

El discurso de los medios en las clases de Ciencias Sociales en la escuela secundaria

The discourse of the media in the classes in the Social Sciences in high school

Virginia Saez

Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) / Instituto de Investigaciones en Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad de Buenos Aires (IICE-UBA), Argentina

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3043-4614>

Correo(s) electrónico(s):

educaciondelamirada@gmail.com

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Resumen: En este artículo se analiza la construcción de conocimiento sobre la matriz racista en los medios de comunicación en la escuela secundaria argentina. Para cumplir con este objetivo se llevó a cabo un estudio de corte cualitativo en dos escuelas de Buenos Aires, y se realizaron entrevistas en profundidad a docentes del área de ciencias sociales, entrevistas a estudiantes y observaciones de clase. Entre los resultados se reconocen a la exposición dialogada y a la búsqueda de notas como herramientas con potencialidad para realizar lecturas alternativas y una serie de obstáculos pedagógicos que afectan la construcción de conocimiento social

Palabras clave: Enseñanza Secundaria; Enseñanza de los Medios de Comunicación; Medios de Enseñanza; Contenido de la Educación.

Abstract: This article discusses the construction of knowledge on the matrix racist in the media in high school in Argentina. To meet this objective will be carried out a qualitative study in two schools in urban areas in Buenos Aires, and he conducted in-depth interviews with teachers in the area of social sciences, interviews with students and classroom observations in the area of social sciences. Among the results are recognized at the exhibition through dialog and the search for notes as tools with the potential to perform alternative readings and a series of pedagogical obstacles that affect the construction of social knowledge.

Keywords: Secondary Education; Teaching of the Media; Means of Teaching; Content of Education.

Introduction

Media Education is an epochal requirement for the development of critical thinking in the construction of social knowledge. The current state of information disorder (Wardle & Derekhsan, 2017) requires media education in secondary schools (Saez, 2019). The society of the 21st century is in the classrooms, the challenge is how to enable experiences to think and understand social life (Buckingham, 2019).

The media crosses cultural, social and political contexts that in turn reconfigure them and give them significance. In Latin America the approach to symbolic goods is very disparate and the media discourse is relevant in the communicative process. We maintain as an interpretative hypothesis that the lack of Media Education is an intervening dimension in the production and reproduction of social marginalization. The study of the media discourse is, therefore, a content to be developed in the educational policies aimed at the equality of opportunities in the access to culture. It is about educating the look to contribute to the denaturalization of the social inequalities and to collaborate to build a regime of senses that can propose and face them.

In various research works (Van Dijk, 2007, Saez, 2018) it became evident how the media reproduce and transmit racism, perpetuating stereotypes and having an effect on its formation. Racist matrix discursive practices are not the sum of individual decisions nor are they expressed in a social, political or institutional vacuum, but rather in a network of relationships that makes them possible and legitimate.

In virtue of the versatile dynamics of the media field and the current state of informational disorder it goes through, we assume that it is relevant to analyze the construction of knowledge about the racist matrix in the media in secondary schools. It is necessary to clarify that we will consider racism in a broad and extended sense (Margulis, 2006), alluding to discriminatory manifestations centered on social variables, among others.

According to the particularities of our object of investigation, a qualitative study was carried out (Sirvent, Monteverde, Clerici, Peruzzo & Agulló, 2016). For this purpose, methodological decisions and strategies were deployed, consistent with a flexible design. The demarcation of the sample was staggered according to three decisions: choice of secondary schools, subjects and teachers. First, two institutions were selected in relation to the criteria of accessibility and predisposition to study on the part of the subjects and the training institutions. We looked for two secondary schools that had similar characteristics, which are fertile for analyzing the pedagogical approach to the racism that circulates in the media at the secondary level

Under these considerations, in order to reach a deep understanding we have carried out an extensive field work in two high schools located in peripheral urban areas of Buenos Aires during the first quarter of 2019. In order to fulfill the objective of this research, we worked with primary sources. We carried out 20 in-depth interviews with social science teachers, 20 interviews with students and 20 class observations in the area of social sciences. In the course of the fieldwork we elaborated field notes to record the senses and perceptions that emerged.

Throughout the study, the practices that are being carried out in the classrooms and their new configuration of knowledge are made visible. In this article, we identify the pedagogical practices facing this new socio-cultural scenario: the forms that the analysis of the racist matrix takes and the pedagogical obstacles that are deployed in Argentine secondary schools.

Development

Mediatic Education in Contemporary Democracies

The media carry a symbolic power that affects democracy: they disseminate the information that society needs to function, they help set public agendas, and they are opinion makers.

In the regional context, the media field is going through a critical and worrisome situation due to the concentration and accumulation of media ownership. This tends to homogenize media voices and discourses under an appearance of plurality. A small group of multinational corporations monopolize the production and distribution of content on a large scale. Likewise, the possibilities for any citizen to send his or her message, individually or collectively, to the rest of society were expanded. The transparency that identifies the new systems of representation favors the confusion between representation and reality.

Together with Rota (2002) we maintain that "a communication system that makes a democratic society possible will not emerge by chance but must be built through the participation of all social sectors" (p. 130).

From this line of research, the exercise of communication rights is considered as a gateway to other rights. The work with media discourses allows us to think about training for democratic coexistence from the school space, combining the development of a participatory culture with the cultivation of a reflective viewpoint.

In Argentina, the enactment of National Education Law No. 26,206 of 2006 represents a break with the selective and exclusionary matrix that has characterized the national education system since its inception, where the secondary level was for the formation of the governing elite and/or for groups that would continue their studies at the university. The extension and democratization of compulsory basic education brings with it new challenges linked to the need to concretize the change of cultural paradigm that inclusion requires. Many of the students are first generation entering secondary school and it becomes a symbolic possibility for many social sectors. These social sectors that enter school have historically been nominated and depicted as barbaric, uneducable, uncivilized.

Along with the expansion of rights, there have been advances in the regulations for school coexistence, such as the law for the promotion of coexistence and the approach to social conflict in educational institutions, Law No. 26,892, passed in 2013, which among its objectives, proposed to guarantee the right to peaceful, integrated coexistence, free of physical and psychological violence, as well as to orient education towards criteria that avoid discrimination and promote a culture of peace and the absence of all types of abuse. From this, it is necessary to build a pedagogical viewpoint with a positioning that is subjective.

The racist matrix of media discourses in social science classes

The media occupies a relevant place for a pluralistic view of the differences. That is why it is important to understand how the critical reading of their messages and the development of a reflective gaze are being carried out. Under the consideration that Media Education refers to the way of teaching and learning about media and technologies, we identify that it is an interdisciplinary field and its contents are an object in dispute. In this investigation we will focus on the analysis of the representations, ideologies and values that circulate in media discourses.

The problem of racism becomes an analyzer of the meaning that media education acquires in the environment of social science classes at the Argentine secondary level. In the pedagogical objectives of the classes studied, the development of a critical reading of the media is identified as a skill that contributes to the development of citizens' autonomy, as well as their social and cultural commitment. After the triangulation of the different sources, it is observed that these objectives are not the central ones from which the classes of the social sciences area are structured, but rather objectives that accompany the construction of social knowledge of contents such as: expansion of political citizenship; coexistence between different groups and cultures; ethnocentrism, racism, and xenophobia; discrimination and prejudice; types of discrimination; coexistence and conflict in the peer group, school, and community; violence in social ties; rights as products of political and social agreements; society and culture as places of diversity; individual and group identities as products of historical and social construction; equality before the law, equal treatment, and equal opportunities, among others. In subjects of the area of social sciences such as Language and Literature, History, Geography, Ethical and Citizenship Training and Technological Education.

The work with the media discourses is recognized as a productive way to problematize the social representations loaded with racism and its obstacles in the construction of social knowledge with young students.

The forms that the analysis of the racist matrix takes

In the search to investigate the forms that Media Education takes in the school space we take up again the proposals presented in the classes to discover the ways in which students build knowledge about the media.

When teachers decide to include pedagogical work with media discourses, it is selected as one more resource among others, but one that stands out for its different potentialities: the promotion of the culture of dialogue in the classroom, the possibility of enabling knowledge situated in the socio-political situation, the opportunity to make different voices visible in different expressive languages and a new dynamic in work relations, such as collaborative work.

Some of the pedagogical strategies that are used so that students can build knowledge about the racist matrix in the media are the dialogical exposition and the search and analysis of notes. First, the teachers observed propose the dialogical exposition to advance and deepen the identification and interpretation of the diverse expressions of racism that take place in the stigmatizing dynamics of media discourses. Students are guided to identify the ways in which the press builds the link between racism and certain groups as part of a media agenda.

Media operations that are complicit in racism are identified as: the association of negative behaviors or certain attributes with a certain group, the minimization of racist behaviors and prejudices by the dominant group, the avoidance of addressing the racist dimension in the events presented, the tolerance of racist jokes, and the juxtaposition of information about a certain group with that about a social problem (such as insecurity), among others

The characteristics attributed to racist discourses are the concealment or deformation of history and the appeal to nature. In the exhibition in dialogue, an appeal is made to reconstruct history and to confront the message with the possible messages on the subject. In the classes observed, various meanings of racism are worked on in its identity and social origins, and it is constituted from predominantly cultural meanings, such as the absence of any social relationship and attempts to put a distance from that group. A continental space is generated: a set of affective conditions that make teachers and students feel their class as a safe space. In this context, students have the confidence to intervene, to ask questions and to propose ideas. In a Language and Literature class where they were dealing with immigration, the teacher adds:

You are not Argentine either. Because of your last name, your grandparents or your great-grandparents also came from Spain. And if you come to this school it's because millionaires didn't come. And surely they came like my grandmother, she couldn't read or write, and she was a minor and she started working in a house as a maid. So what is the difference with an immigrant today, who comes from a Latin American country and not from Europe? Is being European more important? Is it nicer to be from a European country? (Teacher of Language and Literature, first year of Secondary Level).

Teachers act as trusted recipients of students' perceptions. They accommodate, contain, and, tolerate their fears and anxieties, through clarifications, pointing out, adding a new look or a new point of view on what is being said, asking a question that broadens the spectrum of what is being said, but fundamentally realizing that what we hear is taken into account and makes sense to have been said.

But can these pedagogical strategies ensure an effect on the construction of knowledge of the racist matrix in the media? No, all the dialogues generated in the class will not ensure a predefined meaning in the students, but it is thanks to this that they will be able to build their own meaning that will allow them to think for themselves.

Second, another recurring strategy was the association of school content with one or more media coverage. Specifically, students are asked to search and analyze their grades. For example, in a class where the content to be worked on was human dignity and has as one of its objectives that students analyze the racism present in the media is proposed as an activity:

1. Think of some situation in daily life where human dignity is not respected.
2. Think of some recent news - that you have seen on TV, on the radio - related to the lack of respect for human rights. Some situation where human rights were not respected (Ethics and Citizenship Training Class, first year of Secondary Level).

Students select coverages where victims, or those in subordinate positions, have a common identity aspect to them. In the critical reading of media, the different positions that individuals occupy in the social fabric are relevant. For example: one of the students chose the grade of a student abused by a preceptor. Another student, of Colombian origin, selects coverage where she informs about the precarious jobs of immigrants (Class of Ethical and Citizenship Formation, first year of the Secondary Level). It emerges as an interpretative hypothesis that in the construction of knowledge about the racist matrix in the media, social fears associated with youth identity emerge. Social spaces are generated to express situations, generational experiences that identify them.

A common factor in these forms of building knowledge was the space dedicated by the teachers, outside of the compliance with the slogans and readings, to investigate the meaning built by the students on what they are proposing. In the interviews with the teachers, they said they understood that although the pedagogical strategies have their intentions and purposes, they do not assure or determine the complex process by which the students become capable of building meaning on the reality they are trying to approach.

Pedagogical obstacles

The pedagogical practices that aim to work the racist matrix in the media present a series of pedagogical obstacles that need to be reviewed. Firstly, teachers identify resistance from students to work on these contents, especially in basic secondary education. One teacher adds: "In the first year I have students who are obstinate in their racist ideas. Discrimination and xenophobia are rooted in the discourse. And they don't understand it. (History teacher, first year of Secondary Level).

It is necessary to remember that the action of the media is not reduced to a mere reproduction or an autonomous activity of production of the social world. They act in a network of relationships of interdependence with other actors, not in a homogeneous or one-dimensional way.

Research suggests that people, beyond young students, clearly want to stay in these micro ecosystems (Van Dijck, 2016) and, more generally, that news that confirms pre-existing positions or prejudices is much more likely to arouse our sympathy. The media participate in a logic of production and co-production of the racist matrix. The media discourse contributes to the constitution of the common sense or doxa that naturalizes the organizations of meaning that consolidate the racist matrix. Although we find notes that denounce episodes of racism, they are presented as anecdotal facts and not as testimonies of a recognized social process, with a long historical trajectory.

Secondly, the forms taken by the analysis of the racist matrix in media discourse assume that critical reading is a rational process. Therefore, we could combat racism by means of a pedagogical intervention that favors a reasoned argument about the forms of social

classification. We maintain as an interpretive hypothesis that this is a much more complex issue. Racist expressions in the social discourse that circulates in the media, in schools, in social networks, represent signs of cognitive-affective walls that shape and structure sensitivities (Scribano, Cena, and Peano, 2012).

A third obstacle refers to the lack of continuous training of teachers on the dizzying dynamics of the media field and its effects on racist matrix discourses. In a context where the scale and speed of false news has increased (Wardle & Derekhshan, 2017), the powerful intersections between disinformation and racism are renewed, the polarity of discourse is increased and a general state of confusion is created.

Racist matrix discourses are part of a much broader trend in the media system and in social discourse in general. To the extent that the social, political and economic order is being transformed, it is operating on the social construction of meaning. There is an impact on the plane of meanings, on languages, on the ways in which things are named or hidden, on explanations, etc. For this reason, it is necessary to escape the tendency to educate social problems and place the resolution of profound social challenges in pedagogical practices. Of course, this does not mean that we should not try and contribute to the formation of more critical rationalities and sensibilities.

And a final obstacle is the complicity that is established between the racist matrix discourses with the foundational school mandate to strengthen national identity, especially when they refer to new immigrants. In the classes observed, the reaction to a feeling of threat to the collective identity defined in terms of nation is expressed in a defensive way.

In Latin America, and specifically in Argentina, the school was a privileged medium that allowed the expansion of Western civilization. From the first decades of the 20th century onwards, new knowledge and rituals emerged in the desire to affirm national identity. Now, from the curricular designs of the region, the purpose of constructing and reinforcing a diverse identity that privileges the differences in perspective of the strengthening of the bonds of identity is enunciated.

The school is a privileged setting for the construction of social ties, bonds of solidarity, recognition and mutual respect. We are passing through an epochal sensibility that puts in evidence discourses and practices of a racist matrix that is necessary to revise in order to be able to think of other ways of relationship and coexistence.

Conclusiones

In different subjects of the area of social sciences at the secondary level (Language and Literature, History, Geography, Ethical and Citizenship Training and Technological Education) proposals were identified that aimed to generate reflexive processes on the discourses of racist matrix. The dialogical exposition and the search for notes are constituted as tools with potential for alternative readings and were configured as pedagogical practices that facilitate the construction of social knowledge. Thus, the potential of the media discourse to work with the social fears that concern young students is also recognized.

But the treatment of the racist matrix at the secondary level is not reduced to a simple pedagogical task. Four obstacles that persist in the proposals were identified: resistance on the part of the student body to work on these contents, consideration that critical reading is a rational process, lack of continuous training of teachers on the dizzying dynamics of the media field, and complicity between the foundational school mandates to strengthen national identity.

In the prevailing informational disorder, new discourses and plots of meaning are elaborated that legitimize the racist matrix. New communicational forms emerge with renewed instruments that build new and more sophisticated devices. In this context of cultural transition and with its own keys for Latin America, the formation of new pedagogical practices tending to the reinvention of the democratic fiber of the school appears.

The media scenario demands transformations in some aspects of our ways of teaching. This is undoubtedly an effort, but it can also be an opportunity to create. We hope that these results will contribute to orienting pedagogical practices towards the formation of subjects capable of understanding media meanings, both explicit and implicit, superficial and underlying. This research provides dimensions of analysis for the development of

intervention tools that help to build a critical vision of the media. And it hopes to have an impact on the educational system, both in terms of collaboration for the formulation of specific policies, and in the education and training of teachers.

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