las opiniones y percepciones de 79 estudiantes universitarios sobre las narrativas de los inmigrantes y la importancia de la literatura contemporánea para mejorar sus conocimientos sobre la competencia intercultural y la ciudadanía global.

Palabras clave: literatura de viajes; competencia intercultural; ciudadanía global; educación literaria; escritura creativa.

1. Introduction

Since the Bologna Process, the university has been stimulated to reconsider itself as a committed, critical, and creative space of knowledge at the global citizens' service (Moncusí, 2021). Therefore, the European Higher Education Area, encouraged by the 2030 Agenda and the education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC), constitutes a great opportunity for students and lecturers to respond to the current world's challenges. Hence, both undergraduate university students and professional researchers, as powerful future social agents, should make the most out of all the available opportunities while rethinking our role as lifelong learners (Brunold & Esteban-Fonollosa, 2022).

In consequence, the purpose of this article is to show the possibilities offered by the mandatory subject in English Studies, the Degree Final Dissertation (DFD), which introduces undergraduate students into research when the research paper is related to the ESDGC and travel literature, so as to promote the intercultural competence at a Philology, Translation and Communication Faculty. Given that the University seeks to train socially responsible citizens

through values such as solidarity and sustainability, higher education institutions must develop actions linked to the promotion of cooperation for development, the promotion of gender equality, or the development of activities related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. Among these actions are studies to address the problems included in these objectives. In this sense, and to involve students in tackling these problems, the Degree Final Dissertation can be a means to raise awareness and make students responsible for the role they must play in order to promote a more just, sustainable and peaceful world. In other words, the DFD should promote students' intercultural competence.

The intercultural competence is understood as the: "effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations, which again can be further detailed in terms of indicator of appropriate behavior in specific contexts" (Penn, 2011: 66). The promotion of this competence is key because it enables learners to use the skills that they have acquired by learning a foreign language, which is basic to a Philology student. This real education experience held at the Universitat de València (Spain) throughout the academic year 2021-2022 and the notorious improvement of the intercultural competence in our pupils was developed in the following subjects: Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature at the English Studies Degree and Literature (2nd Language): English in the following degrees: Modern Languages and Literatures, Classical Philology, Catalan Studies and Hispanic Studies: Spanish Language and Literature.

Our second objective is to describe how a contemporary migrant narrative such as Mark Howard Levine's *Singing My China Stories to the World* (2021) has helped us achieve our goals by means of a contemporary Anglo-Chinese Literary workshop, and how this experience has been organized, coordinated and implemented, drawing on the task-based learning methodology, and how the latter has (1) used and created tools to include education for sustainable development and global citizenship in the higher education area; (2) introduced the travel literature theory via the service-learning methodology; (3) created tools to promote the intercultural competence; (4) motivated the reading and learning of contemporary migrant narratives throughout the author's virtual intervention; and lastly, (5) promoted the building of bridges for the consolidation of inter-university relations, in this particular case, between Minzu University of China and the Universitat de València in Spain.

2. Theoretical Framework

The comprehensive nature of the 2030 Agenda allows the undergraduate students' dissertation research to build a world committed to sustainability and inclusive development, justice, dignity, and equality for all people, particularly focusing on the migrants' current situation (Benedito, 2021). By doing so, higher education students are responding to the challenges that the global context presents for universities and societies as a whole. Therefore, the ESGC conceives educational spaces as strategic fields of transformation-action so that they participate in equality policies and promote initiatives that contribute to a fairer and more sustainable world (Martínez-Carrasco & Haba-Osca, 2021).

2.1 *Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship*

The theoretical framework of this research revolves around a complex thematic axis based on education for sustainable development and global citizenship through a classroom experience based on the teaching of migrant narratives from contemporary Anglophone literature. To this end, we will first reflect on the last two decades from a human rights perspective. In words of Romero (2008), understanding of the world and global awareness were the two distinct features of the new Millennium, which, however, presented different rhythms and very different political, economic, territorial, social, cultural, and environmental implications (Touraine, 1993; Castells, 1999; Friedman, 2005). As globalization has gained density, there has been a slow emergence of a global consciousness evidenced through innovative educational approaches that call for other ways of participating and governing in processes with a global dimension.

Since then, both the education for sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become major challenges of our time, as they are tools conceived from an inclusive concept applicable to almost every part of the world (Brunold, 2006). According to Xue (2009), this concept was the result of the interaction of three systems: social, economic, and biological. Furthermore, Mesa (2001) even defines this educational methodology as a constant process that not only favors understanding between different cultures, but also promotes values and attitudes related to solidarity and social justice and, to this end, seeks ways of human and sustainable

development. It is, therefore, a socio-political education whose axis is social justice and which is based on a constructivist and socio-historical approach. It is carried out in formal and non-formal educational environments and is a process that needs to be carried out in the medium-long term, given that it is where the cognitive dimension –that is, the acquisition of knowledge– and that attitudes and values cannot be separated.

Hence, the ESDGC analyzes reality from a global dimension, provides analytical criteria, is open to participation, and oriented towards commitment and action (Myren-Svelstad, 2020; Haba-Osca, 2022). As we have demonstrated throughout this initial pilot project, an idealist space to develop these ideas-actions is the mandatory subject Degree Final Dissertation (DFD), as undergraduate students can incorporate their own personal interests into their initial research and further writing. Albeit in the English Studies Degree at the Universitat de València there is a tendency to receive most of the research proposals revolving around Literature and Linguistics, the novelty in this case relapsed in the researcher-apprentice's will to develop an innovative education experience among her peers, hence applying learning-by-doing methodology (Anzai & Simon, 1979; Schank, 1995; Reese, 2011). In this case, by realizing how necessary it is to (re)consider that studying English as a foreign language (EFL) and their culture does not only concern the well-known four language skills, but rather implies communicating with people –and their culture(s)– who also express themselves in this language, nowadays a globalized *lingua franca*. Undoubtedly, one of the best ways to start learning about the limits of our own world, therefore, is through literature.

2.2 Literary Education

Cerrillo (2007) established that literature uses a very special linguistic way of communication, as human beings start a journey through vocabulary search that never ends throughout our entire lives. The most common way to increase our vocabulary and, hence, our knowledge is by reading, and in this manner, we develop a better understanding of the world. According to Ballester and Ibarra (2016: 149), it is through reading that we become aware of the huge matter of perpetual formation that language entails:

[...] los estudios literarios –como también las aportaciones de ámbitos sociales, tecnológicos, antropológicos, educativos e incluso académicos no formales–

sustentan los pilares de una didáctica de la literatura coherente con el contexto actual¹.

Reading is much more than a mechanical and passive process, as it implies an appropriation and a transformation done by the reader. He/she must try to find his/her own interpretation and complement it with his/her previous knowledge (De Vicente-Yagüe Jara, 2015; Ballester & Ibarra, 2016; Quintana, 2020). Consequently, the interpretation of the text varies depending on the context, the interconnections with other texts, and the reader's own experiences. Moreover, in literature, as in every other field of life, communication is crucial. The advancement of literary studies depends on the sharing of knowledge and the critical exchange of complex ideas through publications, debates, and congresses (Colomer, 1996). Since the 1960s, the progress in linguistic theories has helped to renew both language and literature fields, which have been crucial for literary education, as literature was encompassed by a more functional learning. Regarding the English as a foreign language (EFL) context, teaching a language started to go beyond the grammar-translation method and other skills, such as the communicative competence, were developed (Hoff, 2019). Since the 80s, more concern about the understanding and the building of cultural processes has begun to emerge, as well as in the perspective used for literature teaching.

Currently, as the theoretical findings justify the importance in the education of new generations, there is an increase in promoting a more pragmatic conception of literature as a way of social communication and cultural awareness (Ifrim, 2013; Arjona, del Águila y Gutiérrez-Pérez, 2018; Elgebaly, 2020). In this way, literary education helps us instrumentalize literature as it is seen more than a mere compilation of texts. As a result, literature is also employed in foreign language acquisition as it is established as an essential element for the creation and development of culture, creating a collective imaginary in which individuals are seen under a social, global, and collective scope (Devís, 2013; Martins, Gomes & Cá, 2016; García-Tudela, 2018; Chocobar, 2020).

¹ Hermosilla-León's translation: "[...] literary studies –as well as contributions from social, technological, anthropological, educational and even non-formal academic fields– support the pillars of a didactics of literature coherent with the current context”.

2.3 *Intercultural Competence*

When learning a foreign language, we face a process in which not only do we acquire knowledge but also learn how to use it with other speakers. This intercultural competence is what helps the learner to communicate effectively without misunderstandings. According to Byram (1997), the intercultural competence is more complex than the communicative one because it is focused on establishing and maintaining inter-relationships. Obviously, an excellent opportunity to put it into practice has been by means of traveling, as Domene-Benito (2018: 1) states: “from old times, interculturalism and multiculturalism have been part of universal and essential notions such as freedom, reciprocity, brotherhood or cultural confrontations”. Even more recently, WWI and WWII originated a huge migration phenomenon and provoked the inevitable cultural, ethnic, and/or religious mixtures that persist today through refugee and job and study finder waves.

As the main aim of this research is to promote future philologists’ intercultural competence in literature mandatory subjects, the best way to do so is via literary education, approaching cultural realities that are different from one’s own through reading (Martínez-León et al., 2017). These lecturers will help students to get to know and understand better, overcoming prejudices and stereotypes and giving them the opportunity to be linked to diversity via different cultures, developing plural feelings of cultural belonging and flexible commitments in this regard, which implies the recognition of the importance of reflecting on the cultural values and practices that are assumed or rejected (Rodríguez & Pujal, 2012).

Moreover, it is important not to forget that by stimulating the promotion of the intercultural competence in a globalized context, we are also seeking to foster a global citizenship among our critical, creative, and committed university students. Thus, a conscious decision is made when we opt for a classroom experience that contains the narratives of a migrant person, since we consider it especially relevant to give a voice to the unvoiced (Arias, 2020; Domene-Benito et al., 2020). By dealing with the topics of “diversity” and “migration”, we are linking our university literary training spaces to the social reality around us, paying special attention to migratory movements:

Migration denotes a movement of a person or groups of people from one locality to another for the purpose of permanent or temporary resettling. Migration is not to be compared with any other individual experience as it divides a

person's life into "before and "after". Despite status, age, gender, education he starts his life from scratch (Zotova & Dontsov, 2013: 77).

Hence, after meeting the needs that ESDGC encourages us to take into account, we give an instrumental use to literature in two EFL subjects while trying to stimulate the intercultural competence, which will help our audience –future global citizens– to think and reflect. In this sense, we chose our classroom materials focusing on a contemporary native English-speaker's migrant voice: Mark H. Levine's *Singing My China Stories to the World* (2021), his latest publication. Nonetheless, before doing so, a theoretical approach on travel literature was taught.

2.4 *The Importance of Travel Literature*

As travel literature is a genre that has been developing within literature for many years (Navarro, 2013), the theoretical framework for our teaching experience was based on a chronological description of this fascinating genre. Raposo and García (2009) highlight how migrant narratives have a hybrid character between fiction and reality due to three factors: firstly, it has a huge documentation value for the study of the history of culture. Secondly, most of these travel works have the same literary and aesthetic value as other fictional pieces. Lastly, the trip itself –as in Homer's *Odyssey* (8th-7th century BC)– can also be considered a life, initiatory and dream journey. That is, a space for dialogue and opening horizons.

In fact, the earliest works in Europe classified as travel literature date back to the 5th century BC with Herodotus. Moreover, there is older evidence in Asia, such as that of Buddhist Hsüan Tsang, who had already wandered the world and wrote about it (see image 1). As travelers have proven to have different motivations for their trip(s), the content of the works varies, and we can find descriptions of (1) warring conflicts, such as Xenophon's *Anabasis* (400 BC); (2) geographical discoveries, such as Pausanias' *Description of Greece* (2nd century); (3) religion motivations, such as Egeria's *Itinerary* (381-384); or (4) trade, such as *Travels of Marco Polo* (1300). Even some ancient people started traveling just for (5) pleasure: "wanted to see what so great an elevation had to offer" (Petrarch, 1336). In fact, during the Modern Age there was an intense development of communications and a growing increase in travel and intercultural exchanges that directly resulted from this (Raposo & García, 2009).

In that age, Europeans arrived in North America and obviously narrated their experiences, such as Smith or Cristopher Columbus.

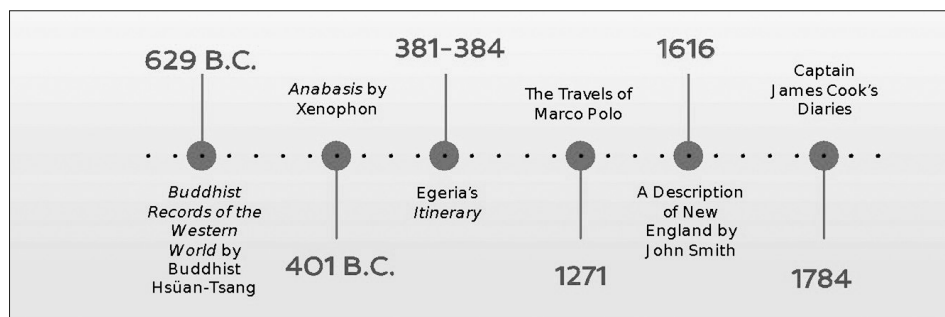


Image 1. Travel literature timeline from 600 BC to 1784.

Source: Timeline by León-Hermosilla (2022)

Through the 18th century, as there were already communications between every continent, travel literature became extremely popular. Especially maritime diaries, as traveling by water was the most common way to reach other continents. An outstanding example, *Captain James Cook's diaries* (1773), was the culmination of the arrival of Europeans on all continents when he landed in Australia in 1770 (Penns, 2011). One of the most important sources of travel literature during the Romantic period was Germany, and one of its main examples is Johan Wolfgang von Goethe's *Italienische Reise* (1816-1817). One of the reasons for working with traveling literature was scientific. To illustrate, examples of this are Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) and Alexander von Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America* (1799-1804). Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, the aristocracy started to appreciate traveling for leisure in order to discover the culture and history of foreign countries, such as Robert Louis Stevenson, who could be considered a pioneer in tourism with his travel works such as *In the South Seas* (1922).

As the first half of the 20th century was shaped by the World Wars, which influenced the entire globe, a huge number of people needed to go into exile, seeking a better life. An example of war literature is Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bells Tolls*. In fact, it would have been better to provide the undergraduate students with exile literature examples from this period. Nevertheless, in the second half of this period, as authors go in search of adventure or self-realization, Jack Kerouack's *On the Road* (1957) was provided as an example throughout our teaching experience (see image 2).

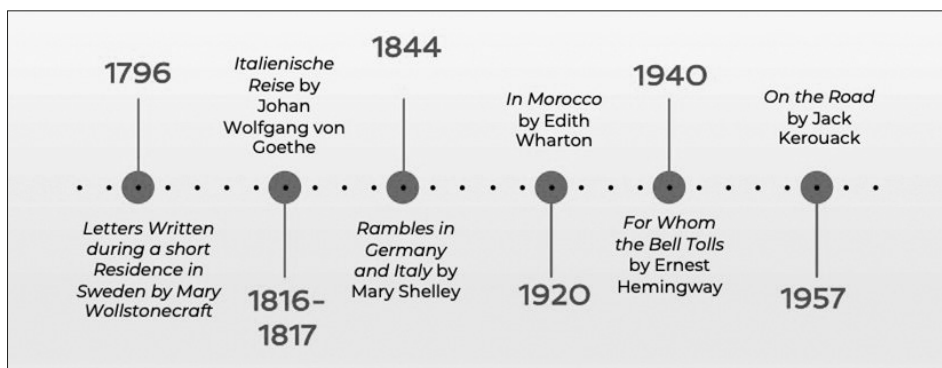


Image 2. Travel literature timeline from 1796 to 1957.

Source: Timeline by León-Hermosilla (2022)

In the 21st century, to travel is more common than ever, and in fact, some people adore documenting and sharing their stories abroad. This is, to a certain extent, Mark H. Levine's case as a singer who sings Chinese rural songs in American country music style, as a writer who tells his migrant experience starting in 2005, as he does in *Singing my China Stories to the World* (2021), and, lastly, as an English as a foreign language (EFL) professor at Minzu University of China.

3. Methodology

From our perspective, feeling and thinking about the collective responsibility of all the people involved in the higher education space, for years we have been developing educational actions in response to the global need to promote education for the sustainable development and global citizenship at the university through culture, using English as a foreign language (EFL) as an essential tool to work intercultural competence. The objectives of our research are thus: (1) to encourage final dissertations with a critical, creative and committed component based on the ESDGC; (2) to promote the intercultural competence in two literature courses focusing on a migrant Anglo-Chinese narrative in order to impact on undergraduate students, fostering global citizenship; and, (3) to integrate the service-learning (hereinafter referred to as SL) methodology to promote horizontal co-responsibility and collaboration between a literature lecturer, a DFD student, the undergraduate students involved in the experience, and, lastly, a writer.

3.1 *Service-Learning*

In the field of educational praxis, methodological choice is one of those aspects in which the best lecturers stand out, applying strategies, procedures and actions that seek to improve learning (Chiva-Bartoll & Martí, 2016). To undertake the emancipatory project of critical pedagogy, there are different methodological variables that, in an ambitious but sensible way, urge us to achieve its fundamental principles in the field of education. On this occasion, we strongly believe that one of these methods is service-learning. By this means, critical pedagogy aims to raise awareness among individuals and collectives about power relations (often silenced), empower them to transform reality, and enable them to free themselves from the injustices and oppression that affect them. Freire (2006) proposes four basic principles that define this way of conceiving and approaching educational processes:

- To educate is to know reality critically.
- To educate is to commit oneself to the utopia of transforming reality.
- To educate is to train the subjects of such change.
- To educate is to dialogue.

Based on them, each educational praxis will involve the treatment and analysis of prejudices, feelings, implicit knowledge, experiences and practices that students have in their cognitive scheme. Thus, teachers should provide their students with tasks involving debate, discussion, and dialogue around real situations to broaden their capabilities and possibilities of understanding reality. This is linked to a key commitment to interact with the social context so as to emphasize the influence of subcultures, personal histories and particular differences, and to establish a dialogue between school and life. Thus, rooted in the line of Freirean conscientization, SL has the aim to trigger transformations both in the realm of ideas and in the social sphere.

In relation to the agents involved –students, teachers, and external professionals– it could be said that each individual should be protagonist in the planning of each section in the same project (Fernández Carrión & Martínez Usarralde, 2015). In fact, the reciprocal accompaniment and collaboration of all the agents is essential, with teachers playing the role of guides (Pallarès Piquer & Chiva Bartoll, 2017). In this sense, Butin (2003) warns us that if dynamics are not generated in which students, teachers and external cultural agents set aside the roles of power within the program itself, the potential of the SL as a critical method largely vanishes.

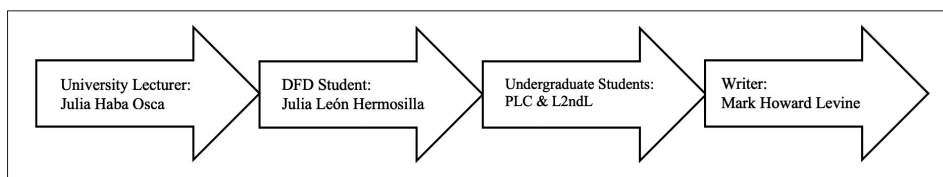


Image 3. Agents implied in our service-learning experience. Source: Own elaboration

In terms of pedagogical characteristics, the starting point is an experiential, active and flexible pedagogical model. Lecturers propose experiences in which the students are active and reflect with the rest of the agents involved in the different phases of the project: planning, execution, and evaluation. The aim is to generate a triple-learning (academic, social, and personal) while applying specific knowledge and values related to the social need addressed. In this case, our service-learning methodology was applied in the following manner: while the main idea was created by the lecturer at the Universitat de València, she develops it together with her DFD student, who runs two sessions in each subject impacting a total of 90 undergraduate students, who strengthen their cultural capital through their telecollaborative interaction with the author, a migrant American residing in China (as seen in image 3), therefore a live example of travel literature personified in himself.

3.2 Research Structure

From the ESDGC perspective, our proposal arose to create an authentic, intercultural, and multilingual exchange. In order to do so, the following four steps were executed: firstly (step 1), for the elaboration of this polyhedric teaching-learning experience, the creation of didactic materials, the planification and coordination of the teaching sessions, and the implementation of workshops in different mandatory subjects and groups was carried out. Then (step 2), throughout the execution of the proposal, a whole session dedicated to the genre of travel literature, taught by the DFD student, took place. This was done by means of a PowerPoint presentation *ad hoc* to support the exchange experience between the author and the literature students and make it better understood in its context and hence more profitable. Plus, an individual pre-questionnaire took place to measure the students' previous knowledge and perceptions of travel literature and migrants' narratives.

Moreover (step 3), as this teaching experience had to take place during the second semester, we managed to contact the author by means of the innovative education program “4th Cycle of Authors in the Classrooms 2021-2022,” launched throughout this period of time by the Culture, Equality and Inclusiveness Vice-Deanship at the faculty. The aim of the program is to encourage the presence of authors who are current references in culture and science. Its main objective is to promote relationships between the University and society to encourage debate on artistic, cultural, political, scientific, and creative perspectives in university classrooms. Mark Howard Levine was invited to participate virtually via Zoom and talk about his last book publication from a creative writing perspective (image 4).



Image 4. Mark Howard Levine’s virtual participation poster. Source: Philology, Translation and Communication Faculty (Universitat de València)

This telecollaboration intervention took place on February 24th and 25th and it impacted both the 50 students attending the mandatory course Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Language and the 31 pupils registered in the optional subject Literature (2nd Language): English available for the following five degrees: English Studies, Modern Languages and Literatures, Classical Philology, Catalan Studies, and Hispanic Studies: Spanish Language and Literature. Throughout this unforgettable experience, students learnt directly from the creative process that took place prior to the publication of *Singing my China Stories to the World* (2021), belonging to the contemporary travel literature genre. Moreover, as undergraduate students worked in groups, this also improved their communicative skills, collaboration capacity and tolerance, as they shared different beliefs and perspectives based on migratory movements. All in all, it was an incredible opportunity for the students to

hear the experience from a US migrant citizen who has written about his nearly twenty years living abroad in China, and to ask direct questions about his writing process. Right before the ending of these two special sessions –one per subject– an individual post-questionnaire in order to measure the learning results took place.



Image 5. Mark Levine's virtual participation in "Literature 2nd (Language): English class". Source: Photography Haba-Osca (2021).

Lastly (step 4), all the questionnaires were collected and analyzed in order to survey the results obtained from the undergraduate students participating in the experience and to rethink the possibilities of improving and spin-off this service-learning experience throughout other academic years and/or other subjects, among other future possibilities. In addition, in order to better convey all the content taught in this transformative classroom experience, we proceed to briefly explain both the travel literature genre that was taught during the preparatory and theoretical session and the excerpts from Levine's *Singing My China Stories to the World* (2021), as well as the triggering questions employed for the intercultural competence awareness.

3.3 *Singing My China Stories to the World* (2021)

This book describes China through its American author's 15-year-long experience of teaching, traveling, and participating in cultural activities that involved singing, writing and speaking all around the country. Mark Howard Levine came to China in his late 50s, and that is where this book begins. An active participant in cultural exchange on a personal level, his stories, both written in prose and verse, depict China through his open mind, keen insight, and constant yearning to learn about and join in China's bright future.

In our case, our research was focused on three excerpts of the book, starting with the "Foreword" (p. 14), as we were seeking students' discussions revolving around the concept of otherness. Three ice-breaking questions were asked to the whole class: "Do you believe in the concept of the other?", "Could you describe it?", and "Do you think everyone deserves a better life? If so, how come it does not occur?". The main purpose was to generate an environment of confidence and strengthen the self-esteem of the students so they could express themselves in English as a foreign language (EFL). After sharing their thoughts, the concept of otherness was explained, right before asking the group to brainstorm about the concept of interculturality, which of course works on students' metacognition, as they begin to question their own learning process and the role of intercultural competence in this autonomous process.

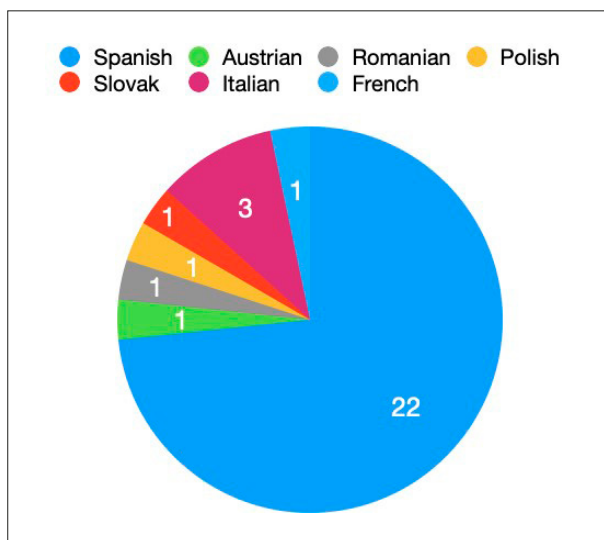
Right after generating the proper mood for the session, students were asked to analyze the poem "The Bell of Truth the Tolled" (chapter 24) based on a Jewish migrant journalist, Israel Epstein and his Chinese wife, Huang Huanbi. Epstein described the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War as shown in *Letters about The People's War* (1939), while Huanbi was a journalist and foreign affairs expert secretary. After the group reading, critical thinking was again promoted through several quote analyses and a series of questions revolving themes such as migration and oppression that were voluntarily answered by different individuals: "Can you think of different motivations that make people migrate?", "How many types of migration movements do exist?", "How many ways can a person be oppressed?". The purpose of this core activity was to clarify the differences between key concepts such as: *trip*, *travel*, *migration*, *asylum*, *foreigner*, and *expat*, which are essential when trying to recognize and value foreign languages and cultures, and fundamental to build an open-minded and respectful global citizenship.

Lastly, the third excerpt chosen belongs to chapter 25, “They Helped to Build a New China”, which deals with different foreigners that have participated politically in the latest worldwide wars and revolutions. In the same way that some Chinese people fought during the Spanish Civil War (40,000 volunteers with 54 different nationalities have been officially registered), textbooks and society rarely recognize their contribution. Although this fact happened around eighty years ago, it is still a relevant topic, for this recognition is linked to external factors. Hence, we worked on diversity, migration, and racism thanks to this last excerpt.

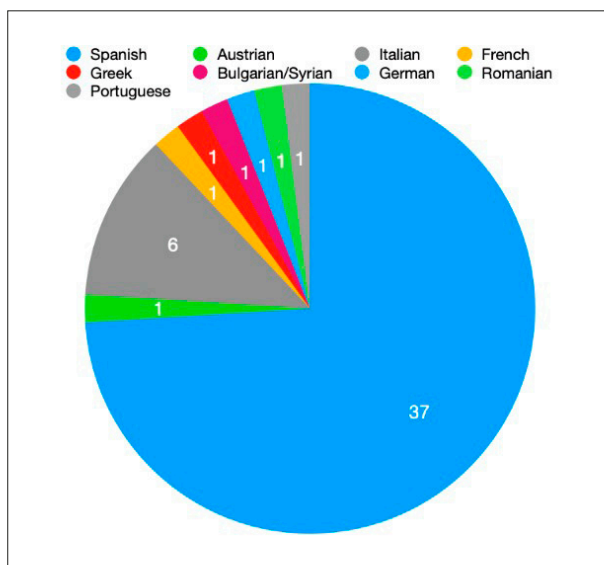
4. Results

Out of the 51 students registered in the compulsory module Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature at the English Studies Degree, only 30 attended class throughout this innovative education experience (being 27 female and 3 male students). Whereas in Literature (2nd Language): English – that is, an optional subject offered at four different degrees: Modern Languages and Literatures; Classical Philology; Catalan Studies, and Hispanic Studies: Spanish Language and Literature–, out of the 80 students registered, only 49 participated (41 female and 8 male students).

Therefore, we managed to collect in total both 79 pre and post-questionnaires, as well as 79 brief creative writing responses of diverse profiled undergraduate students at our institution, aged most of them between 18-20 years old (26 %), and with a maximum of 23 years old (2 %) in the English Studies Degree scenario; and between 19-21 (30 %) in the Literature (2nd Language): English module, with a maximum of a 35-year-old participant, representing 1 % of the total. Particularly outstanding for this activity is the undergraduate students’ nationalities in both subjects (see graphs 1 and 2), as well as their experience living abroad in the past (see graphs 3 and 4).



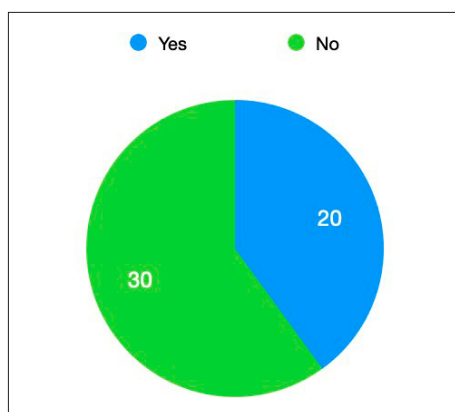
Graph 1. Undergraduate students' nationality at Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature. Source: own elaboration.



Graph 2. Undergraduate students' nationality at Literature (2nd Language): English. Source: own elaboration.



Graph 3. Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature group, answering the question *Have you ever lived abroad?* Source: own elaboration.



Graph 4. Literature (2nd Language): English group, answering to the question *Have you ever lived abroad?* Source: own elaboration.

All this demographic objective information, added to the questions and debate generated in the classroom, shed light on their knowledge prior to the classroom intervention and showed their learning evolution after this experience (post-questionnaire). Since our top priority lies in the undergraduate students' intercultural competence, an initial discussion was stimulated through leading questions in order to achieve a better understanding of the importance of travel literature. Moreover, as we seek the creation of an imaginary collective about what characteristics global citizenship should have, stu-

dents' opinions were recorded in a classroom diary, being their aim to lessen prejudice and start treating each culture equally.

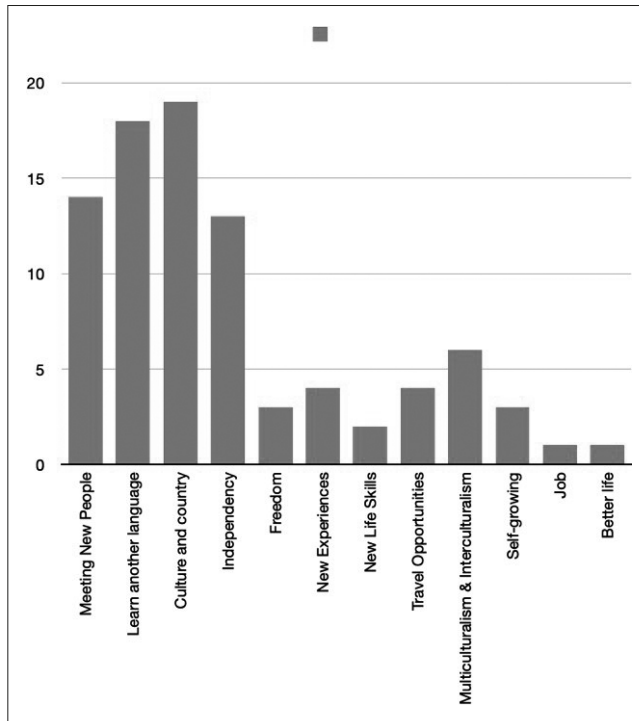
4.1 *Creative Writing Responses and Post-Questionnaire Results*

Thereafter, the analysis of the book started by reading the previously mentioned excerpts and by answering eight questions related to the author's biography, such as: "When did the author went to China for the first time?", "In which field did he write his doctoral thesis?" and "Which instrument does he play as a professional musician?". The purpose of these initial questions was to promote students' interest and curiosity revolving around a migrant US professor and artist living and working in Beijing (China). In other words, to re-think the reasons why people decide to migrate. Additionally, by doing so we were seeking for undergraduate students who were willing to share their own personal stories revolving around their own heritage and background. In fact, students participating in the experience shared their own personal experiences, thoughts, and future perspectives by means of several creative writing experiences.

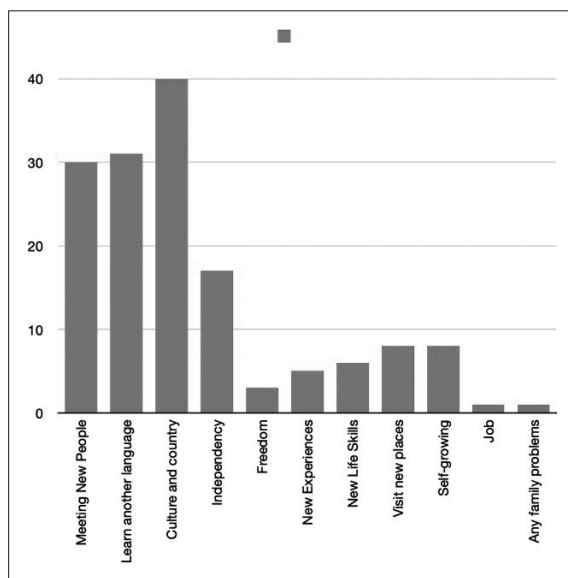
As we were coping with the intercultural competence, besides asking students "Have you ever lived abroad?", we deepen the question with the following one: "Where and for how long?". Some of the answers related to the places (countries and/or cities) in *Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature* was Amsterdam, Austria, Belfast, England, Ireland, Luxembourg, US and Valencia. On the other hand, in *Literature (2nd Language): English* the answers were the following ones: Barcelona, Belgium, Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, Málaga, Latvia, London, Paris, Spain, and Valencia. We also added a further question in which we asked all the participants to state in which foreign country they would like to live in a nearest future. In this first attempt of promoting creative writing, all the undergraduate students shared in a brief couple of paragraphs their strongest memories attached to these destinations and their life experiences there. It became particularly interesting to witness how, right after reading, analyzing and learning about a current migrant narrative experience, students were desirous of sharing their own personal experiences as migrant people and/or willing to travel and migrate.

Immediately after these creative writing ice-breaker activity revolving around three general items (nationality, previous migrant experience and interest in living abroad), undergraduate students started to share their own

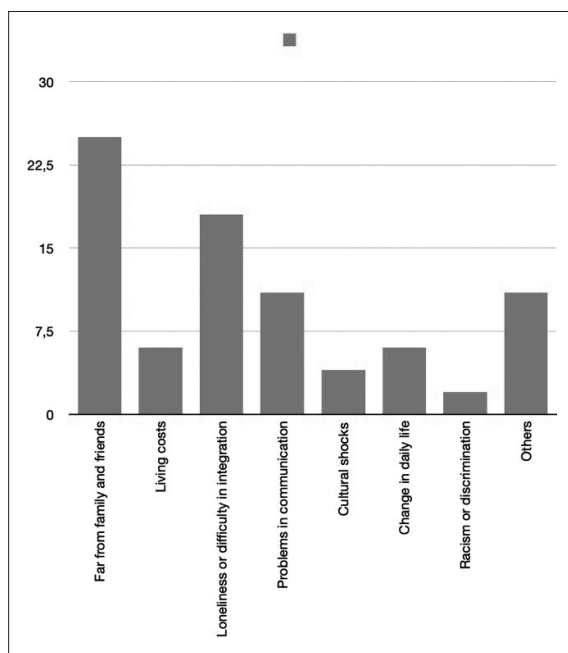
personal interests regarding living in other destinations and mentioning what positive and negative aspects living abroad has (graphs 7 and 8, and graphs 9 and 10, respectively). Being the three most common positive responses: “Culture and country”, “Learning another language” and “Meeting new people”. While the most common negative remarks mentioned were: “Far from family and friends”, “Loneliness and difficulty in integration” and “Problems in communication”.



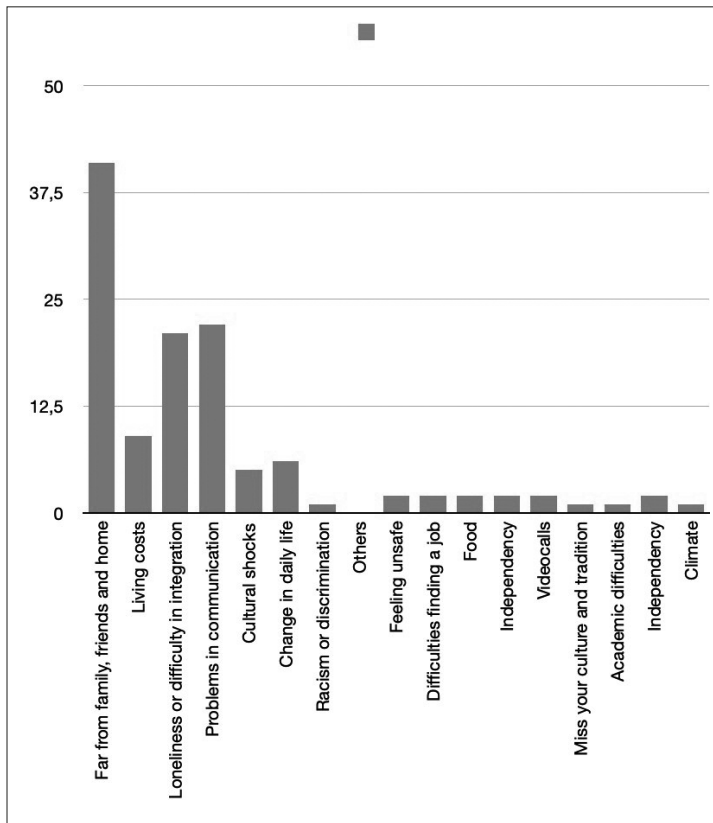
Graph 7. Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature group: Three positive aspects about living abroad. Source: own elaboration.



Graph 8. Literature (2nd Language): English group: Three positive aspects about living abroad. Source: own elaboration.



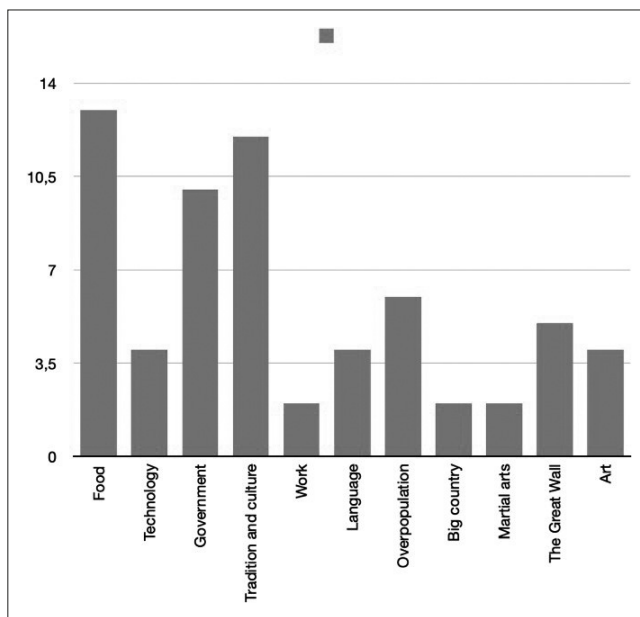
Graph 9. Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature group: Three negative aspects about living abroad. Source: own elaboration.



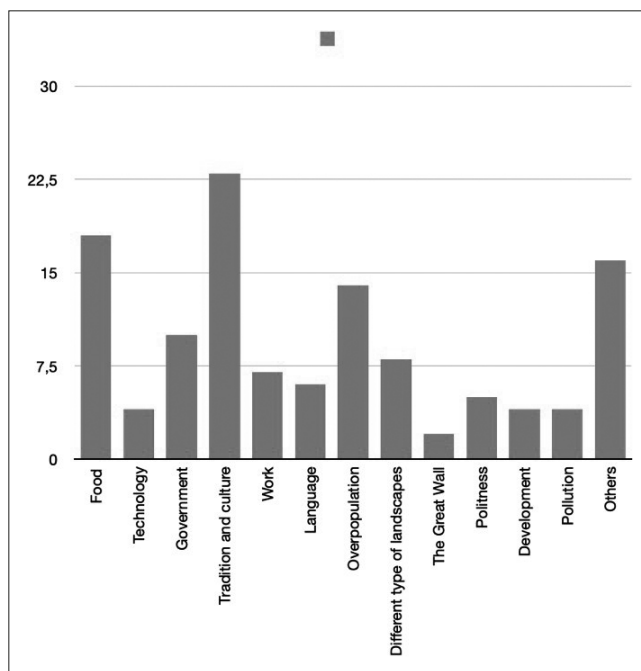
Graph 10. Literature (2nd Language): English group: Three negative aspects about living abroad. Source: own elaboration.

Curiously enough, right after these questions, they all pointed out the importance of travel literature when it came to fully understanding the necessity of representation and literary diversity. In other words, all the participants have proven to show through their post-questionnaire a real interest in migrant narratives and felt encouraged to share their own life experiences as global citizens. Plus, by exposing not only *Singing my China Stories to the World* (2021) but by also having the chance of direct communication with the author, students managed to go beyond the text itself and started to express their personal circumstances and interests. All these creative writing exercises constituted a clear example of how creative writing can be used also as a transformative weapon and to create a safe, inclusive space for diversity and migrant narratives.

Therefore, this clearly proves that the innovative education program “4th Cycle of Authors in the classrooms 2021-2022” helped us link Mark Howard Levine’s experience and narrative as a double-migrant –from a Holocaust Nazi concentration camp survivor to US citizen and then afterwards from being a professor in California to being an emeritus professor and artist in China– and to understand the need to broaden the current literary canon in order to better comprehend the contemporary worldwide situation. Most of the undergraduate students realized after reading and explaining the three excerpts in class that the collective imaginary about China was unrealistic. This was proven via the question “What are the first three concepts that come out of your mind when you think about China?”. In both cases, the most common answers were: “Tradition and culture”, “Food” and “Government”, albeit nobody could mention the People’s Republic of China’s President (see graphs 11 and 12).



Graph 11. Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature group: Concepts about China. Source: own elaboration.



Graph 12. Literature (2nd Language): English group: Concepts about China.
Source: own elaboration.

When asked to write briefly about their perceptions of contemporary China, students also mentioned the “little chance of Chinese people to live abroad”, a “monotonous everyday life”, the “oppression of the minority”, that “they are close to their family”, that it is an “interesting exotic country”, that most things are “made in China”, “dragons and martial arts”, the Chinese “obsession with their physical appearance”, and “COVID-19” as some of the most outstanding responses.

When asked by the author during the online intervention whether students thought you could learn about foreigners’ lifestyles through literature, the Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature group wrote in their creative writing responses: “With literature we can see the culture and lifestyle of a country and its inhabitants”, “Plenty of literature can make us discover about foreigners and their lifestyle”, “You learn how they express themselves through writings”, “Literature reflects real experiences”, “Literature is one important part of a country and its development”, “There are people who write about their culture, people who talk about their experiences as

foreigners and we can use works from countries we do not know”, “Not much knowledge of foreign literature to develop and answer”, “Better to see it with your eyes, but authors have tons of experiences”, “It is even better learning from a foreigner’s perspective”, “Close perspective to people’s daily lives”. On the other hand, the Literature (2nd Language): English group’s most eye-catching justifications were: “You can find out people’s lifestyles, costumes and their evolution”, “People from each country can write differently”, “You get to know the point of view of the people living there”, “You also learn about the culture”, “It gives a lot of details”, “It is more realistic”.

In other words, in the first group, some people argued that we could learn through a migrant’s narrative if the foreigner had lived enough time in that country. Moreover, some people believed that it was better to learn from a local’s point of view because he/she would always know the country much better. This answer generated loads of debate, as some students answered back by saying that a foreigner will put more interest in a country that is new or different, as we appreciate aspects that locals give for granted or simply ignored. The same debate was aroused in the second session, as some people believed that it was good because you could learn things that can only be noticed by a foreigner’s perspective. Nonetheless, some students said that foreigners also bring in their own prejudices, while a native person can show off their cultural heritage much better.

As the sessions were becoming extremely personal, it was decided to wrap up the experience by finally asking all the participants if they thought it was important to provide a space and time to give voice to the unvoiced, in order to start re-thinking the current literary canon that is mandatory in both course syllabus. The total of the undergraduate students (30 participants) registered in Practical Literary Criticism Applied to English Literature agreed to the need of including live authors’ and their texts into the classrooms, as they had deeply enjoyed the experience in these sessions. In the subject Literature (2nd Language): English, only 47 students agreed, 2 people said that it depended on the author and text(s) chosen, and only 1 participant totally disagreed.

Lastly, students were asked to write down two last creative writing interventions by leaving some spare time and space for them to share their comments and thoughts regarding (1) the author’s participation in their classes. These are some of the aspects that they had enjoyed the most: “his tiny performance” (referring to the author’s live singing), “the different anecdotes that he told in relation with his creative work as a teacher and musician”, “when he explained how Chinese people help him even though he doesn’t speak the

language”, “he doesn’t speak Chinese and he isn’t interested in learning it”, “his spontaneity and the happiness with which he spoke. His charisma and he is so nice, natural and a very close person”, “he answered very naturally to the questions that we made”, “he was really confident, and he made clear that the rest of the world are not so different”, “his dedication on patience to arrive at the point he is now” and “when he talked about his first years in China”. Additionally, students shared their thoughts and impressions about the five creative writing assignments in total. These were some of the answers given: “I’ve loved that you’ve provided us with the opportunity to express themselves and vent in a safe space where they will be treated with equality and respect”, “Did enjoyed leaving a space in school’s curriculum to learn about marginalized authors and giving lectures about them”, “Loved destroying the concept of *the others*”, “Had the time of my life by raising awareness and creating a platform to do so” and “via literature, social media and TIK-TOK, you have demonstrated that you can teach us and share other people’s experiences”. Bringing native people to tell their own experiences and people who had lived these types of experiences together.

5. Conclusions

Re-thinking the amount of possibilities a couple sessions had, it is truly evident that this learning experience should be applied by designing a new subject where the intercultural competence is taught and by introducing this in other subjects, not only at university, but also in elementary school, high school and vocational training, a big change in students’ mentality could take place in how they see the world and other cultures.

Hence, in a near future, it could be interesting to continue analyzing more ways to develop the intercultural competence with the support of travel literature, having in mind two main facts: (1) as mentioned above, the lack of teaching modules specifically designed for this means at the English Studies degree –and the rest of the current degrees available at the Philology, Translation and Communication Faculty at the Universitat de València (Spain)–; and (2) the fact that the time and space provided for the Degree Final Dissertation (DFD), as a mandatory 12-ECTS-credit subject is definitely too short and narrow for students to develop all the research possibilities and their innovative educational methodological approaches.

This is still certainly a possible beginning for a further research career. In fact, another interesting study would consist in linking the theoretical learning based on the acquisition of English as a foreign language (EFL) at the master's degree in Secondary Education Teacher Training and their practicum period, so as to delve into the relevance of this literary didactic methodology and how to bring the intercultural competence and the education for development and global citizenship into public Spanish high schools. This would start spreading mind-openness, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness among people; in other words, it would help them become global citizens. By doing so, future generations may transform the world into a more peaceful one where there would be fewer prejudices, less racism and a better coexistence between different cultures, changing the multiculturalism, which nowadays exists nearly everywhere, into interculturalism.

6. References

- Alves Martins, Aracy *et al.* 2016. Letramento(s)/alfabetização em contextos multilíngues de Angola e Guiné-Bissau. *Educação em Revista* 38(4): 391-412. doi: 10.1590/0102-4698164867
- Aanzai, Yuichiro & Simon, Herbert, A. 1979. The theory of learning by doing. *Psychological Review* 86(2): 124-140. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.86.2.124>
- Arias, Jonathan. 2020. *La literatura del oprimido*, Jairo Aníbal Niño y Aquiles Nazoa: *Una historia no contada*. Editorial Académica Española.
- Ballester, Josep & Ibarra, Noelia. 2016. La educación lectora, literaria y el libro en la era digital. *Revista Chilena de Literatura* 94: 147-171.
- Brunold, Andreas & Esteban-Fonollosa, Maricel. 2022. La educación para el desarrollo sostenible aplicada a la enseñanza-aprendizaje del alemán como lengua extranjera. *Tabanque Revista Pedagógica* 34(1): 26-44. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363556537-La_Educacion_para_el_Desarrollo_Sostenible_aplicada_a_la_ensenanza-aprendizaje_del_aleman_como_lengua_extranjera
- Cerrillo, Pedro. 2007. *Literatura infantil y juvenil y educación literaria: hacia una nueva enseñanza de la literatura*. Barcelona: Editorial Octaedro.
- Chocobar, Cynthia Nathaly. 2020. Creación surrealista de sueños colectivos en Educación Primaria. Investigación-acción intercultural. *Las competencias comunicativa y digital en estudiantes de Magisterio* 38(3): 363-382. <https://revistas.um.es/educatio/article/view/452971>
- Colomer, Teresa. 1996. *La Didáctica de la Literatura: temas y líneas de investigación e Innovación. La educación lingüística y literaria en la enseñanza secundaria*. Barcelona: Horsori/Universitat de Barcelona, Instituto de Ciencias de la Educación.
- Devís, Ana. 201. *La educación literaria en el desarrollo de la competencia intercultural. Aportaciones para una educación lingüística y literaria en el siglo XXI*.

- Domene-Benito, Rocio. 2018. *La Educación Literaria a través del álbum ilustrado* (Ph. D. Dissertation). Valencia: Universitat de València.
- Domene-Benito, Rocio *et al.* 2020. *Voiced to the Unvoiced: Promoting Critical Thinking by means of Literature in the English Studies Degree*. Independently published.
- García-Tudela, Pedro. 2018. Educación intercultural como eje transversal en la Educación Primaria. *Cuadernos de Pedagogía* 486: 26-30.
- González Rodríguez, Luisa & Borham, Miriam. 2012. Promoting Intercultural Competence through Literature in CLIL Contexts. *Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies* 34(2): 108. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289725422_Promoting_Intercultural_Competence_through_Literature_in_CLIL_Contexts [Acceso 12/12/2022]
- Haba-Osca, Julia *et al.* 2015. Taller de escritura creativa para el desarrollo de la competencia literaria en Brasil. *Didáctica: Lengua y Literatura* 27: 97-110. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_DIDA.2015.v27.50868
- Haba-Osca, Julia. 2016. *Practicing critical writing handbook: developing skills in literary writing*. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch.
- Hernández, Blanca. 2020. La educación literaria: nuevos referentes para trabajar la igualdad desde la perspectiva de género. Propuestas didácticas. *Lenguaje y Textos* 51: 95-106. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4995/lyt.2020.11555>
- Hoff, Hild. 2019. Fostering the 'Intercultural Reader'? An Empirical Study of Socio-Cultural Approaches to EFL Literature. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 63(3): 443-464. doi: [10.1080/00313831.2017.1402366](https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1402366)
- Hornby, Albert Sidney *et al.* 2020. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ifrim, Nicoleta. 2013. Education and Interculturality in Approaching Post-totalitarian Identity Discourse: Interactive Views on Re-reading the Romanian Cultural Identity. *Science Direct* 93: 18-22.
- Levine, Mark Howard. 2021. *Singing My China Stories to the World*. Beijing: China Intercontinental Press.
- Martínez-Carrasco, Robert. & Haba-Osca, Julia. 2021. Ciudadanía global y formación investigadora en humanidades: cómo convertir el trabajo final de grado en espacio de resistencia y transformación. En *Educación para el Desarrollo y la Ciudadanía Global. Combatir las desigualdades sociales a través de la competencia investigadora del alumnado*. Valencia: Tirant Lo Blanch, 131-153.
- Martínez-León, Patricia *et al.* 2017. Identidades fronterizas y pertenencias plurales: diversidad e interculturalidad a través de la educación literaria. *Didáctica Lengua y Literatura* 29(29): 155.
- Moncusí, Albert. 2021. Prólogo. En *Educación para el Desarrollo y la Ciudadanía Global. Combatir las desigualdades sociales a través de la competencia investigadora del alumnado*. Valencia: Tirant Lo Blanch, 15-16.
- Myren-Svelstad, Esben. 2020. Sustainable Literary Competence: Connecting Literature Education to Education for Sustainability. *Humanities* 9(4): 141. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/h9040141>

- Navarro Domínguez, E. 2013. *Imagen del Mundo: seis estudios sobre literatura de viajes*. Huelva: Universidad de Huelva Publicaciones.
- Penn, Jeremy. 2011. Assessing complex general education student learning outcomes. *New Directions for Institutional Research* 149: 5-14. doi: 10.1002/ir.376
- Petrarca, Francesco & Lokaj, Rodney. 2006. *Petrarch's ascent of Mount Ventoux*. Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo.
- Raposo Fernández, Berta & García Wistädt, Ingrid. 2009. *Viajes y viajeros, entre ficción y realidad*. Valencia: Universitat de València.
- Reese, Hayne. 2011. The learning-by-doing principle. *Behavioral Development Bulletin* 17(1): 1-19. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0100597>
- Sánchez Arjona, María Dolores *et al.* 2018. La Competencia Conciencia y Expresión Cultural para poner en valor la herencia literaria medieval hispano-árabe en un contexto educativo Intercultural. *Tercio Creciente* 7(1). doi: 10.17561/rtc.n13.5
- Schank, Roger. 1995. What We Learn When We Learn by Doing. *Technical Report* 60.
- Vicente-Yagüe Jara, María Isabel. 2015. Fomento de la lectura: el plan lector. El canon formativo en la educación lectoliteraria. En *Didáctica de la Lengua y Educación Literaria*. Murcia: Pirámide, 297-303.
- Zotova, Olga & Dontsov, Aleksander. 2013. Reasons for Migration Decision Making and Migrants Security Notions. *Science Direct* 86: 76-81. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.528>.

