



Global Citizenship Education with Picture Books in English Language Learning

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Abstract: The United Nation's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognise that quality education requires the integration of global citizenship education (GCE) into school curricula. A powerful way to integrate a global citizenship perspective in primary education is by harnessing the motivational power of stories in English-language learning (ELL) as a way of developing young learners' global consciousness and global competencies. This article explores how story-based instruction can develop intercultural and ecological awareness, alongside reading and writing skills, by incorporating the vision and values of global citizenship education through a careful selection and use of picture books and storytelling practices in the primary English-language classroom.

Global Citizenship Education mit Bilderbücher im englischsprachigen Klassenzimmer

Die Agenda 2030 der Vereinten Nationen mit ihren Zielen für nachhaltige Entwicklung erkennt an, dass eine qualitativ hochwertige Bildung die Integration von Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in die Lehrpläne der Schulen erfordert. Eine wirkungsvolle Möglichkeit, die Perspektive der Weltbürgerschaft in die Grundschulbildung zu integrieren, ist die Nutzung der motivierenden Kraft von Geschichten im frühen Englischunterricht, um bei jungen Lernenden ein globales Bewusstsein und globale Kompetenzen zu entwickeln. In diesem Beitrag wird untersucht, wie ein auf Geschichten basierender Unterricht neben den Lese- und Schreibfähigkeiten auch ein ökologisches und interkulturelles Bewusstsein entwickeln kann, indem die Vision und die Werte der Global Citizenship Education durch eine sorgfältige Auswahl und Verwendung von Bilderbüchern und Geschichtenerzählungen im englischsprachigen Klassenzimmer einbezogen werden.

Educazione alla cittadinanza globale con gli albi illustrati nelle classi di lingua inglese

Gli Obiettivi di Sviluppo Sostenibile (OSS) 2030 delle Nazioni Unite riconoscono che un'istruzione di qualità richiede l'integrazione dell'educazione alla cittadinanza globale nei programmi scolastici. Un modo efficace per integrare una prospettiva di cittadinanza globale nell'educazione primaria è quello di sfruttare il potere motivazionale dei racconti nell'apprendimento precoce della lingua inglese come modo per sviluppare la coscienza e le competenze globali nei giovani allievi. Questo articolo esamina come la didattica narrativa possa sviluppare la consapevolezza interculturale ed ecologica insieme alle abilità di lettura e scrittura, incorporando la visione e i valori dell'educazione alla cittadinanza globale attraverso un'attenta selezione e l'uso di albi illustrati e di pratiche di narrazione nella classe di lingua inglese primaria.

Keywords: global citizenship education, intercultural education, picture books in early English language learning | Interkulturelle Bildung, Bilderbücher im frühen Englischunterricht | educazione alla cittadinanza globale, educazione interculturale, albi illustrati e storytelling nella didattica della lingua inglese.

1 Theoretical orientation to Global Citizenship Education

Today's world is characterised by interdependence, complexity, and unprecedented transnational challenges. Schools play an important role in preparing new generations to understand this reality and to assume a conscious role as citizens working for social transformation. Drawing on a selection of children's picture books, this article explores how intercultural and ecological discourses related to global citizenship values can be introduced in the primary English-language classroom. In the first section, a definition of global citizenship education is provided along with an overview of its articulation in international policy frameworks. The power of picture books for citizenship education is then examined in the second section. Thirdly, examples of suitable picture books for exploring global issues are presented. Picture books can act as building blocks not only for literacy development, but also for constructing a culture of care based on democratic principles from the earliest stages of learning.

1.1 Definition of Global Citizenship Education

Global citizenship education (GCE or GCED) is a form of civic education that involves students' active participation in projects that address global issues of a social, political, economic, or environmental nature. The Global Citizenship Foundation defines GCE as “a transformative, lifelong pursuit that involves both curricular learning and practical experience to shape a mindset of care for humanity and the planet, and to equip individuals with global competencies to undertake responsible actions aimed at forging more just, peaceful, secure, sustainable, tolerant and inclusive societies” (<https://www.globalcitizenshipfoundation.org/about/global-citizenship-education>). Its two main pillars are the development of *global consciousness*, the moral or ethical aspect of global issues, and of *global competences*, the skills needed to enable learners to participate in projects which aim to have a transformational impact in society.

Global citizenship education is a new name for a familiar concept that emerged following the end of the Second World War as European governments met with the aim of rebuilding their education systems once peace had been restored. The establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) by the UN General Assembly on 16 November 1945 was designed to “encourage the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” through education. Key moments that have since helped to shape the evolution of an international perspective in education include the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the 1959 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education, the 1974 Recommendation on Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the 1994-1995 Declaration

and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (ICE), the 2012 Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) for access to quality education for all children, the 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration and adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, and the 2015 adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹ Across this timeline, UNESCO and other international organisations have recommended policy frameworks and promoted curricular initiatives for peace education, civic education, international education, social justice education, intercultural education, inclusive education – different concepts that share a common recognition of the important role education plays in sustaining democratic principles and democratic participation.

The underlying premises of GCE remain acutely relevant today and are seen as a defence against the rise of violence, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination, and intolerance of all kinds. The growing heterogeneity in schools since the late-twentieth century underlines the importance of learning to live together in increasingly diverse, complex, interconnected, and democratic societies that aim to promote justice and peace, social responsibility and the development of critical awareness and civic engagement (c.f. Banks 2017; Reysen/Katzarska-Miller 2013; Stoner/Tarrant/Perry/Gleason/Wadsworth/Page 2019; Surian/Berbeglia/Delrio/Vanoni 2018). Global consciousness and competences are more important than ever as challenges arising from conflict-induced displacement and migration, the climate crisis, and a surge in populist beliefs and policies are challenging democratic principles in many societies (Dryden-Peterson 2020). As noted by Parejo, Molina-Fernández and González-Pedraza (2021), education systems today are called upon to address complex problems and interrelated phenomena through an approach which favours deep understanding and engagement with global issues on multiple levels, rather than proposing apparently simple and quick solutions to isolated phenomena.

The overarching aim of GCE – to empower students to “act as competent and effective democratic citizens” (Council of Europe 2018: 37) – is not only concerned with helping them acquire technical knowledge related to political institutions and processes, but also in developing their ability for “effective and constructive interaction with others, thinking critically, acting in a socially responsible manner and acting democratically” (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2017: 9). To this end, the Council of Europe (2018) developed a Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) to support education systems in ensuring that learners are given opportunities to develop both a civic mindset and a set of competencies for democratic participation. This process implies that young people acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to act as citizens who understand and support democratic values, including human dignity and human rights, cultural diversity, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of the law (Council of Europe 2018: 38).

¹ For further information, see UNESCO’s “Education milestones”: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education/about-us/history>.

1.2 The UN 2030 Agenda and Global Citizenship Education

A key articulation of global citizenship in international policy frameworks is found in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably in target 4.7, “Education for sustainable development and global citizenship”, of SDG 4, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. UNESCO’s *Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action* mandates the fostering of education for global citizenship through the development of the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED) (2016: 8).

To this end, UNESCO proposes a model of global citizenship education that adopts a multi-layered approach that involves: (1) learning critical thinking and developing understanding and reflection on local and international issues; (2) developing a sense of belonging and fostering values such as empathy, solidarity, and respect for diversity; (3) forming responsible, tolerant, and peaceful citizens. These key learning objectives are based on three interrelated domains of learning: cognitive, emotional, and participatory. Schools are called on to provide civic education through which students can learn how to create a better world from a holistic approach that integrates these three domains. Educational institutions can promote global citizenship by fostering in educators and learners a recognition that they belong to a local-global nexus of interconnected lives and can use their knowledge and skills to contribute towards the betterment of local and translocal communities.

Drawing on Singleton’s (2015) “Head-Heart-Hands (3H)” model of transformative learning, with its emphasis on action-taking as a key dimension of sustainable education, a curriculum for global citizenship education should stimulate young learners’ cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural engagement with global issues in a holistic way. UNESCO (2015) identifies the key learning outcomes and learner attributes for GCE across these three domains in the following figure.

Global Citizenship Education

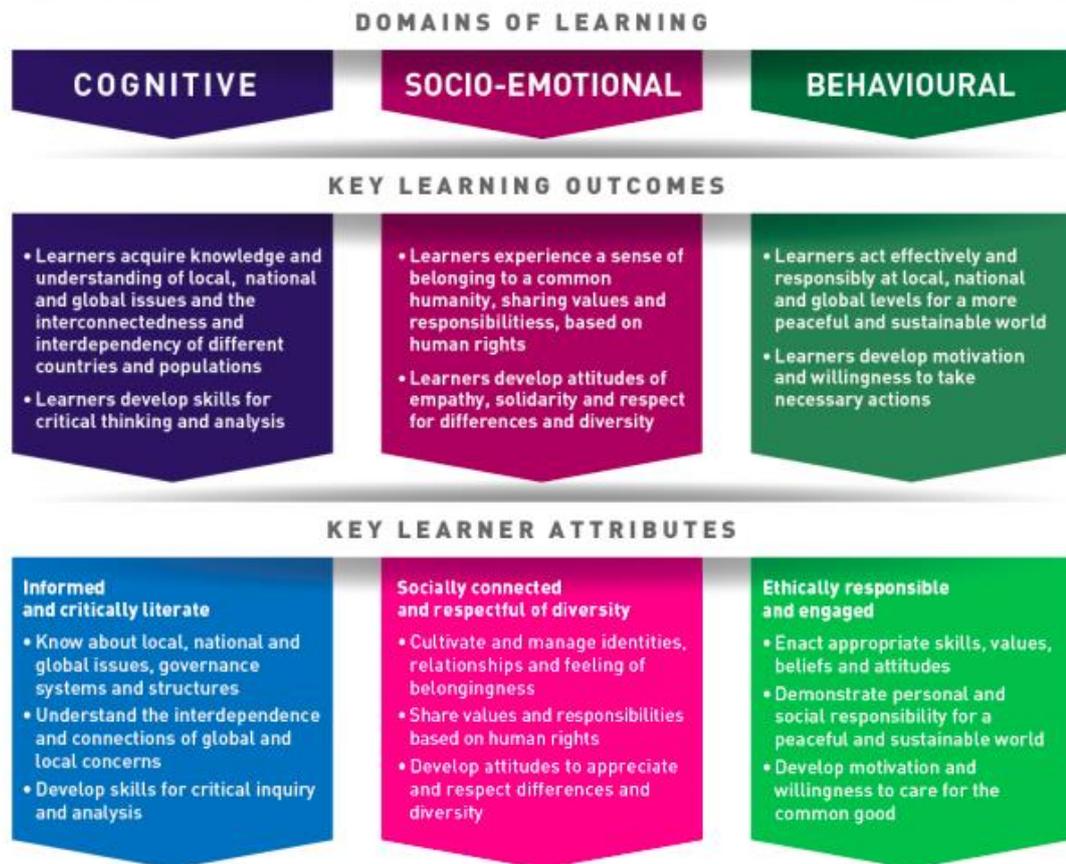


Fig. 1: Expected learning outcomes and learner attributes in GCE (UNESCO 2015: 29).

The UNESCO guidelines (2015) provide a framework for the implementation of GCE to assist educators in preparing young learners to develop the knowledge and skills needed to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable societies. It is important that educators work across the three domains of learning, deploying Singleton’s (2015) “Head-Heart-Hands (3H)” model, as detailed below:

1.  *Cognitive domain* – Learners acquire the knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities (e.g. knowledge of local, national and global issues). They also develop their understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependency of shared situations, as well as their critical thinking and analytical skills.
2.  *Socio-emotional domain* – Learners develop a global consciousness, particularly a heightened relational understanding and awareness. They experience a sense of belonging to a common humanity, share values and responsibilities regarding human rights, develop

attitudes of empathy, respect, and solidarity with others, and learn to express feelings and reflect on emotions.

3. 🖐️ *Behavioural domain* – Learners acquire the motivation and willingness to actively engage with issues affecting social justice and sustainability. They learn to channel knowledge and values into concrete actions at the local, national, and global levels, and to develop the skills needed to implement these actions.

1.3 Global citizenship values and learning aims in primary education

How can schools embed GCE values and goals in their curricula? What specific competences are needed by young people for effective participation in a complex, diverse and interconnected world? To assist teachers, UNESCO provides a ‘can do’ list of specific learning aims for lower and upper primary learners, delineated according to broadly defined topics that can be easily embedded across the curriculum regardless of national context (c.f. 2015: 22–28). These objectives take into consideration the three domains of learning as represented by distinct colours in the table below: cognitive (blue); socio-emotional (pink); behavioural (green).

Tab. 1: UNESCO learning objectives for GCE in primary education across the three domains of learning (2015: 31).

TOPICS	LEARNING OBJECTIVES	
	Preschool & lower primary (ages 5–9)	Upper primary (ages 9–12)
1. Local, national & global systems and structures	Describe how the local environment is organised and how it relates to the wider world, and introduce the concept of citizenship	Identify governance structures, decision-making processes and dimensions of citizenship
2. Issues affecting interaction and connectedness of communities at local, national, and global levels	List key local, national and global issues and explore how these may be connected	Investigate the reasons behind major common global concerns and their impact at national and local levels
3. Underlying assumptions and power dynamics	Name different sources for information and develop basic skills for inquiry	Differentiate between fact/opinion, reality/fiction, and different view- points, perspectives
4. Different levels of identity	Recognise how we fit into and interact with the world around us and develop intrapersonal and interpersonal skills	Examine different levels of identity and their implications for managing relationships with others
5. Different communities people belong to and how these are connected	Illustrate differences and connections between different social groups	Compare and contrast shared and different social, cultural and legal norms
6. Difference and respect for diversity	Distinguish between sameness and difference, and recognise that everyone has rights & responsibilities	Cultivate good relationships with diverse individuals and groups
7. Actions that can be taken individually and collectively	Explore possible ways of taking action to improve the world we live in	Discuss the importance of individual and collective action and engage in community work
8. Ethically responsible behaviour	Discuss how our actions and choices affect other people and the planet and adopt responsible behaviour	Understand the concepts of social justice and ethical responsibility and learn how to apply them in everyday life
9. Getting engaged and taking action	Recognise the importance and benefits of civic engagement	Identify opportunities for engagement and initiate action

Kenyon and Christoff (2020) note that while incorporating global citizenship education into school curricula is increasingly recognised as important by scholars and international agencies, teachers and schools at times struggle with its implementation due to uncertainty about which disciplines are best suited to GCE. Social Studies is an obvious choice, yet this subject area is often encountered later in schooling and, according to Kenyon and Christoff, the “absence of GCE in these earlier grades is particularly troubling because this is when students are forming their initial ideas about the world around them” (2020: 397).

A powerful way for primary school teachers to address GCE in early learning is by embedding it in language education through a careful selection of children's picture books which represent a diversity of individuals and groups, are sensitive to a broad range of cultural experiences, and emphasise relations of care between people and the environment (c.f. Brophy/Alleman 2002). An overview of key theoretical and methodological considerations in using picture books for GCE in the context of early English foreign-language pedagogy is presented in the section that follows, along with a framework to guide teachers in the process of selecting suitable books for story-based instruction that incorporates a GCE perspective.

2 Methodological approach to Global Citizenship Education using picture books

The use of picture books for citizenship education offers teachers the potential to work with young learners across the three domains of learning – cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioural – through communicative interaction in reading, telling, and sharing stories. When approaching the theme of diversity, Osler and Starkey (2018) emphasise the importance of working from students' own experiences, analysing situations with which they are familiar and linking these to other contexts in order to highlight interconnections and shared discourses. This implies a pedagogical approach that goes beyond a *transmissive model* of knowledge wherein the teacher imparts information to students, to a *transactional model* in which students participate as co-creators through their own experience, inquiry, critical thinking, and interaction with others, and towards a *transformative model* in which knowledge is channelled into concrete actions that extend beyond the classroom with the aim of enacting some form of transformation in society.²

Global citizenship values and learning aims can be readily integrated in foreign-language education where attention is naturally directed to linguistic and cultural diversity and the world beyond the classroom through a focus on the acquisition of foreign-language competences for intercultural communication (c.f. Cates 2002; Lütge 2015; Lütge/Merse/Rauschert 2022). GCE in the context of the foreign-language classroom necessarily requires three sets of interconnected learning objectives: linguistic objectives, intercultural objectives, and citizenship objectives. This combination of foci can be achieved through teachers' careful selection of picture books which enable young learners to develop knowledge and skills in the foreign language, intercultural understanding, and social

² The Miller-Seller model focuses on three “metaorientations” in curriculum development: transmission, transaction, and transformation. Each metaorientation is linked to philosophical and psychological theories which determine the teacher's approach to teaching and learning (c.f. Miller/Seller 1990).

engagement through issues emerging from the fictional or non-fictional story worlds depicted.

2.1 English language learning through picture books

As a rich source of high-quality language input, children's picture books lend themselves to language and literacy work in children's first and additional languages through storytelling practices. Ghosn (2013: 171) argues for the use of picture books over course books in language education since the former offer rich exposure to language used in natural communication while the latter are often too simplified, culturally distant and removed from the life experiences of young learners. Bland (2014) similarly notes that authentic picture books are powerful in early learning since the pictures transform into dynamic mental images that remain in the young reader's repertoire of experience, anchoring ideas, concepts, and feelings, along with new language.

As authentic stories are highly motivating and rich in language experience, Wright (2001: 5) suggests that they allow learners to develop a "reservoir of language" as vocabulary and grammar structures are acquired first through receptive learning. Before children can learn to speak and build sentences in English, they must develop phonological awareness by recognising sounds and patterns within spoken language. Listening to the rhythmic cadence of picture books through dialogic readings helps them develop phonological awareness as they reproduce the rhythm, intonation, prosody, and pronunciation of English words and phrases; this process serves as the foundation for learning to read (c.f. Bland 2019; Evans 2012).

An interactive or dialogic reading of a picture book involves the teacher (or other competent reader) pausing for clarification, sign-posting key actions and events, drawing children's attention to the images and graphic elements of the book to help them follow the storyline and acquire key words. Ellis and Mourão (2021: 22–25) examine the mediation strategies teachers use to support learners' linguistic development in early English-language learning, noting that dialogic readings or read-alouds "facilitate the acquisition of formulaic sequences or chunks, as children need exposure to consistent repetition and recycling to be able to transfer these to other situations" (2021: 22). The language in picture books is often presented in repetitions and rhymes that are predictable and memorable, thus facilitating language retention through pattern practice as learners repeat key phrases and favourite passages. Participating in picturebook read-alouds also stimulates children's listening and reading fluency as they search for textual meaning, discuss what is happening in the story, retell a sequence of events, decipher word-image correlations, and predict outcomes of stories, guided by the teacher's mediation strategies (c.f. Ellis/Brewster 2014; Ellis/Mourão 2021; Hoffmann 2021). In this way, children gradually build up knowledge of lexis and grammar in English since language exposure, over time, leads to language

emergence as they move the acquired language into their productive control, developing speaking and writing fluency (Mastellotto/Burton 2018).

Kümmerling-Meiburg (2018) notes that picture books play a crucial role in children's developing cognitive, linguistic, moral, and aesthetic capacities. Alongside functional literacy (i.e. the ability to read and write), picture books and storytelling help to support the development of many different literacies – visual literacy, emotional literacy, cultural literacy, digital literacy, numeracy – which children also require in order to interpret and decode stories, particularly given the proliferation of diverse modes of communication today through new technologies. Scholars have noted that children's stories can act as a powerful pedagogical tool for developing young learners' *multiple literacies*, a term which embraces the notion that knowledge is constructed through many sources and modes that extend beyond language itself, and that children must become literate in these (Cope/Kalantzis 2009). A multiliteracies pedagogy is, consequently, underpinned by multimodal theory, which recognises that children create meaning using a “multiplicity of modes, means and materials” for self-expression (Kress 1997: 97).

Picture books are multimodal resources which offer a dual-decoding experience since the text carries meaning that is enhanced by images and peritext, which help young learners unlock narrative meaning in the target language. Sipe defines the picture book as the text form in which pictures, words, and peritext (e.g., cover, endpapers, title page) interact to tell a visual story (2008: 14). As Ellis notes, written-linguistic modes of communication interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial patterns of meaning as teachers make use of picture books and related media for English-language teaching and learning (2016: 28). Bland claims that through their “multi-layered” (readable in different ways at different levels of linguistic sophistication and cognitive maturity) and “multimodal” (combining written text, visual images and graphic elements) dimensions, children's picture books encourage engaged analysis on linguistic, metalinguistic, and metacognitive levels (2014: 2).

Immersive and participatory story worlds encountered through picture books enable children to receive, reproduce and produce new stories. Kress (1997, 2000) notes that children move easily between and across modes, semiotically recycling information in creative and transformative ways according to their own interests, experiences, and abilities. The ability to express their thoughts, to be understood, and in so doing to act upon their culture is, according to Kress, an essential part of the child's development of a sense of agency and voice (1997: 97). This focus on the empowering potential of storytelling, which gives voice to children's ideas and enables them to act upon their culture, signals the potential of stories to encourage children to go beyond the book and apply their knowledge in new and creative ways to the real world they live in.

2.2 Intercultural learning through picture books

In addition to providing affordances for language learning, story-based instruction also provides affordances for the development of intercultural awareness and communicative competence (c.f. Barrett/Golubeva 2022; Byram 2008; Byram et al. 2013; Byram et al. 2016; Dolan 2014; Doyé 1999). Listening to stories in class is a social experience that allows children to share emotions as a group and forge a deep connection with others. Roney (1996: 7) notes that the “co-creative and interactive” dimension of sharing stories makes storytelling a powerful tool for social learning in childhood. Picture books support many affective functions, allowing children to experience and express a range of emotions and understand their sources, thus enriching the child’s inner world (Campagnaro/Dallari 2013). By linking fantasy or imaginative worlds with children’s real worlds, stories help them make sense of their everyday lives. Moreover, stories help children situate themselves in the world and identify ever-widening circles of belonging – home, school, community.

While strategies for supporting learners’ skill development in areas such as empathy, self-regulation, and conflict resolution can be integrated across the curriculum, the English-language classroom is considered a natural environment to engage children in social and emotional learning (SEL). The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as:

the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>).

Using picture books and children’s literature for SEL is a well-established practice in English-language teaching and teacher education, and publishers make available a range of quality resources to support it.

By presenting cultural values and customs, stories help children understand their own reality, as well as diverse realities which shape their world (c.f. Bland 2016, 2020, 2022; Ellis 2010; Ibrahim 2020; Rader 2018; Volkmann 2015). Morgado explains that well-selected picture books can act as vehicles for fostering young learners’ intercultural awareness since they function as “representations of global diversity and local human action which resonates globally” (2019: 165). Since stories express cultural norms, values, and behaviours, they are ways for children to understand what makes them the same as or different from others encountered in story worlds. Heggernes (2019) suggests that picture books open up a dialogic space in the classroom for the development of learners’ cultural awareness and empathy. Children’s narratives and storytelling practices are, in fact, part of a “hidden

curriculum”³ in primary education since they nurture children’s psycho-social and emotional development through the development of values related to self-definition, empathy for and connection with others, intercultural awareness, and respect for diversity.

Nussbaum signals the ethical force of stories which help to cultivate a “narrative imagination”: through imaginary encounters with difference, readers can develop an ethical orientation by thinking about “what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have” (2010: 95–96). This capacity for perspective-taking and empathy are especially important given the rapid and unprecedented global sociocultural changes contributing to ever-growing “superdiversity” in schools and society (c.f. Vertovec 2007).

The imaginary encounters which take place through the telling and receiving of stories facilitate an engagement with other perspectives from the horizon of one’s own position and experience, making self-awareness and critical distance an integral part of self-other narrative encounters. Edward Said reminds us that identities are dialogically constructed through difference: one defines oneself based on the recognition of what one is not in relation to others; thus, *the Other* acts as “a source and resource for a better, more critical understanding of the Self” (2004: xi). Perspective-taking tasks through reading and imaginary encounters facilitated by picture books can help young learners develop empathy by enabling them to project themselves into a character, see the world through different eyes, and vicariously experience a spectrum of emotions.

The cultivation of empathy and solidarity with others through the use of picture books for intercultural citizenship education (ICE) is the focus of a recent European Erasmus+ project, “Intercultural Citizenship Education in Primary English Language Learning – ICEPELL”, which counts among its intellectual outputs a series of eighteen “ICEKits” or teaching packs to be used with picture books for intercultural learning in the English-language classroom⁴. ICE focuses on the intercultural communicative competence associated with foreign language education and on civic action in the community associated with citizenship education (c.f. Bradbery 2013; Bradbery/Brown 2015; Byram/Golubeva/Hui 2016; Ellis/Mourão 2021; Matos 2012; Mourão 2015; Porto 2016), thus embracing values and strategies that align closely with the aims of global citizenship education.

³ A hidden curriculum refers to the unspoken or implicit values, behaviours, procedures, and norms that exist in an educational setting. While such expectations are not explicitly written, ‘hidden curriculum’ is the unstated promotion and enforcement of certain behavioural patterns, professional standards, and social beliefs while navigating a learning environment (c.f. Miller/Seller 1990).

⁴ For further details, please see the ICEPELL project website: <https://icepell.eu/>.

2.3 Citizenship education through picture books

Gaining knowledge about global citizenship at the cognitive level involves students first learning about rights and responsibilities, about social justice and sustainability, through an examination of situations which place human rights at risk and endanger human life; in this way, they acquire knowledge about structural and social inequalities and the dominant discourses that shape them. This knowledge frames a *global consciousness*, which is an informed view of one's rights and responsibilities in the global community, which prompts action-taking on issues (c.f. Carpenter/Weber/Schugurensky 2012; Davies 2006; Dower 2014; Dower/Williams 2002).

Second, for students to develop global values they must go beyond a cognitive assimilation of information about structural inequalities towards understanding the interrelationships between collective and individual responsibility through a sense of solidarity with others based on mutual recognition, respect, and empathy. Recognising one's own role in supporting human rights issues, environmental sustainability and intercultural understanding contributes to global awareness and provides an impetus for direct engagement with global issues. Third, students must be given opportunities to respond to contemporary issues of poverty, social injustice, persecution, exploitation, or environmental concerns through initiatives that enable them to seek solutions to current problems and to enact change, possibly within their local communities or through broader networks. This process involves channelling knowledge and empathy into concrete actions through participatory engagement with initiatives that seek a transformational impact in society (Mourão 2015; Valente/Mourão 2022). In so doing, students develop a set of global competencies based on international awareness, informed advocacy, and social-political efficacy (Lorenzini 2013), which are essential skills for democratic citizenship.

While recognising the importance of all three domains of learning, Lorenzini (2013: 418) stresses the importance of the behavioural dimension, stating: "Knowledge about global challenges can leave students frustrated and overwhelmed unless students also understand how they might contribute to solutions". Indeed, providing opportunities to reflect on possible actions that students and other community members can take to find solutions to current problems is key to action-oriented learning and engaged citizenship. Banks (2017: 367) defines *transformative citizenship* as acting on behalf of others by actively promoting policies and changes consistent with equality, human rights, and social justice. He claims that schools can support students' socialisation as citizens by cultivating their civic consciousness and democratic participation skills by learning about structural inclusion and political efficacy (2017: 372).

2.4 Framework for incorporating a GCE perspective in storytelling

This section addresses how global citizenship values can be incorporated in a storytelling framework, drawing on Ghosn's (2013) model of a four-phase storytelling cycle:

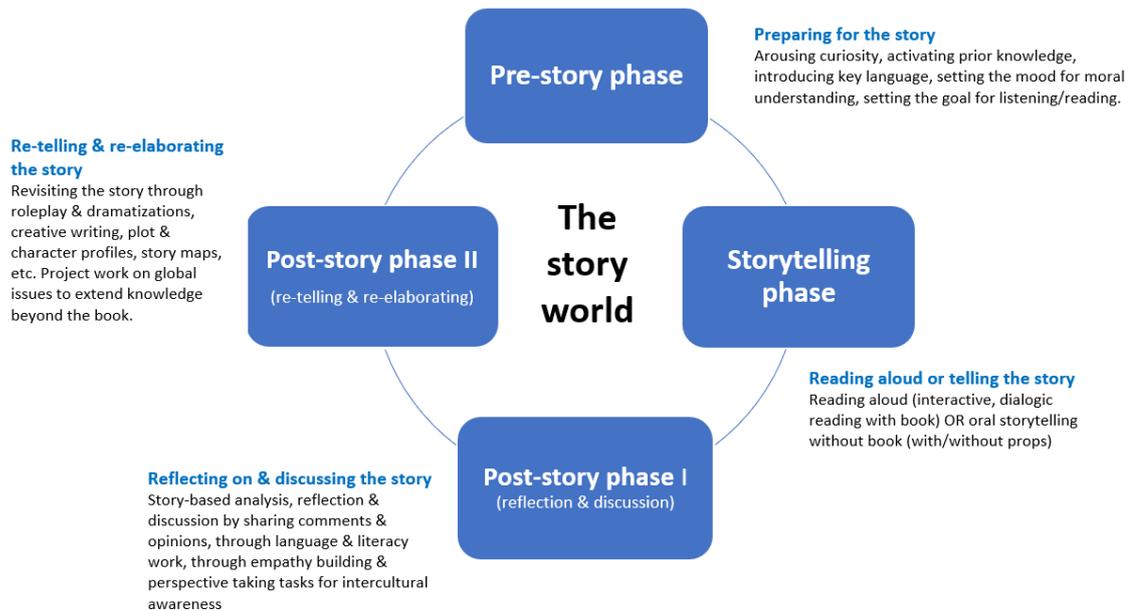


Fig. 2: The storytelling cycle according to Ghosn (2013).

In the *pre-story phase*, books with a thematic focus on global issues are carefully selected; Oxfam's guidelines (2015) suggest the following topics are suitable for GCE: social justice and equity, identity and diversity, globalisation and interdependence, sustainable development, peace and conflict, human rights, and power and governance. Activities are developed and introduced, including verbal and non-verbal warm-ups that focus on story setting, theme, and the introduction of key lexis. This initial phase helps set the stage for storytelling, igniting interest and arousing children's curiosity. Learners are introduced to knowledge about local, national and global issues, and the values and attitudes which shape engagement with them. The pre-story phase is important not only for activating prior knowledge, pre-teaching key language, explaining cultural and contextual details, and prompting critical thinking (cognitive domain), but also for setting the mood for moral understanding and creating a safe space for sharing stories (socio-emotional domain).

The *storytelling phase* involves the teacher telling the story, either in part or in whole, by reading aloud from the picture book or through an oral storytelling approach, both of which make use of various expressive techniques to enliven the performance as well as mediation techniques to support learning, as examined in section 2.1 above. Through verbal and non-verbal scaffolding strategies, teachers make linguistic input comprehensible and contribute to children's understanding of key concepts depicted in the stories (cognitive domain). Teachers explore the affective dimension of learning, inviting children to identify with

and/or express empathy for characters and situations encountered in storyworlds; this maximizes affordances for intercultural learning by highlighting the interconnectedness and interdependency of shared situations through narrative encounters, as discussed previously in section 2.2.

Post-story reflection is important for the linguistic and cultural affordances or learning opportunities that emerge through whole class and small group conversational exchanges about the story. Activities can be used for empathy building through perspective-taking tasks, such as having children adopt a character's perspective by writing a journal entry from a character's point of view (for children with more advanced literacy), or by engaging in a roleplay based on specific characters, settings, and situations. Exposure to alternative perspectives and shared understandings help to deepen awareness on intrapersonal and interpersonal levels (c.f. Ghosn 2001, 2010). Not only do learners acquire language but also intercultural awareness through text-to-life and life-to-text connections (c.f. Sipe 2008) drawn through story-based analysis, reflection, and discussion. They learn to express feelings, reflect on emotions, and develop attitudes of empathy, respect, and solidarity with others, fostering an understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependency of shared situations. By experiencing a sense of belonging to a common humanity, they nurture a global consciousness that, in turn, leads to informed engagement (cognitive domain, socio-emotional domain, behavioural domain).

The *re-telling or re-elaborating phase* involves revisiting the story through activities that recall and enhance the storytelling experience. These might include dramatized storytelling by drawing on different media, or task-based learning that extend knowledge and skills beyond the book by involving learners in projects that address citizenship issues and promote the skills of active listening, cooperation, negotiation, inclusion, and conflict resolution. Action-taking on democratic issues related to social justice, human rights, and/or environmental sustainability is fundamental for transformative learning to take place (cognitive domain, socio-emotional domain, behavioural domain).

3 Examples of picture books for Global Citizenship Education in primary school

Stories can be a powerful pedagogical tool for navigating issues of identity and inclusion in the primary classroom, especially with well-chosen books which present diversity in affirming contexts and elicit intercultural reflection and discussion guided by the teacher. This is the premise of a new course in multilingual and intercultural teacher education being developed at the Free University of Bolzano to support primary school teachers in addressing issues of diversity with the use of picture books for global citizenship education in second language (L2) teaching and learning. The course is part of a Erasmus+ KA2 project, "Diversity in Action – a cross-border online space for training teachers through multi-

lingual and multicultural experiences”, involving five strategic partners located in border territories marked by multilingualism and multiculturalism – University of Primorska (Slovenia), Free University of Bolzano (Italy), University College of Teacher Education Vienna / PH Wien (Austria), Juraj Dobrila University of Pula (Croatia), and University of Trento (Italy). This collaboration seeks to develop hybrid initiatives (online and onsite) for pre-service and in-service teacher training in a transnational context to prepare teachers to adequately respond to the richness and complexity of multilingual and multicultural classrooms in innovative ways that promote inclusion.

Drawing on examples of children’s picture books for GCE in upper primary education (ages 9–12), the section below explores how picture books can be used in the English foreign-language classroom to help children acquire knowledge of global issues and intercultural awareness. Two books by Canadian indigenous authors have been selected for their thematic content which offers teachers opportunities to introduce children to linguistic and cultural diversity through a focus on ‘Canada’ as a cultural unit of study.

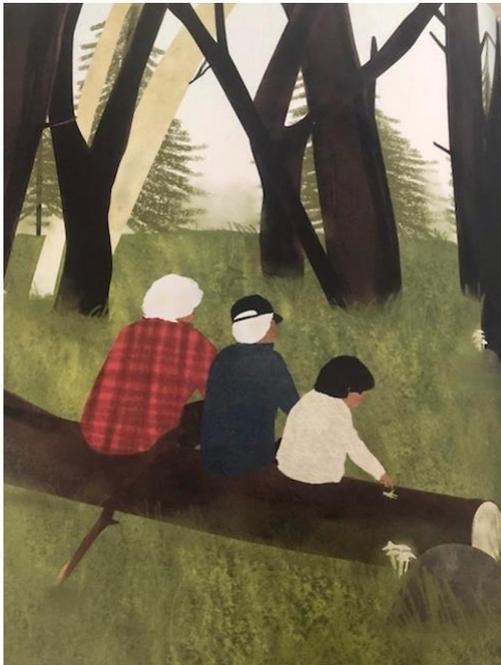
This exposure is intended to deepen learners’ understanding of diversity by drawing on new sources of information which can foster their plurilingual and intercultural awareness, as well as knowledge of global issues. Gaining knowledge about global citizenship at the cognitive level involves first learning about social justice through an examination of situations which place human rights at risk; in this way, students acquire knowledge about structural and social inequalities and the dominant discourses that shape them. The two texts examined below can be used to build knowledge of linguistic and cultural diversity, thus contributing to learners’ *global consciousness*, which is an informed view of one’s rights and responsibilities in the global community.

3.1 *On the Trapline* (2021) by David A. Robertson

On the Trapline recounts how a boy and his grandfather take a long journey from the city to the northern wilderness to visit the trapline where years before the elder’s family had lived off the land, hunting, fishing, and foraging on an island. It explores the deep connection that the Cree moshom and boy have with each other and the land as they visit the former’s boyhood home. It is based upon Robertson’s experience of returning with his own father to the latter’s childhood trapline after a 70-year absence.

The illustrations by Julie Flett evoke a sense of space and wonder as the boy is introduced to places and stories that hold meaning for his family. The drawings depict sparsely populated villages, thick woods, lakes, rocky shorelines, eagles, beaver dams, and camp life in dark, muted colours which seem to seep from the landscape itself: forest green, sky blue, muddy brown, slate grey. The text is spare and surrounded by blank space, allowing the eye to move calmly between words and images, not overwhelming the reader with intersemiotic complexity. A sense of slowness is further enhanced as the grandfather recalls life

on the trapline, a remembrance of things past underscored by the presence of Swampy Cree words inserted in the text; this use of Cree vocabulary items slows down the reading and prosodic rhythm, creating space for thoughts and emotions.



We look at birch trees and pine trees and all the long grass. I imagine Moshom and his friends speaking Cree in there.

“Is that your trapline?” I ask

“No,” he says. “My trapline is far from here.”

I ask Moshom what it was like going to school after living on the trapline. He is quiet for a long time.

“I learned in both places,” he says. “I just learned different things.”

Pahkan means “different.”

Fig. 3: *On the Trapline* (Robertson 2021: unnumbered)

Appearing at the end of each page, the Cree words act as a summary of key themes that emerge across the story. This position highlights the Cree expressions, giving them a resonance that lingers in the reader’s mind.

Robertson, who is a member of Norway House Cree Nation and a Governor-General award-winning Canadian writer, provides a glossary of eighteen Swampy Cree words and a pronunciation guide at the end of the book. The words appear in the peritext in the same order in which they were presented in the story, thus encouraging readers to review them. Although definitions are integrated into the main text in English, the presence of the Cree words and their repetition in the glossary provide reinforcement, adding to the book’s educational potential. Commenting on his deliberate choice to use Cree words in the text, Robertson explains:

In one sense, I wanted to use Cree as a way to continue to work toward language revitalization, to have our language represented in mainstream literature. The other thing was to display the beauty of the language to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers. It also added so much breadth to the emotions, the meaning, the tone of every page. I used the language very carefully and very intentionally. What I love



about Cree is that one word can mean so much. Cree is such a beautiful language. (CBC Radio 2021)⁵

When Moshom and the boy finally reach the trapline in the story, the Elder's eyes light up: “That's my trapline,’ he says. Kīwēw means ‘he goes home’”.

By inviting readers to learn about Cree language and traditions through the intergenerational relationship depicted in the story, the book not only activates the cognitive dimension of intercultural learning but the socio-emotional dimension as well, presenting “different levels of identity” through the boy's relationship with his grandfather, “different communities people belong to and how these are connected” through traditional indigenous customs depicted, and helping readers cultivate “respect for diversity” through the story characters and the use of Cree words in the text (UNESCO 2015: 31). Moreover, the text challenges the one language/one culture/one nation paradigm by foregrounding the visibility of other cultures and languages in English-language picture books by Canadian authors, inviting critical classroom discussions about multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Daly and Short (2022) warn that the presence of words written in less prestigious languages might be ignored, especially in the context of English-language books given the privileged status English enjoys as a global language. Such potential neglect has negative repercussions for the multilingual and intercultural development of children who must be exposed to diversity to learn that the world is not monolingual or culturally homogeneous on local, national, and global scales. In the Canadian cultural context, where French exists alongside English as an official founding language but where indigenous languages have a minority status due to historical policies of enforced linguistic and cultural assimilation, it is important that narrative representations foster a multidimensional vision of plurilingual and intercultural belonging. Robertson's book presents an opportunity to “explore representation of peoples and places and the hegemony of English language and ‘western’ ways of seeing the world”, a GCE learning aim aligned with the English language curriculum (Oxfam 2015: 12).

In addition to its educational potential in enhancing intercultural awareness, Robertson's book presents opportunities for young readers to develop ecological awareness through the depiction of the natural world and the protagonists' relationship with the land which changes according to the temporal past and present of the story. The boy finds himself imagining what life was like two generations ago through his grandfather's stories, a life that appears to be both different from and similar to his life now.

⁵ For information on efforts to revitalize indigenous languages in Canada, please see the Canadian federal government website: <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524495846286/1557513199083>.

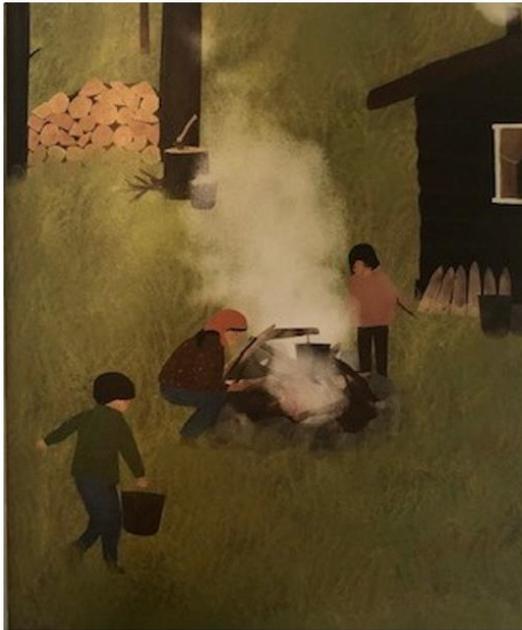


Fig. 3: *On the Trapline* (Robertson 2021: unnumbered)

This understated exploration of memory, loss and change evokes the close connection with the land and a traditional lifestyle which the grandfather experienced in his youth then lost through colonialization, a traditional way of life which his grandson's generation has never known.

This confrontation with difference through the moshom's recalled experience of fishing, trapping, and foraging enables a reflection on the value of nature and healthy ecosystems, helping children think dynamically about ecological relationships or the interconnectedness of different forms of life (c.f. Rule/Atkinson 1994). *On the Trapline* helps children acquire a deeper respect for nature and understanding of human reliance on natural resources:

We stop to fish on the way back. Moshom's friend catches lots of fish. Moshom catches some. I almost catch one, but it gets away.

"Why are you so good at fishing?" I ask.

"We used to fish on the trapline too," he says.

Moshom tells me that we can share. On the trapline everybody shared with everybody else.

Natenamakēwin means "sharing". (Robertson 2021: unnumbered)

A discourse of environmental sustainability emerges across the story as the grandfather teaches the child about how to be a good custodian to the land and share its resources with others. By facilitating a discussion of how human choices and actions affect other people and the planet, Robertson's picture book is an effective tool in guiding young readers towards ecological literacy. As Parsons (2005: 220) explains, "Stories push back the walls of

We find a pile of wood that looks like a giant game of pick-up sticks. "This is where we chopped wood," he says.

Moshom tells me that even the youngest children had jobs to do, and everyone would share the work. I think about my chores back in the city.

Putting away dishes. Cleaning up my room. I wonder what it would be like to do my chores outside instead.

Wanawī means "go outside".

the classroom, providing the experience and relationship with which effective environmental education begins”.

3.2 *I Lost My Talk* (2019) by Rita Joe

While the loss of indigenous language and culture is signalled indirectly in *On the Trapline*, it is the central theme in *I Lost My Talk* by the acclaimed Canadian poet Rita Joe, of the Whycocomagh First Nation, who was a revered Mi’kmaq Elder and is considered the Poet Laureate of the Mi’kmaq nation. Her well-known poem, “I Lost My Talk”, is a hypotext for this 2019 edition, illustrated for the first time by Pauline Young and published as a picture book for young readers. By seeking to reclaim visibility for voices and traditions that were systematically erased, the book delivers an explicit message concerning the need for indigenous language revitalization as part of a process of reparations for the colonial legacy.

The poem and picture book reference the author’s first-hand experience in the Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia where she lived from ages 12 to 16, forced to speak English instead of Mi’kmaq, an Eastern Algonquian language. The story explores what it means to *lose* your language – that is, to be forbidden to use it – and to have to re-learn it at a later stage, drawing attention to a dark period in Canadian history when indigenous languages and traditions were subjected to cultural eradication through the system of residential schooling. First Nations’ children were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to institutions administered by the government and the Catholic Church where assimilation to Christianity and the English language was enforced. Documented cases of physical, sexual and psychological abuse of indigenous children in residential schools, as well as the horrific discovery of mass graves at school sites, are part of a shameful and painful colonial legacy in Canada which has prompted calls for legal redress for survivors and First Nations communities.

The title of Joe’s book is poignantly accompanied by a colourful image on the cover illustration by Pauline Young which juxtaposes the picture of an indigenous girl in traditional dress in bright yellow with that of a schoolgirl donning the standard short haircut and residential school uniform in a faded brown tone, emphasising the link between language and identity. The central theme of linguistic and cultural erasure is also conveyed through the orange end papers which repeat the title “I lost my talk” framed by chalk drawings which indicate the symbolic systems of representation that have been lost through enforced use of the English language in schooling. This message is repeated on the first page of the picture book with the accompanying text, “Which you took away”. The subsequent pages further evoke the absent ‘you’ – the interlocutor (i.e. colonizer) responsible for linguistic and cultural erasure – as the narrator is forced to “create like you”. The text ends with a direct appeal, “Let me find my talk”, which conveys the need for aboriginal language preservation and strengthening, the book’s main theme.



Fig. 4: *I Lost My Talk* (Joe 2019: unnumbered)

Word-image interactions can change over the course of a picture book, giving rise to different types of textual-visual interanimations across a story, and the teacher needs to provide contextualisation and disambiguation to guide children’s understanding. Throughout Joe’s book, the language is simple and straightforward, and the images reinforce the story’s message by offering visual scaffolding that supports textual meaning. As Moya Guijarro (2014: 68) explains, concurrence between image and text requires less inference from readers since the intermodal input is symmetrical, which in turn lightens the cognitive load; in other instances, when the verbiage and image do not fully concur, scaffolding is necessary to help support young readers’ understanding of the story. In *I Lost My Talk*, the focus of the teacher’s mediation is in providing contextual and cultural details to support learners’ comprehension – What has been lost? Where? When? Why? How? – rather than linguistic disambiguation since the language is simple and straightforward, and the images reinforce the story’s message by offering visual scaffolding that supports textual meaning. Furthermore, a two-page “Short History of Residential Schools” is presented along with an archival photograph as peritext at the end, offering additional information teachers can use to guide readers’ understanding of the colonial legacy of residential schooling in Canada. The text and peritextual elements assist the process of “social memorialization” (Hoffmann 2018), fostering cultural memory through the representation of an occluded chapter in contemporary Canadian history.

Schools and teachers must decide on the best time and pedagogical approach for teaching historically difficult subjects such as the abuse of indigenous populations and genocide. In this case, teachers need to evaluate what kind of contextual information to provide about European contact and colonization of the Americas based on the cognitive and emotional maturity of learners, but picture books such as Joe’s and Robertson’s are valuable multi-modal resources to assist them in addressing difficult themes, helping learners make text-to-life and life-to-text connections through literature (c.f. Sipe 2008). Byram stresses the need to engage with controversial topics when selecting content for GCE, urging teachers to take risks and not shy away from “disquieting elements” by maintaining neutrality in curricular choices (ICEPELL Conference 2022). As José Botelho and Kabakov Rudman note in their analysis of multicultural children’s literature for educational contexts, “a passive stance is not neutral” but rather elides the power dynamics and forms of structural inequality present in society (2009: 266–67). Exploring values, beliefs, and experiences of

different groups of people and other ways of seeing and knowing is crucial for widening the range of cultural representation in the language classroom.

Drawing on texts and thinking from a range of cultures and traditions by selecting books that intentionally address themes of diversity and social justice can help teachers stimulate conversations with learners which can deepen their intercultural understanding (c.f. Ghosn 2001, 2010). Bland (2016: 43–44) argues that identities which have been misrepresented, marginalised, hidden or absent from texts must be made visible through an inclusive pedagogy: teachers must be aware of ideological issues underpinning cultural representation and misrepresentation/erasure in children’s literature and carefully select texts that metonymically represent a full spectrum of diversity. Sims Bishop (1990) similarly warns that the effects of marginalisation or erasure are debilitating on children’s psycho-social development: all children need to see themselves reflected in a positive way in the books they read. She maintains that the silencing and invisibility of certain socio-cultural groups in children’s books has a negative impact not only on children who identify with that group but also on children belonging to a dominant group who are denied the opportunity to understand the multiculturalism that is part of their world (1990: ix). Giving voice to occluded stories in the English language classroom is, therefore, an important way of re-centring narrative to reflect a more accurate and complete cultural memory.

4 Conclusion

Global citizenship education plays a vital role in the important process of cultivating democratic consciousness and encouraging democratic participation from the earliest stages of learning (c.f. Andreotti 2015). Central to its pedagogical implementation is teachers’ willingness to address current global challenges concerning human rights, environmental decline, and democratic participation by creating a space in the classroom for analysis, discussion, reflection, and action-taking on these and other issues, so that transformative learning is made possible. This article has sought to contribute to a conceptual framework for integrating GCE in primary English-language learning, but further research is needed on specific pedagogical procedures for its implementation at different ages and stages of learning.

Embedding global issues in foreign-language learning is a pedagogical response in line with current research and international policy frameworks which emphasise the urgency to enrich concrete educational practices for developing students’ citizenship competencies through knowledge of global issues, intercultural awareness, and turning empathy into action. To this end, Johnston and Bainbridge (2013) signal the need to support pre-service teachers in understanding identity, diversity, and multiculturalism, and in developing culturally sensitive curricula and pedagogical practices for intercultural learning. The content choices schools and teachers make to stimulate the three domains of learning imply that

teachers see their pupils as agents of social change. Byram (2022: 8) argues that young people, even pupils in elementary education, should be recognised “as citizens not denizens” and not as “citizens in waiting”; consequently, they should be given opportunities to learn about and act upon global issues long before they reach voting age (2022: 8).

Children grow into narrative contexts from an early age and acquire knowledge and competencies related to language and literature, to self and world, by imagining “possible worlds” through narrative (Bruner 1986). It is widely acknowledged that stories function as a powerful tool in shaping and circulating knowledge and values in a social context (c.f. Bruner 1991, 1997); therefore, harnessing the power of narrative for global citizenship education can enable young learners to imagine possible worlds based on the values of human rights, equality, social justice, and sustainability, and to take concrete actions to help shape society in their image. Creative re-imaginings of the world, critical awareness, and social responsibility can start from stories shared in the primary foreign-language classroom that help to promote democratic and civic-minded culture within and beyond schools.

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