

INTEGRATING HUMAN RIGHTS IN LANGUAGES LEARNING: A FORUM THEATRE APPROACH

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Abstract

In language teaching framed by a communicative approach, learners are required to act as active social agents rather than passive consumers of grammar rules and vocabulary lists. By mapping the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (United Nations, 1948) against the *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (PCIC) (Instituto Cervantes, 2006), this essay demonstrates that foreign language instruction inherently carries civic, sociocultural, and ethical dimensions. However, transitioning away from traditional methods long embedded in the classroom remains a challenge. To bridge this gap, this paper proposes integrating Forum Theatre into foreign language education as a pedagogical tool for fostering interculturalism and human rights awareness. Through interactive drama and the new concept of 'spect-actor', learners engage with non-punitive, open-ended scenarios featuring real-world socio-cultural conflicts (such as racism, xenophobia, arbitrary interferences in the family life, and unfair labour practices...). This methodology transforms abstract human rights values into active communicative practice, allowing language learners to negotiate solutions and develop intercultural competence within a collaborative environment.

Keywords

Human Rights. Language Learning. Forum Theatre. Intercultural Competence

Summary

1. Introduction. 2. Linking Human Rights and Instituto Cervantes. 3. Drama Pedagogy as an Intercultural Tool in Language Learning. 4. Pedagogical Implications. 5. Conclusion. 6. References

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1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language teachers are constantly seek innovative methodologies to enhance acquisition while integrating intercultural competence and inspiring students to contribute to a more just society. To address this intersection, this paper examines the following research questions:

- How can the principles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (United Nations, 1948) be meaningfully integrated into language teaching?
- In what ways can UDHR be aligned with *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (PCIC) (Instituto Cervantes, 2006), as the benchmark framework for Spanish as a Foreign Language (ELE)?
- Does this integration facilitate the identification of richer intercultural and sociocultural resources for foreign language instruction?
- What mechanisms for social dissemination can be effectively implemented within the language classroom?

Grounding language teaching in human rights aligns with critical pedagogy. As Freire emphasizes: ‘education through communication is the only option if students are to develop a capacity for critical thinking’ (1970, as cited in Quennerstedt, 2019: 2). Furthermore, adopting a social justice lens in world language education not only ‘confronts and disrupts injustices, but also promotes critical thinking and social change while providing material and emotional resources for students to learn to their full potential’ (Back & Dickey, 2025: 777).

2. LINKING HUMAN RIGHTS AND INSTITUTO CERVANTES

Modern foreign language teaching integrates democratic values, intercultural competence and social agency into the curriculum. Rather than treating language as a set of grammar rules and vocabulary, the Instituto Cervantes (2006) uses the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1948) as a core foundation for defining what a learner needs to know to function as an active, ethical participant in society.

The United Nations published the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948, this declaration has been translated into more than 500 languages. The UDHR is ‘a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world [...] as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected’. The Instituto Cervantes is an official, non-profit public institution founded by the Spanish government in 1991 to promote the Spanish language and foster the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries worldwide (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela). Acting as a global bridge for intercultural dialogue, its educational framework goes beyond vocabulary and grammar; it actively promotes democratic values, global citizenship, and human rights through the universal vehicle of language learning. The Instituto Cervantes administers accreditation exams; such as the CCSE test (*Conocimientos*

*Constitucionales y Socioculturales de España*²) for obtaining Spanish citizenship, which assesses knowledge of Spanish culture and law (as the Spanish Constitution is grounded in the UDHR).

Regarding language teaching, the Instituto Cervantes has a syllabus that contains the necessary parameters for a learner to function as a social agent. While a speaker may possess knowledge of grammar across levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, or C2) and vocabulary, applying them without context and communication is meaningless. In the field of *Cultural Knowledge* («Referentes culturales», RC) and *Sociocultural Knowledge and Behaviors* («Saberes y comportamientos socioculturales», SCS), there are only three phases rather than six levels: the Introductory Phase (IPh), the In-Depth Phase (IDPh), and the Consolidation Phase (CPh). These phases are not directly linked to a learner's language proficiency, as progression depends on each speaker's communicative needs. In some cases, only paragraph references are included when the content is particularly specific.

By examining the connections between the UDRH (United Nations, 1948) and the PCIC (Instituto Cervantes, 2006), it is possible to structure the results into a comparative framework. Tables illustrate this alignment: the first column contains article from the UDRH, while the second column presents the corresponding curricular contents from the PCIC. This establishes a direct thematic link between a universal legal guarantee (UDHR) and its corresponding socio-cultural realization in a language-learning context (PCIC) applying all the three cultural dimensions across the framework. We

² CCSE Exam (Constitutional and Sociocultural Knowledge of Spain)

have designed five tables depending on the themes addressed: *Table 1* Fundamental Principles and Collective Identity, *Table 2* Personal Integrity, Judicial Guarantees, and Rule of Law, *Table 3* Private Life, Freedom of Movement, and Expression, *Table 4* Economic, Labor and Social Wellbeing Rights and *Table 5* Cultural Rights and Education.

Table 1 Fundamental Principles and Collective Identity aligns the foundational declarations of human dignity, equality, and civic participation with the PCIC sections that address how social identity and language policy are constructed. By mapping Articles 1, 2, 20, 21, 22, 28 and 29 against socio-cultural guidelines, it highlights how language instruction incorporates themes of regional diversity, minority integration and active democratic participation.

<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> (1948)	Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes (2006)
Article 1 All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.	3. Collective identity: meaning and a sense of belonging within the social sphere (SRS). 3.1.1. Shaping collective identity IPh: Elements that help shape collective identity. Official and co-official languages. IDPh: Administrative and political divisions. Measures to promote and preserve the cultural heritage of the regions. Regions where languages coexist and areas where languages coexist. CPh: Elements that help shape collective identity. The concept of decentralization: the central government and the regional governments. Public spaces that seek to preserve and maintain the traditions and cultural heritage of the regions. Days set

	aside on the calendar for regional festivals. Institutional actions regarding language policy.
Article 2 Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.	1.2. Population (RC) IPh: Peoples of Spanish-speaking countries Ethnic minorities. The importance of the indigenous population. IDPh: Traditional costumes of indigenous ethnic groups CPh: Migration flows in the 20th and 21st centuries in Spanish-speaking countries 1.11. Language Policy (RC) IPh: Official and co-official languages. Public agencies and institutions dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the language. Public agencies and institutions dedicated to the dissemination of the language and culture. IDPh: Areas of use of official and co-official languages. Spanish language congresses. Majority and minority languages. CPh: Actions taken by governments and official institutions regarding language policy. education policy in bilingual communities in Spain. Language and its relationship to territorial identity. 1.10. Religion (RC) IPh: Major Religions. IDPh: The value placed on faith: social implications in Hispanic countries. beliefs associated with the dogma and creeds of the major religions.

	CPh: Religious and pseudo-religious practices. Pre-Columbian religions and deities. Popular religious imagery. Santería representations and deities. 3.1.3. Ethnic Minorities (SRS) IPh: Major ethnic and religious minorities. IDPh: Areas with the highest concentration of ethnic minorities, recently settled social groups, and religious minorities. CPh: The degree of integration and acceptance of ethnic groups and religious minorities in society. Religious communities.
Article 20 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. 2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association. (and Article 21, 29)³	3. Collective Identity and Lifestyle (SRS) 3.1.2. Civic participation and pluralism IPh: Forms of social participation. Official and co-official languages. Mechanisms for political participation. IDPh: The concept of civic participation as applied to politics and the social sphere.

³ Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 29

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

	The concept of pluralism as applied to different spheres. CPh: Manifestations of pluralism in Spain. Citizen participation in political elections. Citizen participation in the media.
Article 22 Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality. Article 28 Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and	1.4.1. Territorial and Administrative Boundaries (RC) IPh: Traditional dishes from the regions. Folk festivals in the regions. IDPh: Territorial organization in Spanish-speaking Countries. Government bodies and units. Cultural peculiarities. CPh: Institutions and bodies of Spain's autonomous governments. Federal states. Capitals of territorial divisions. Nationalist movements: historical roots.

2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.	
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Table 1. Alignment between the articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Plan Curricular* Cervantes (2006). Fundamental Principles and Collective Identity

Focusing on core civil rights, *Table 2 Personal Integrity, Judicial Guarantees and Rule of Law* connects the universal protections against arbitrary detention, torture, and slavery (Art. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 30) with the PCIC's coverage of governmental structures, legal systems, and public safety. The alignment demonstrates how learners engage with the vocabulary and concepts surrounding constitutional guarantees, state institutions, labor rights, and civic security in Spanish-speaking societies.

<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> (1948)	Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes (2006)
Article 3 Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person. Article 5 No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Article 9 No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. Article 30	1.3. Government and politics (RC) IPh: 1.3.1. Branches of Government and Institutions. Systems of Government. Symbols of the branches of Government and Institutions. IDPh: 1.3.1. Branches of Government and Institutions. The Importance and role of parliamentary debates in social and political life. 1.3.2. Rights, freedoms, and guarantees citizens' rights and guarantees. CPh: 1.3.1. Branches of Government and Institutions. Constitutions of Spanish-speaking countries. The structure of the state across its different branches. the persistence

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.	of traditions. 1.3.2. Rights, freedoms, and guarantees. guarantees of minority rights in Spanish-speaking countries. the roles of the ombudsman, consumer advocate, and reader's advocate... labor legislation. labor movements. 1.3.3. Political parties and elections. Election campaigns and platforms. the concept of a runoff election. municipal and regional elections. Legislative terms. Political parties and ideologies. 1.16. Security and the Fight Against Crime (SRS) IPh: Law enforcement agencies. IDPh: Manifestations of organized crime. CPh: Terrorism. Counterterrorism policy, xenophobia and racism, the problem of violence in schools, the problem of violence in sports.
Article 4 No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.	1.3. Government and politics (RC) CPh: 1.3.2. Rights, freedoms and safeguards Safeguarding the rights of minorities in Hispanic communities. The roles of the ombudsman, consumer ombudsman, readers' ombudsman, etc. Labour legislation: the Workers' Statute, collective agreements, trade union movements.
Article 6 Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.	1.3.1. Branches of government and institutions (RC) CPh: Constitutions of Spanish-speaking countries. The structure of the State across its different branches executive branch (President of the State, Council of Ministers, Attorney General's Office, etc.), legislative

(and Article 7, 8, 10, 11, 15) ⁴	branch (Congress, Senate, Chamber of Deputies, Legislative Assembly, etc.), judicial branch (Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Judicial Council, Ombudsman's Office, etc.). The survival of traditions (the Water tribunal in Valencia, Spain).
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Table 2. Alignment between the articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)

⁴ Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public [...]
2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed.

Article 15

1. Everyone has the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

and the *Plan Curricular* Cervantes (2006). Personal Integrity, Judicial Guarantees, and Rule of Law

Table 3 Private Life, Freedom of Movement and Expression maps individual freedoms (such as privacy, family protection, property rights, free movement, and freedom of thought and expression) (Art. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19) to relevant PCIC thematic areas including family structures, transportation, and communication media. It illustrates how everyday communicative contexts, from discussing family dynamics to analysing news media or transportation networks, serve as vehicles for exploring fundamental personal liberties.

<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> (1948)	Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes (2006)
Article 12 No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence [...] Article 16 1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. 2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and	1.2. The Family Unit: Concept and Structure (SRS) IPh: Concept and types of family units. Types of bonds that unite couples. Concept of in-laws. IDPh: Predominant types of family units. The values society assigns to the family, its members, and the role of each member. The concept of a large family. Family behaviors related to hierarchies. CPh: The consideration of the family unit in government and social institutions.

full consent of the intending spouses. 3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. Article 17 1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. 2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.	
Article 13 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. 2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. Article 14 1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. [...]	1.9. Means of transportation (RC) IPh: 1.9.1. Long-distance transportation: airplanes, trains, and ships. Air transportation: Major international and domestic airports. Major airlines. Railroad network. Railroad networks in Spanish-speaking countries. River and maritime transportation. Major ports in Spanish-speaking countries. Major navigable waterways. 1.9.2. Urban and Intercity Transportation. Urban Transportation Networks. 1.9.3. Road Transportation. Road Networks. IDPh: 1.9.1. Long-distance transportation: airplanes, trains, and ships. Air transportation. Major charter airlines. Railroad network. Major rail lines. Domestic and high-speed trains. Notable train stations. River and maritime transportation. The importance and role of the Panama Canal in

	Central America. 1.9.2. Urban and Intercity Transportation. Bus Stations. 1.9.3. Road Transportation. National Highways, Freeways, and Expressways. Road Safety. The significance of the sea as a shaper of shared identities. The importance and role of rivers in shaping the identity and unique character of the regions through which they flow. CPh: 1.9.1. Long-distance transportation: airplanes, trains, and ships. Railroad network: Regional and commuter trains. Legendary trains. River and maritime transportation: Major shipping lines. Values associated with the concept of a port city. Marinas. Shipbuilding. Maritime and river disasters. 1.9.2. Urban and Intercity Transportation. Major Bus Companies. 1.9.3. Road Transportation. Financing of the Road Network: Tolls. Road Network Management and Oversight Bodies.
Article 18 Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Article 19	1.8. Media (RC) IPh: 1.8.1. Print Media. Major newspapers in Spanish-speaking countries. 1.8.2. Television and radio. Television channels with the largest audiences. Radio stations with the widest reach. IDPh: 1.8.1. Print media. Common sections and supplements in newspapers in Spanish-speaking countries. Renowned journalists with an international presence. 1.8.2. Television and radio. historical television programs.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.	CPH: 1.8.1. Print media. General-interest newspapers in autonomous communities, regions, and localities. Widely circulated or prestigious specialized newspapers in Spanish-speaking countries covering economics and commerce. Widely circulated or prestigious specialized magazines in Spanish-speaking countries covering science, medicine, geography, architecture, and economics. The most widely circulated celebrity magazines in Spanish-speaking countries. 1.8.2. Television and radio. Spanish and Latin American advertising on radio, television, and in the press. Renowned television and radio journalists. 1.8. Media and Information (SRS) 1.8.1. Print Media (SRS) 1.8.2. Television and Radio (SRS) 1.8.3. Internet (SRS)
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Table 3. Alignment between the articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Plan Curricular Cervantes* (2006). Private Life, Freedom of Movement and Expression

Centering on socio-economic rights, *Table 4 Economic, Labor and Social Wellbeing Rights* pairs the Universal Declaration's articles (Art. 23, 24 and 25) on work, fair remuneration, leisure, and an adequate standard of living with the PCIC's modules on business, employment, healthcare, and social services. It details how language curricula integrate practical socio-economic topics (such as job searching, labor

regulations, public healthcare systems, housing, and social assistance) into real-world communication.

<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)</i>	Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes (2006)
Article 23 1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. 2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. 3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. 4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.	1.5. Economy and Industry (RC) IPh: Systems of weights and measures in Spanish-speaking countries. Currencies of Spanish-speaking countries. IDPh: Major economic resources of Hispanic countries. CPh: Commercial laws and free trade agreements.
Article 24 Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of	1.6. Labor and the Economy (SRS) IPh: Work schedules, breaks, and vacations. Areas of towns where offices are concentrated. Classification of individuals based on their status in the labor market.

working hours and periodic holidays with pay.	IDPh: Areas of towns where industrial complexes are concentrated. Hiring practices. Conventions regarding the writing of cover letters and resumes. Social conventions and behaviors related to job interviews. CPh: Types of Taxes. Value-Added Tax. Organizations and places to turn to when looking for a job. Programs and activities offered by government agencies to promote entrepreneurship among young people, women, and the unemployed. The importance placed on on-the-job training. Rights and obligations of employers and employees. Workplace safety. 1.7. Leisure Activities, Habits, and Hobbies (SRS) 1.7.1. Habits and Hobbies (SRS) 1.7.2. Entertainment (SRS) 1.7.3. Outdoor Activities (SRS) 1.7.4. Sports (SRS)
Article 25 1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in	1.12. Health and Hygiene (SRS) 1.12.1. Public Health (SRS) 1.12.2. Healthcare Facilities (SRS) 1.9. Housing (SRS) IPh: 1.9.1. Characteristics and types. Types of housing in cities and towns. Room layouts and rooms in a home. Average size of homes and their various rooms. Facilities and services found in Spanish homes. 1.9.2. Access to housing and the real estate market. Ways to access housing. Preferences and values. IDPh: 1.9.1. Characteristics and types. Types of housing in cities and towns. Common areas. Security services in housing. 1.9.2. Access to

circumstances beyond his control. 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.	housing and the real estate market. Characteristics of the Spanish real estate market. Social conventions related to renting a home. Behaviors related to searching for a home to buy or rent. CPh: 1.9.1. Characteristics and Types. The relationship between the architectural tradition of a region or cultural community and the use of building materials or construction techniques. Social conventions regarding the use of certain materials in residential construction, interior finishes, and decoration. Behaviors and conventions related to the use of renewable energy in residential construction. 1.9.2. Access to housing and the real estate market. The relationship between housing prices and the purchasing power of Spaniards. The concept of publicly subsidized housing. Factors determining the age at which young people leave their parents' homes and their influence on access to housing. Loans and subsidies for home purchases. The “okupa” movement and the phenomenon of squatting in unoccupied homes and commercial spaces. 1.6. Medicine and Healthcare (RC) IPh: Healthcare Systems. IDPh: Doctors from Spanish-speaking countries with international renown. Nobel Prize winners in Physiology or Medicine from Spanish-speaking countries. CPh: Public and private healthcare in Spain and Latin America. Alternative and Complementary Medicine. Paramedicine.
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	Milestones in the History of Medicine in Spain and Latin America. 1.15. Social Services and Assistance Programs (SRS) 1.15.1. Services for the Elderly (SRS) 1.15.2. Services for Immigrants (SRS) 1.15.3. Services for the Economically Disadvantaged (SRS) 1.15.4. Services for Victims of Abuse (SRS) 1.15.5. Non-governmental Organizations (SRS)
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Table 4. Alignment between the articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Plan Curricular* Cervantes (2006). Economic, Labor and Social Wellbeing Rights

Finally, *Table 5 Cultural Rights and Education* explores the intersection between human rights and cultural expression by aligning the rights to education, scientific progress, and artistic production (Art. 26 and 27) with the PCIC’s extensive cultural and educational framework. It underscores how the study of Spanish language and literature, performing arts, architecture, and educational systems directly fosters intercultural understanding, academic access, and appreciation for shared cultural heritage.

<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> (1948)	Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes (2006)
Article 26 1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.	1.7. Education (RC) IPH: Educational institutions. Vocational training programs. Universities representing Spanish-speaking countries. IDPh: University entrance exams in Spain and Latin America. Language instruction.

Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. 2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. 3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.	Degrees. Symbols associated with university life. The value placed on intercultural education. CPh: Distance learning. Education for students with special educational needs. Education for immigrants. Education abroad. Scholarships. Recognition and equivalency of academic credentials. Research institutes in Spanish-speaking countries. 1.5. Education and Culture 1.5.1. Educational Institutions (SCS). IPh: Guidance on secondary and higher education. IDPh: Guidance for Secondary and Higher Education. Most common school and extracurricular activities. Social norms and behaviors in the educational context. CPh: Concepts of reception classrooms for non-Spanish-speaking foreign students and remedial classrooms. The relationship between student demand and the capacity of educational institutions. The value placed on the role of teachers. Participation in the governance and management of educational institutions. 3. Collective Identity and Lifestyle (SRS) IPh: Major ethnic and religious minorities. IDPh: Areas with the highest concentration of ethnic minorities, recently settled social groups, and religious minorities. CPh: Degree of integration and acceptance of ethnic groups and religious minorities in
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	society (interculturalism and xenophobia). Religious communities. 3.3. Spirituality and Religion (SRS) IPh: Major religions and religious beliefs. Places of worship and pilgrimage sites. IDPh: The relationship between religious rites and folk traditions. religious rites rooted in tradition. CPh: Religious presence in public institutions. Level of tolerance and respect for religious denominations.
Article 27 1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. 2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.	3.1. Literature and Thought (RC) IPh: Great authors and literary works of international renown. The importance of Cervantes and <i>Don Quixote</i> in the history of world literature. The significance and impact of great literary figures and works on popular culture and language: The special case of <i>Don Quixote</i>. Symbolic references in great literary works in the Spanish language. IDPh: Great Spanish and Latin American authors. The reflection of major historical milestones in literature. Characters, settings, and myths in the literature of Spanish-speaking countries. Literary awards. CPh: Chronology of the History of Spanish and Latin American Literature. The Spanish and Latin American Novel. Contemporary Spanish and Latin American fiction. The short story in Spain and Latin America. The essay in Spanish and Latin American Literature. Spanish and Latin American poetry. Spanish

	and Latin American theatre. Female and feminist perspectives in Literature. 3.2. Music (RC) 3.3. Film and the Performing Arts (Theatre and Dance) (RC) 3.4. Architecture (RC)
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Table 5. Alignment between the articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Plan Curricular Cervantes* (2006). Cultural Rights and Education

This alignment serves to acquaint students with the content they can explore to achieve their learning outcomes. It extends beyond a mere vocabulary list, establishing a structured framework of sociocultural and intercultural knowledge essential for constructing sound arguments based on *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

3. DRAMA PEDAGOGY AS AN INTERCULTURAL TOOL IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

3.1 Learners as Performers and Cultural Agents

Incorporating drama into foreign language teaching assigns new roles to students. On the one hand, they become performers and cultural agents (Council of Europe, 2001: 10, defines language learning as ‘social agents’), rather than passive opinion-givers; on the other hand, drama empowers learners to step into the role of actors. Within this framework, actors ‘are in a no-penalty zone’ (Jesen & Hermer, 2002: 161). This means that learners can produce oral discourse without fear or tension regarding what they say or being criticized for expressing their opinions, personal or cultural values, given that is the character who presents these views. Stepping into the role of an actor provides

learners with a protective shield, thereby reducing foreign language anxiety, encouraging risk-taking and experimentation, and enhancing empathy and intercultural competence.

The *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) promotes a communicative approach that is further enhanced through drama, as ‘Drama demands a *doing* approach where to read, comment, discuss, write, collaborate in planning, be in charge of the actions of others’ (Jesen & Hermer, 2002: 161).

3.2 The Beginnings of Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is a form of applied theatre in which actors perform a narrative centred on an unresolved conflict rather than a definitive ending. This setup is designed to prompt audience participation and dialogue. Within this pedagogical framework, language-learner actors present a scenario featuring a human rights violation.

Augusto Boal, creator of Forum Theatre, introduces the concept ‘*spect-actor*’ in 1974 (Boal 2025: 67). Through this approach, he involves spectators in the drama play, giving them the opportunity to step on stage as actors and resolve the conflicts portrayed in scenario. The depicted scenes address human rights, social justice and discrimination (racism, xenophobia, gender inequality, sexism, LGBTQ+ discrimination...), domestic and family conflicts (such as traditional gender roles, generational clashes, or hidden domestic manipulation), academic pressures and bullying (including peer harassment in schools, or systemic exclusion), workplace exploitation (unfair labour practices, wage theft, or abusive leadership), environmental challenges (pollution from local factories, access to

clean water, public transport, food insecurity) and cultural clashes and misunderstandings.

Foreign language teachers are constantly exploring ways to actively involve students in their learning process. One effective approach is transforming the issues outlined in the previous paragraph into authentic communicative situation. This engages pupils and motivates them to respond meaningfully.

Although a comprehensive exploration of the role of theatre and drama in language teaching lies beyond the scope of this paper, readers may refer to Martí-Contreras (2026) for a more detailed discussion.

3.3 Structure of Forum Theatre

In Forum Theatre, actors perform plays lasting approximately twelve minutes. The following section outlines the step-by-step process of Forum Theatre (Baldwin 2014: 159, Boal, 2025: 67-86):

1. Introduction of Forum theatre to the public.
 - a. Welcoming the audience. A member of the cast (in language classes, it is usually the teacher or a student at an advanced level who acts as a linguistic and social mediator) takes on the role *Joker* or *coringa*. He acts as a neutral master of ceremonies and facilitator who bridges the gap between the actors and the audience.
 - b. Explaining the dynamics. The Joker introduces themselves and outlines their role in the upcoming performance. Rather than allowing the audience to passively observe a scene of oppression, the Joker breaks the fourth wall to encourage audience members

to become active *spect-actors*. The Joker explains that a interactive forum discussion will immediately follow the brief initial performance.

- c. Presenting the cast. The Joker introduces the actors, who take the stage individually to present themselves with a concise, one-sentence statement or emotional reflection. These brief entries serve as ‘starters’ to introduce the central controversial themes.
2. A scene lasting about twelve minutes.
 - a. Unresolved narrative arc. The cast performs a scene lasting approximately twelve minutes. The script is structured to stimulate critical reflection and provoke an active response from the audience. The play features an open ending with no definitive resolution to the core conflict.
 - b. Characterisation and staging dynamics. The cast portrays scenarios in which the protagonist makes decisions of questionable social acceptability. This framework asks the audience to be attentive, engaged participants in a creative rather than purely aesthetic exercise: ‘Dramatic performance in the theatre intends that onlookers shall be affected by what they see and hear’ (Jesen & Hermer, 2002: 161).
 - c. Visual and physical markers: each character wears or carries a distinctive visual prop (a red scarf, a green jumper, a blue bag...) to ensure immediate visual identification by the audience. Furthermore, actors perform significant, repeated physical gestures within

the dramatic action (such as sitting on a sofa, taking a drink of water, or removing a coat) to ground key moments in recognizable actions.

- d. Intentional flaws. The choices made by the protagonist contain deliberate flaws, encouraging spect-actors to analyse the situation and formulate alternative strategies for a better outcome.
3. Audience engagement and facilitated reflection. Before the performance, the Joker speaks to the audience and asks questions similar to those related to previous plays:
 - a. Icebreakers prompts:
 - Raise your hand if you have seen this exact problem happen in your own community, group, classroom.
 - Did you see something on that stage that you disagree with?
 - Who was the person holding the power in that situation?
 - Does the protagonist have to accept this outcome, or do they have alternative choices?
 - b. Call to action
 - What would you have done differently in this situation?
4. Spect-actor intervention and guided forum simulation.
 - a. Stepping onto the stage. The audience is invited to join the cast and replace an actor or actress (Vulpe & Țabără 2016: 31, Motos & Méndez 2023: 265, Boal 2025: 71). When an audience member suggests a possible solution

from their seat the Joker says: ‘Don't just tell me, come up here and show us. Which scene do you want to go back to?’.

- b. Character transfer and symbolism. The *spect-actor* takes the stage and selects a character. The original actor hands them that character's distinctive prop, and the spect-actor assumes the role. This symbolic transfer increases the spect-actor's confidence, framing the intervention so that it is not the participant acting as themselves, but rather assuming the role of a character whom they wish to help.
- c. Improvised re-enactment. The spect-actor and the remaining cast improvise the scene based on the proposed intervention. However, the scene does not always yield the spect-actor's intended outcome.
- d. Deconstructive Facilitation. When the improvised intervention reaches a standstill, the Joker pauses the scene to pose further analytical questions to the audience:
 - What did we just see happen there? Did that intervention resolve the issue, or did it escalate the oppressor's reaction?
 - Is this a realistic solution? Could you implement this in everyday life, or is it a 'magical' resolution?
 - That intervention did not succeed... but why? What can we learn from it?

- What are the long-term consequences of that choice?

5. Iteration, Debriefing, and Closing Remarks.

- a. Multi-Perspective Iteration: After thanking the spect-actor for their proposal and bidding them farewell, the Joker invites a second or third spect-actor to propose alternative interventions and test different strategies on stage.
- b. b. Pedagogical Framing: the Joker must never declare: 'This is the right solution'. A core principle of Forum Theatre is that no single 'correct' answer exists; rather, the process explores multiple pathways and possibilities.
- c. Synthesis and Closing: When the session concludes, the Joker thanks the audience for their active participation and reminds them that complex social conflicts rarely yield easy or immediate solutions. Finally, the Joker acknowledges and thanks all cast members before concluding the performance.
- d.

4. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The following sections present two illustrative scenarios. The first, titled 'Education in Bilingual Cities', examines the challenges faced by children who have relocated to a new urban setting. The second, titled 'Father/Mother, Are You Here?', demonstrates the practical application of Forum Theatre to a common real-life situation.

4.1 Education in Bilingual Cities

UDHR and PCIC in which we will work:

<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> (1948)	Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes (2006)
Article 26 1. Everyone has the right to education. [...] 3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.	1.5. Education and Culture 1.5.1. Educational Institutions (SCS) CPh: Concepts of reception classrooms for non-Spanish-speaking foreign students and remedial classrooms. The relationship between student demand and the capacity of educational institutions. The value placed on the role of teachers. Participation in the governance and management of educational institutions. 1.11. Language Policy (RC) CPh: Actions Taken by Governments and Official Institutions Regarding Language Policy. Education Policy in Bilingual Communities in Spain. Language and Its Relationship to Territorial Identity.

Core Conflict: A family from a Latin American country has recently arrived in Valencia (Spain) a city with two official languages (Valencian/Catalan and Spanish), where the main language of instruction at school is Valencian. The parents demand their children be taught exclusively Spanish.

Character Breakdown:

Protagonist (The Oppressed): The child. They have lost their friends and are struggling to integrate into their new school and neighbourhood.

Antagonist 1 (The Oppressor): The parent (Mother/Father), who demands that the primary language of instruction be the official of the country.

Antagonist 2 (The Oppressor): The Principal, who strictly follows state guidelines regarding language policy in education.

Dramatic Structure:

Action 1: One of the parents and the principal argue about official languages at school.

Action 2: The son plays in the schoolyard while other children talk to him in Valencian, which he understands and engages with effortlessly.

Action 3: People on the street speak both Spanish and Valencian, often mixing the two languages seamlessly.

Action 4: The parent expresses frustration because they don't understand why the lessons are not taught in Spanish.

Spect-actor's Interventions:

Spect-actor 1: Assumes the parent's role and continue arguing that the instruction should prioritize the dominant national language (Spanish).

Spect-actor 2: Assumes the principal's role and instructs teachers to address the child exclusively in Spanish (leaving the child feeling marginalized from their peers).

Spect-actor 3: Assumes the child's role, expressing happiness and integrating into a new language and culture, while demonstrating how linguistic immersion facilitates a deeper understanding of the local community.

Linguistic objectives⁵: Conditional sentences.

A1 Level: no structures.

A2 Level: Basic conditional protasis and apodosis in the present indicative: '*Si el niño quiere, no hay ningún problema*⁶'; "*Si*" as a conditional link and connector.

B1 Level: Polite conditional: '*¿Podría el director cambiar las instrucciones?*⁷'. Modesty condition: '*Yo diría que el padre*

⁵ The linguistic objectives are extracted from de PCIC (Instituto Cervantes, 2006: §9.1.5 Condicional simple).

⁶ 'If the child wants to, there's no problem'.

⁷ 'Could the director change the state guidelines?'.

*puede tener otra actitud*⁸; Suggestive meaning with modal verbs: *deber, poder*: '*Debería pensar más en su hijo y menos en él*'⁹.

B2 Level: Expressing probability in past contexts: '*Sería una buena decisión, preguntar al hijo*'¹⁰. Subsequent to a past point in time (*consecutio temporum*): '*Dijo que le daría más responsabilidad, pero no se la dio*'¹¹.

C1 Level: Highlighting past objections or rejections: '*Al hijo le importaría poco el idioma, pero para el padre era algo muy importante*'¹².

C2 Level: Expressions of caution or apprehension regarding past events: '*¿No pensaría el director que era idea del hijo?*'¹³. Journalistic conditional (implicit quotations). Mitigating factor: '*Según el informe del director, sería necesario hacer una votación para decidir*'¹⁴).

Objective in forum theatre:

Examine systemic vs. individual rights.

Construct linguistic identity.

⁸ 'I'd say the father might take a different approach'.

⁹ 'She should think more about her son and less about him'.

¹⁰ 'It would be a good idea to ask the son'.

¹¹ 'He said he would give him more responsibility, but he didn't'.

¹² 'The son wouldn't have cared much about the language, but for the father it was very important'.

¹³ 'Wouldn't the director have thought it was the son's idea?'.

¹⁴ 'According to the director's report, a vote would be needed to reach a decision'.

4.2 Father/mother, Are You Here?

The second proposal is about the abuse of technology and smart phone:

<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> (1948)	Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes (2006)
Article 12 No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his [...] family, [...]. Article 16 1. Men and women [...] have the right [...] to found a family. [...].	1.2. The Family Unit: Concept and Structure (SRS) IPh: Concept and types of family units. Types of bonds that unite couples. Concept of in-laws. IDPh: Predominant types of family units. The values society assigns to the family, its members, and the role of each member. The concept of a large family. Family behaviours related to hierarchies. CPh: The consideration of the family unit in government and social institutions.

Core Conflict: The erosion of family presence, communication, and emotional bonds due to adult smartphone addiction, leading to passive neglect, broken family hierarchies, and arbitrary interference in family life.

Character Breakdown:

Protagonist (The Oppressed): ten-years-old child wants meaningful connection, help with a difficult situation at school, and a present family environment.

Antagonist (The Oppressor): The parent (Mother/Father), who is hyper-connected to work and social media; physically present but emotionally absent; uses screen time as a wall against family duties.

Dramatic Structure:

Action 1: The family sits at the dinner table. Child attempts to talk about a problem at the school. The parent is scrolling the smartphone, answering e-mails or is watching videos.

Action 2: Child says that he needs a smartphone, the parents accept.

Action 3: The parent promises to take the child to an outing (zoo, painting pottery...) ... when the day arrives, the parent forgets.

Action 4: Parents and child are in the living room with the tv on and each one with their smartphone without talking.

Spect-actor's Interventions:

Spect-actor 1: Assumes the child's role find strategies to break through the parent's digital wall.

Spect-actor 2: Assumes the principal's role he tries not to work too much (but he is sacked from the company).

Linguistic objectives¹⁵: Expressing opinions.

¹⁵ The linguistic objectives are extracted from de PCIC (Instituto Cervantes, 2006: §2.9 Expresar acuerdo).

A1 Level: Basic opinion formulas: '*También creo que el padre es dependiente mucho del teléfono*'¹⁶.

A2 Level: Simple agreement/disagreement: '*Estoy de acuerdo con lo de cambiar las normas*'¹⁷.

B1 Level: Formulating nuanced positions: '*A mí tampoco me parece bien no cumplir las promesas*', '*Estoy de acuerdo con cumplir las promesas*'¹⁸.

B2 Level: Elaborating shared or contested perspectives: '*Comparto tu opinión, lo veo mal porque...*', '*Por supuesto que el padre no quería hacer daño a su hijo, pero...*'¹⁹.

C1 Level: Formal agreement and qualification: '*Coincido contigo en lo de negociar unas normas*', '*Estoy completamente de acuerdo con lo que ha pasado, pero...*'²⁰.

C2 Level: Advanced discourse markers for alignment and formal stance-taking: '*Soy de la opinión de que es necesario cambiar*', '*Me sumo a la idea de que es necesario cambiar*', '*Me adhiero a sus palabras y suscribo su opinión*'²¹.

¹⁶ 'I also think the father is very dependent on his mobile phone'.

¹⁷ 'I agree with the idea of changing the rules'.

¹⁸ 'I don't think it's right to break promises either', 'I agree that we should keep our promises'.

¹⁹ 'I agree with you, I think it's wrong because...', 'Of course the father didn't want to hurt his son, but...'

²⁰ 'I agree with you about negotiating some rules', 'I completely agree with what's happened, but...'

²¹ 'I believe that change is necessary', 'I agree with the idea that change is necessary', 'I agree with what you've said and share your view'.

Objective in forum theatre:

Examine the moral duty of parents to protect their children once a family is founded.

Protect the family from arbitrary interference, such as hyper-connectivity.

Deconstruct modern family hierarchies and roles.

Analyse the institutional and social definition of household.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that human rights principles (United Nations, 1948) can be systematically integrated into foreign language education by aligning them with official institutional curricula. Given the clear parallels established between the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and the *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (PCIC), educators can effectively explore themes related to social justice and intercultural understanding through participatory methodologies such as Forum Theatre.

Integrating the UDHR into the language classroom enhances students' communicative competencies. Furthermore, the application of Forum Theatre transforms learners from passive recipients into active socio-cultural agents capable of negotiating meaning, exercising critical thinking, and acting ethically in the target language.

Drama-based instruction fosters spontaneous improvisation, promoting oral fluency and real-time pragmatic competence more effectively than conventional role-playing exercises. This heightened engagement occurs because learners work toward a tangible communicative objective: resolving complex, real-world ethical conflicts.

Finally, the role of the Joker is essential to this pedagogical framework. The Joker serves a dual purpose: guiding learners to analyse underlying structural conflicts beyond their immediate surface manifestations and acting as a linguistic mediator who assists spectators in structuring their arguments, opinions, and critical discourse throughout the language acquisition process.

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