

Using ICT for English Learning at the School of Architecture of Madrid: Raising Interests and Cross-Cultural Interactions

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Abstract

In this paper we plan to present an exercise we gave our students last semester where they had to analyze certain material accessible through internet and give a personal answer to the topic proposed. The exercise was the following:

"In our world, 1% of the population owns 40% of the planet's wealth. About 34,000 children die every single day out of poverty and preventable diseases and 50% of the world's population lives on less than 2 dollars a day. Only China is the world's leading producer of greenhouse gases, being pollution the first cause of death from cancer but if the Chinese current massive migration from the countryside to cities accelerates in 20 years time China will need to build almost 40 billion square metres more of floor space.

If we think of those figures we will understand why revolutionary ways of thinking such as the Zeitgeist movement and the activism arm of the Venus Project, have been born. They propose a straightforward redesign of our culture to diminish war, poverty, hunger, debt and human suffering. In such a setting architecture would be crucial to pursue a sustainable planet to live but experiments in that direction like Norman Foster's Masdar city in Dubai seem to propose very expensive solutions only open to rich societies.

After analyzing the material, please, state clearly if some revolutionary solutions are being offered or if architecture is maintaining a double discourse and only aiming at creating ecocities that seem too ambitious and unreachable".

In short, our students' answers show that they did show the material and were more interested than in the cases in which we propose more conventional exercises. Besides, this type of activity is very useful in cross-cultural settings, like ours where some students come from very different backgrounds and also are forced to travel during the semester. Not all answers were equally right but we could appreciate that most students had accessed the sources proposed, what we consider a very positive outcome.