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The Role of Art and Advertising in Developing Critical Thinking Skills in English

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Abstract

In this proposal, we aim to offer different visual and audio-visual tools that will aid us to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a 6th grade of primary education. To be more specific, our intention is not only for students to develop their communicative competence in English but also their critical thinking skills within their scope of knowledge and maturity. First, we will present a theoretical justification from which we will state the beneficial implications of using visual arts and its valuable role in promoting the gradual acquisition of reflective skills. In our intervention proposal, we have applied some of those methodological approaches in order to involve students in their learning, to teach them how to start analysing visual and audio-visual materials and to promote their awareness and empathy towards social and intercultural problems.

Keywords: critical thinking, visual arts, meaningful acquisition, deconstructing visual narratives

Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

1. Introduction

This topic has been chosen due to the fact that there is a need to adapt our practices to our current living situation: the new communication society and technology have shaped our way of living, the way we conduct ourselves in our relationships and our cultural identity (UNESCO, 2005). Therefore, to bring visual alphabetization into educational practices such as, in this case, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), will indeed enrich our students' learning with a holistic, critical and symbolic knowledge that will relate their scholar context with our actual picture-filled reality (Laiglesia, Loeck and Caeiro, 2010; FECYT, 2007).

As Caeiro, Callejón and Assaleh (2018) state, art is one of the subjects in Primary Education that most connects the educational practices with the children's inquisitive nature, however, as their study "Artistic Education in Early Childhood and Primary Education Degrees. An analysis from the current teaching specialties and proposals to a specialisation in arts, visual and audio-visual culture and design" implies, many interviewed Spanish primary teachers stated the need for more specific training in this area. This is due to the fact that it is difficult to relate any type of formal education (including EFL) with teaching about visual language, audio-visual critical thinking, pictorial criticism or any other important branch of the interdisciplinary subject without an appropriate and formal training in it.

By the same token, as Kaymakamoglu's (2018) case study indicates, even though some teachers seem to have a constructivist belief towards education, their observed teaching practices show a traditional and teacher-centred approach rather than a communicative and constructivist practice. However, there are many studies that prove how beneficial the use of a student-centred approach is, such is the case of the work of Vlassi and Karaliota (2013) or that of Kim, Andrews and Carr (2004) among others, who compare the use of traditional teaching methods with others that follow a student-centred approach in diverse educational stages. Surprisingly, these studies prove that there are still EFL teachers that would rather just use text materials instead of questions related to independent thinking (Elder and Paul, 1998). On the other hand, diverse research has been carried out into teachers' feelings towards incorporating critical thinking in their classrooms; for instance, Asgharheidari and Tahriri, in

their 2015 work, "A Survey of EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards Critical Thinking Instruction" and Ketabi, Zabihi and Ghadiri, in their work 2012, "Critical thinking across the ELT curriculum: A mixed methods approach to analyzing L2 teachers' attitudes towards critical thinking instruction", agree on the teachers' belief in the benefits of incorporating critical thinking in their EFL classroom, nevertheless, they need wider instruction on its use and successful implementation. However, as El Soufi and See (2019) highlight, there are still EFL teachers that tend to emphasize covering text material over engaging students in independent thinking. Indeed, they claim that:

> In cultures that attach importance to conformity and discourage independent thinking, fostering critical thinking is all the more relevant. Unfortunately, in such countries, language teachers are often more concerned with language accuracy than critical appraisal of texts. English language classes in these countries often involve students reading a text and answering comprehension questions. Rarely are they asked to evaluate the text or judge the credibility of the information. In many cases, the materials used in the language classroom do not encourage students to think critically. (El Soufi and See, p.141)

Against this belief, even since 1998, Elder and Paul have attempted to examine the nature and teachability of critical thinking, to analyse the functions and types of teacher questions in order to help EFL classroom instructors gain a deep understanding of the teacher's questions and get to know how to employ higher order questionings to foster the students' critical thinking ability. Those higher order questioning are defined by Bloom (as cited in McNeil, 2010) "as mental processes of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation" (p. 74). As McNeil alludes, high order questioning has many benefits such as increasing literacy levels (e.g., Taylor, Clark, Pearson, Walpole, 2000), furthermore, it develops thinking skills (Dontanio and Paradise, 1988), and, rather than using simple questions (e.g. questions answered just by stating a reading information), high order questioning aids to get to a major acquisition of the target language (Farooq, 2007).

Therefore, this proposal has been developed with the intention of offering possible visual materials, educational activities and methods to promote the acquisition of those high order

thinking skills that lead to critical thinking through the use of visual arts. In this case, our proposal is contextualised with students from 6th year of primary education.

On account of the fact that we live in a society bombarded by visual images and, in order to achieve the described goal, visual materials such as publicity and artistic manifestations will be used. However, the main problem confronted is the fact that it is difficult to find appropriate materials for 6th graders as they must be useful, intellectually challenging, and adapted to their level. What's more, they must reflect real problems or situations that could promote debate and the development of critical thinking skills in EFL within their scope of knowledge (Turuk, 2008).

1.1. Justification

To be able to deconstruct, to debate and to be critical in this ever-changing society should be one of the most relevant objectives in modern education. Indeed, Paul (1990) supports the idea that one of the most essential features that everyone needs in order to survive in this rapidly changing world, is precisely to be taught critical thinking skills within the educational system. Nevertheless, teachers sometimes tend to overlook these skills. This could be due to the fact that human beings have a willingness to find a non-complicated explanation to every narrative. For instance, it is much easier to think of our history in Manichean terms, in other words, to believe that the world is divided into "the bad and the good ones". In fact, broadly speaking, we do not even bother to read between the lines or investigate about the others' point of view.

On the same page, the reason behind using images to promote language acquisition is the fact that images illustrate a story and those stories can become, following Türkcan and Yaşar's (2011) conclusion "a strong instrument to help students interpret the visual world and become more efficient in expressing their ideas" (p. 1564).

However, to interpret the possible meanings of a visual manifestation is just to touch the surface of its potential use. As Hernández (2013) states, over the years, artistic manifestations have been superficially explained and taught in educational practices such as museum tours or classroom instruction. Those instructors tend to use a simplistic point of view or a narrative

that seems to have all the answers ready to be given. For instance, in Hernandez's (2013) words:

> When students face an image, teachers that are guiding the questions, usually tend to ask those that lead to predictable or factual answers such as "what can you see in this image?" or "what is the story behind it?". Instead, they should explore a new path such as "what can I see of myself reflected in this image". (p.76)

If our desire as educators is to help our students to be critical and capable citizens in the future, why do we have to wait until they are "old enough" to understand how many middle greys the world could have? With this proposal, our intention is to start raising up our students' consciousness and building up their own thinking skills without forgetting their age group. Indeed, it goes without saying that the activities and materials designed must be adapted to what they are capable of. And what is more; topics must be chosen carefully as well. Not only should they be of interest to the students, but they must also be meaningful and helpful to raise up new questions and thoughts.

With this proposal, our intention is to offer one of the many possible ways to make visual content accessible to 12-year-old students while they develop their oral skills in English in order to promote the acquisition of the language.

Obviously, helping students' mindset mature is not an easy task, especially when they have been taught not to give a second thought to what they are seeing or learning. Therefore, it is essential to start developing high order thinking skills when they are young, so they can start wondering and questioning their present world and their current problems. However, even though materials can be made accessible to the students' thinking ability and linguistic capacities, we must bear in mind that our pupils need to have the right predisposition to face critical thinking challenges (Perkins, Jay and Tishman, 1993).

Finally, we would like to state, that those materials and practices offered in this proposal aim to merge and have into consideration all the aspects mentioned above, so that teachers can help their students to develop their critical thinking abilities and use those abilities in the English classroom.

1.2. Brief analysis of the state of the art

Since the shift towards the student-centred approach (Council of Europe, 2001) took place, educational practices have suffered major changes; nowadays teachers are aware that students need to feel that what they are learning is useful for them, and educators must prepare them to be lifelong learners (Celuch and Slama, 1999). What's more, Noula's (2018) case study "Critical Thinking and Challenges for Education for Democratic Citizenship: an ethnographic study in primary schools in Greece", underlines the requirement of using critical thinking as the indispensable engine for education in democratic citizenship. She highlights the fact that students need to start taking responsibility for their own reasoning and, therefore, teachers need to promote the use of discussions in a respectful atmosphere.

Beyond that, what students actually learn, needs to talk to them, to narrate their reality and those issues that they could care about. Indeed, artistic manifestations and publicity are interesting tools to do so, due to the fact that they are open to interpretation and could offer a wider view of popular culture (Hernández, 2013). On the same page, learning English as a Foreign Language needs to be useful as well. For instance, developing oral skills alongside their critical thinking skills could benefit our students not only because of the improvement in the language itself, but also in the use of their high order thinking skills that can be applied to any aspect of their education (Bustle, 2004). Furthermore, it will also benefit them in appreciating the correct use and interpretation of prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and stress (Wells, 2006), as well as understanding and internalising nonverbal communication such as the use of gestures, eye contact, corporal posture, corporal distance, facial expressions, etc. (Giri, 2009) and, among other benefits, to develop competencies related to debate such as transmit ideas and opinions, knowing how to speak, to listen, to share positions, to challenge and to be prepared to change the someone's mind (Mosquera, 2017). In short, it could help them to achieve meaningful communication that could allow them to feel that learning this lingua franca (which could be defined according to Crystal, 2012, as a practical and common language used for communication between people that do not share the same mother tongue) has a purpose that might be beneficial for them.

Another challenge for teachers to overcome is that 12-years-old students might not be as proficient in English as in their mother tongue, so they might struggle when trying to provide those necessary arguments to state their point of view. Therefore, teachers should help them to use specific vocabulary, speech formulas, grammatical structures and compensatory strategies to get their messages and thoughts across.

Using visual content offers the possibility of using accessible, meaningful and authentic materials in the classroom that "accommodates a variety of working styles and engages students in critical thinking skills" (Shoemaker, 2012, p.692). This will allow them to work in non-artificial contexts, thus, they will be able to use the language with a real end.

1.3. Objectives of the study

This study has been designed with the general objective of offering visual arts activities through which students can develop their critical thinking skills and communicative competence when using EFL. To achieve this objective, an intervention proposal in which sixth graders will work on the gradual development of their critical thinking skills through the use of visual arts has been delineated. On the other hand, the specific objectives that we will try to achieve with this study are:

- To analyse what critical thinking means and its implications in EFL education.
- To examine the many benefits that the use of visual arts can offer to language acquisition and the development of critical thinking skills in EFL education.
- To formulate an achievable and realistic example of the application of critical thinking skills through the use of images in students of sixth grade in the English classroom.
- To highlight the pedagogical value of the use of visual arts as a resource in the teaching of EFL.

2. Literature review

In order to find out proper ways to use visual arts and advertising in the English classroom and, consequently, facilitate the acquisition of critical thinking skills and communicative competences, it is necessary to define certain concepts. Therefore, theories, studies and methods have been researched and selected regarding their relation to the issue at hand.

2.1. The importance of learning English

Learning a second language, especially English, seems to be one of the most essential priorities to develop as a professional in our globalized world, what is more, since The Bologna Accord (1999) started to be implemented, European universities agreed upon requiring at least a B1 on CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) to get a degree. This necessity has been transferred towards all levels of formal education and the proliferation of bilingual education in English is a fact that is spreading to most European countries. For instance, the next figure shows the growing evolution of students that are studying a bilingual education in English in Madrid.

Figure 1. Rate of students in the Spanish-English Bilingual Program of Madrid' Community.
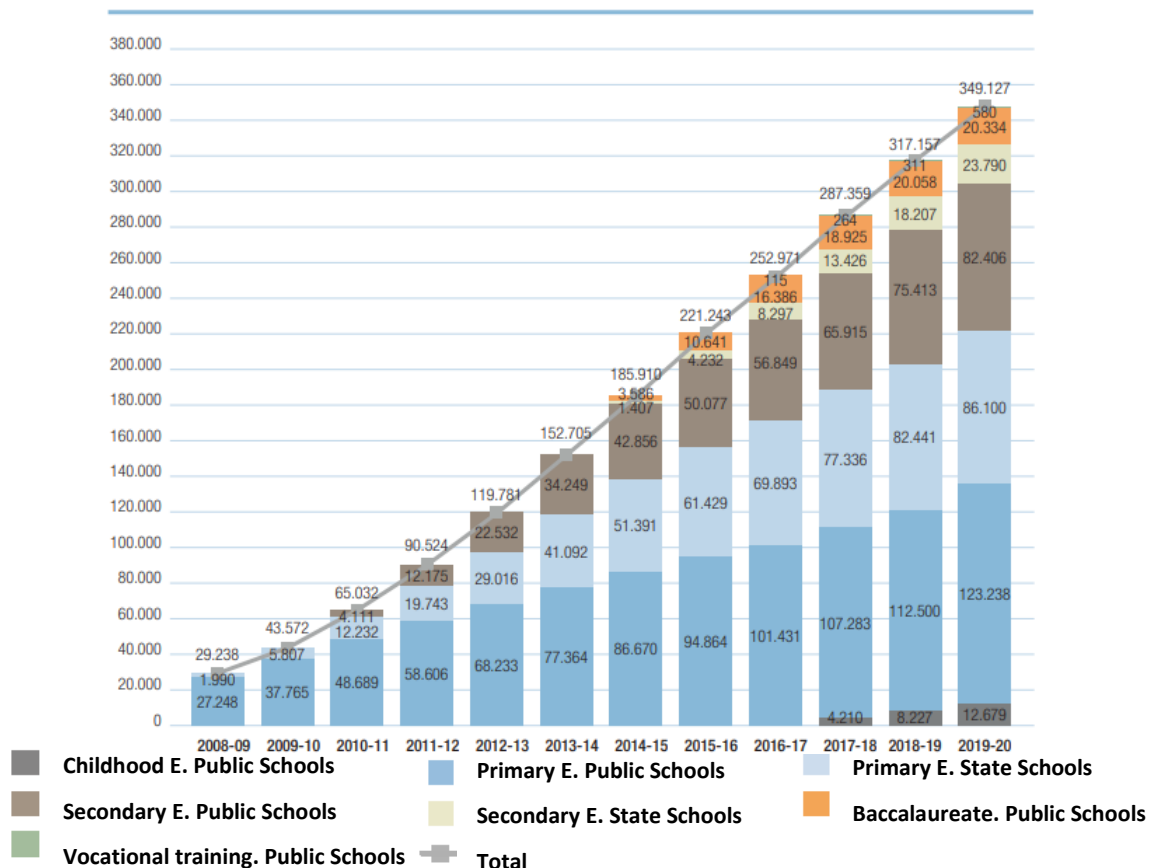
Source: *Dirección General de Bilingüismo y Calidad de la Enseñanza.* Retrieved October 3rd 2020, from: http://www.madrid.org/bvirtual/BVCM050013.pdf

13

Therefore, as it can be seen, thinking and communicating efficiently in English from a young age is indeed one of the most demanded necessities in our educational system. In other words, students need to acquire communicative competences.

The term communicative competence is a concept that was first coined by Hymes (1994) when reacting against Chomsky's (1965) perception of the terms of linguistic competence and performance. Hymes carried out an ethnographic research that involved "communicative form and function in integral relation to each other" (1994, p.12). However, the concept has suffered changes over the years, the most recent interpretation is offered by the Council of Europe (1991) in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. As it indicates, in order to acquire the communicative competence, a student should work on its three components:

- The linguistic competence which involves lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, orthographic and orthoepic competences.
- The sociolinguistic competence which "is concerned with the knowledge and skills required to deal with the social dimension of language use [...]: linguistic markers of social relations; politeness conventions; expressions of folk-wisdom; register differences; and dialect and accent" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 118).
- The pragmatic competences which are concerned with the learners' knowledge of the way messages attend to discourse, functions and design.

All these competences could be worked on in a holistic way within the students' scope of knowledge, and indeed, a way to do it can involve working their critical thinking skills. In fact, the reason behind working critical thinking skills in English lies on studies such as "Metacognitive Attributes and Liberated Progress: The Association Among Second-Language Learners' Critical Thinking, Creativity, and Autonomy", which is the one carried out by Nosratinia and Zaker (2014). Their work proves that students that had received instruction through English as a second language, obtained higher results on creativity, critical thinking and autonomy.

2.1.1. Implications of English language and culture

Many are the authors that indicate that learning a language is bound together with learning culture, such is the case of the study "The relationship between culture and language". In this case study, Jiang (2000) affirms that "It is commonly accepted that language is a part of culture, and that it plays a very important role in it. Some social scientists consider that without language, culture would not be possible" (p.328). What's more, according to Brown, language is "the symbolic representation of a people, since it comprises their historical and cultural backgrounds, as well as their approach to life and their ways of living and thinking" (1994, p.165). Therefore, by learning English, our students are learning culture at the same time.

The fact of teaching English implies that students are learning a language that has become a lingua franca, in other words, following Seidhofer (2011), students are learning a language used among speakers whose mother tongue differs from English but use English as means of communication among them, that is to say, that they are learning English as Lingua Franca (ELF). Consequently, as Guilherme (2007) highlights:

> The possibilities the English language offers are huge, bearing in mind all the cultures which are in contact thanks to this language, either because they spoke it as a L1 or L2 (first or second language) or because it is considered a kind of lingua franca for international communication. The more information we provide in the classroom, the more control of the fear of the unknown, the promotion of a critical look and the enhancement of self-development (p. 87).

2.2. How to teach English

The aforementioned leads us to wonder which the most efficient way of teaching English as a second language to 12-year-old students is. There is not a single method that works for every student and every situation, on the contrary, an eclectic methodology featuring different approaches such as the following ones, seems to be the answer in order to achieve our goal.

First, we will follow some of the aspects concerning the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which gives priority to activities that foster interaction and negotiation

between learners in order to provide real learning contexts of communication. This implies the use of authentic rather than adapted materials (Savignon, 2005). According to Richard (2006), those activities must be focused on the functions and purposes of the language. An example of this type of activities could be to manage different texts, situations and different reasons to learn, to debate, to do a role-play, to investigate, to interact with native speakers, to look for solutions to a problem, to do collaborative work, etc.

We must bear in mind the fact that in CLT, the classroom is seen as a community in which students are active participants that use their interlanguage to communicate. In fact, Selinker in his 1972 work, "International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching", defines the concept of interlanguage as a linguistic and cognitive space that exists between the target and the native language. In other words, interlanguage can be defined as that unique and personal language that is produced when students are learning a language. Hence, it contains mistakes and it is imperfect. What's more, mistakes might be produced by language transfer, interference or simply lack of knowledge.

Therefore, students are expected to use different communicative strategies to make themselves understood, even if they lack in knowledge. However, this gap can be solved by using certain strategies of second language communication such as the ones proposed by Mahmood and Murad (2018), i.e., by using synonyms, providing a literal translation, generalizing meaning, miming, pointing, approximation, circumlocution (explaining what the word means without saying the word) and paraphrasing (explaining the concept in a simpler and/or shorter way).

The implications of this Communicative Approach (also known as Communicative Language Teaching) infer that, the student should attain fluency in order to engage in meaningful and authentic communication (Hinkel, 2005). Consequently, there is a major look for fluency rather than accuracy in the language. To ensure it, corrective feedback must be used. This concept is described by Act for Youth as the time in which an instructor describes a behaviour or incorrect answer and offers, implicit or explicitly, the correct alternative. This correction can be done by using prompts and reformulations (Zuo, 2017). Indeed, when errors impede communication, students could be corrected using corrective feedback, however, if

communication is not at stake, errors must be mostly corrected without interfering in their speech; once the student has managed to get the idea across, errors can be corrected. Obviously, exercises to look for accuracy can be also worked on.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that CLT shares features with Krashen's Natural Approach (1981) such as the use of authentic materials, error correction and the prioritization of communication even if students commit mistakes. As Krashen (1981) pointed out in his Theory of Second Language Acquisition, developing our students' English competence is not just about learning, it is about acquiring the language. Indeed, the difference between language acquisition and second language learning, is that, while language acquisition is a subconscious, informal and implicit process where the person does not realize the way in which language is being picked up, second language learning is learning in a conscious and formal way where the person is aware of the linguistic rules that he or she is using. Among other characteristics, Krashen's theory points out certain features when it comes to selecting appropriate content, for instance, topics should be of personal interest (meaningful) for students and they must offer a comprehensible input, ergo, the level must be slightly above their level of competence. On the other hand, keeping in mind the students' characteristics, it is important to create a low anxiety environment where they feel relaxed and comfortable, otherwise, acquisition will not take place efficiently.

This drives us to think about the importance of including metacognitive skills so that, students could reflect about their own learning process when learning English. As previously indicated, in Nosratinia and Zaker's (2014) study, metacognitive factors deeply influence the process of learning English as a second language. Some of these metacognitive skills are autonomy and creative and critical thinking. Following these authors, when students use them, "they become confident, independent, autonomous, and fluent learners" (2014, p.8). What is more, they enable students to become more independent and to monitor how to learn a second language. (Nation and Macalister, 2010). In other words, these strategies help students to be aware of their own learning process, to analyse reasons behind whether they are learning or not, etc.

2.3. Critical thinking

2.3.1. Definition and benefits

As certain studies such as the one carried out by Ketabi, Zabihi and Ghadiri (2012) have shown, some English teachers tend to use the term critical thinking in broad terms, lacking from a true understanding of the term and applying it to some circumstances that might not be considered as such.

Following a statement made by Scriven and Paul (1987) at the Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform, critical thinking is defined as:

> The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness. (Scriven and Paul, 1987 cited in Eutsler, 2017, p.34).

In his 2017 contribution, Eutsler devises different examples to clarify those universal intellectual values mentioned in the previous definition. Following his ideas, we proceed to enumerate some of the examples provided by him:

- Clarity: a statement cannot be unclear; we need to be certain about what the person is asking. Therefore, teachers can ask for clarifications. E.g. "could you give me an example?", "could you explain what you mean in another way?", etc.
- Accuracy: statements must be accurate. This means that we need to make sure that what we are saying is true. E.g. the sentence "dogs are always barking" is incorrect because dogs are not barking all the time.
- Precision: sentences need to be specific. E.g. in the statement "Alice is too underweight", we do not know Alice's weight or what we consider to be underweight.
- Relevance: a statement might not be relevant for the topic that is being discussed. E.g. If the topic is healthy diet, asking the way someone is dressed is irrelevant.

- Depth: we do not want our statements to be superficial. We need to consider the complexity of the problem. E.g. the statement used to warn teenagers about not abusing of videogames; "just do not spend much time playing videogames", lacks in depth because it does not explain why they should not do it.
- Breadth: we need to think about the existence of different points of view when dealing with the same issue. E.g. "do you think that a father of a person with Down Syndrome would take as a joke your misuse of the word retarded?".
- Logic: our many arguments about a topic must make sense, they should not be contradictory or illogical. E.g. "but now you are saying the opposite of what you implied before, how can both be true?"

Critical thinking affects, not only EFL, but all subjects, therefore, as Elder (2007) claims, it also impacts the quality of the individuals' life by making them more empathic and rationale. Following the website "The Foundation for Critical Thinking", a person that thinks critically will avoid thinking simplistically about complicated issues and will have others' point of view into consideration. As Elder implied, critical thinking can be trained in different fields and over the years in order to constantly analyse, assess and, as a result, improve the quality of one's thinking. Extending this thought, Paul (2005) points out that this third phase is when creative thinking takes place. By all means, it is when a weak or strong thinking is replaced with a stronger thinking, therefore, it is a natural by-product of thinking critically because by analysing and assessing one's thinking, people could raise their thinking to a higher level.

2.3.2. Problems when instructing in critical thinking

According to Paul's 2005 article, "The State of Critical Thinking Today", the main problems with faculty members when studying critical thinking are three, namely: that they lack from knowledge about the vastness of the concept and its implications, that they are unaware of their lack of knowledge and also believe that they are applying it correctly on their teaching practices and last, that despite many initiatives in college instruction, they seem not to be enough to educate professionals in critical thinking.

As it can be presumed, these three obstacles represent a long-term problem in education because they have repercussions in teaching at all stages. If teachers are not taught appropriately and they are unaware of their lack of knowledge, how can they teach their students? Indeed, Eutsler (2017) draws our attention to the fact that teachers are highly likely to teach in the way they previously learnt, so changing methodologies or including something new becomes an even more complicated task.

Another problem that Paul indicates is that teachers usually feel forced to teach heavy content subjects, therefore, generating thought-provoking tasks will increase their workload and will not help them to cover all that content. However, when some teachers try to use critical thinking skills, they sometimes fall into pseudo critical thinking because they do not analyse and assess the process and outcomes. In order to differentiate critical thinking from standard thinking, Eutsler (2017) points out that all critical thinking abilities have three parts: a process, an object, and a standard. Some examples that include those abilities are "to evaluate information for its relevance, to accurately identify assumptions, to construct plausible inferences, to identify relevant points of view and to distinguish significant from insignificant information" (Elder, 2017, p. 54). On the other hand, another pit that teachers might fall into is indoctrination, which is defined in the Cambridge Dictionary as "the process of repeating an idea or belief to someone until they accept it without criticism or question". In order to avoid indoctrination, Paul argues that teaching ethical values should go hand in hand with teaching students critical thinking skills; students need to assess facts and interpret different situations, thus, some ideas should not be given for granted.

However, how should we promote the acquisition of this skills? In the next section, we will introduce the benefits and the ways in which we can include visual arts into EFL teaching.

2.4. Using visual arts to promote the development of critical thinking skills in English

2.4.1. Reasons for the use of visual arts in education

Dr. Leshnoff is an artist that researches the history of art education, in her article "Art, Ambiguity and Critical Thinking", she highlights that "education in the visual arts contributes

to a more profound understanding and appreciation of civilization" (1995, p.51). Thus, it can be stated that the use of art criticism in a classroom is a meaningful tool which allows students to share their insights, get involved in critical thinking and to understand cultures and different points of view (Anderson, 1990).

Moreover, Leshnoff (1995) emphasises the fact that even if the artist has done a piece of art with the intention of transmitting a certain message or feeling, it might not be seen under the same light by the viewers. This is due to the fact that everyone has different experiences and learning backgrounds. In fact, comparing the students' insight with the teacher's, usually, teachers have more depth and breadth due to their knowledge of the matter.

Certainly, in a TEDx Talk video, Foley (2015) talks about looking through the artist eye, not only to get to understand a piece of art but to incorporate ambiguity into the students' daily life. She states that:

> Students struggle with ambiguity because we all do. Artists on the other hand, realise that ambiguity is part of the process; they take it, they identify it and they tackle it… So, if artists are doing this, can you imagine if art education was a place where we knew students could go to prepare for lives of not knowing. (Foley, 2015, min 8.04)

Indeed, ambiguity creates the discomfort of not knowing something but, on the other hand, it arises curiosity. Thus, ambiguity promotes creativity and encourages the cultivation of ideas and the search for answers. What's more, images seldom offer a right or wrong answer, it is a resource that promotes thinking and arises curiosity, hence, Foley proposes to work on interdisciplinary tasks that cultivate this type of thinking, such as visual arts.

Apart from this, using art and advertising in education has been defended by professionals such as López (2020) who emphasises the vital importance of visual literacy in compulsory education. Visual literacy can be defined as "the ability to read, interpret, and understand information presented in pictorial or graphic images" (Wileman, 1993, p. 114). López points out that certain aspects of the elements that we see daily influence the way in which we perceive the world; symbolic knowledge is a powerful weapon that advertising companies and, in general, our society of knowledge and information, uses in order to get people to

consume their product. Being critical and learning how to look at a piece of art, advertisement or just an object of consumption, are skills of major importance that could help us to avoid manipulation and teach us to deconstruct reality. Therefore, it is vital to start educating the student's critical eye from a young age.

Consequently, it is important as well to use art and advertising in the foreign language classroom. For instance, using TV commercials is not only useful to just work on critical thinking, but also to work on all linguistic skills, especially on listening. Smith and Rawley (1997) identify many benefits when using these materials, for instance, the use of accessible language is an advantage because it usually shows a short message that can be stopped, rewinded or forwarded to check their understanding, infer meaning or discuss specific parts. Another benefit of using these materials is that, as Krashen (1981) suggests, using accessible language offers authentic language that could feature many appealing topics, especially cultural ones or even values. Therefore, cultural comparisons, judgements or evaluations can be made when criticising and analysing an advertisement. Finally, the last of the benefits described in Smith and Rawley study, "Using TV Commercials to Teach Listening and Critical Thinking", is that audio-visual materials allow students to engage easily with the subject because they could include appealing music, catchy slogans or interesting images. At the same time, this leads to cater for diversity because it allows to work on linguistic, spatial (visual), musical and even, to work on intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences (Gardner, 1983).

As described by Marenus (2020), a research assistant from Harvard Graduate School of Education, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences challenges the traditional idea that we possess just one single type of intelligence; by using a wide variety of activities and approaches to learning that focuses on one of those specific type of intelligences, teachers can reach all students while, at the same time, it allows them to think from various perspectives, deepening their knowledge of a topic.

By the same token, analysing art pieces opens a door towards using debates and communicative strategies in class, and these skills are essential when it comes to acquiring communicative competence in English, for this reason, in "Laboratory of Teaching English through the Visual Arts", a study done by Gómez, Moran and Flores (2006), they attempt to

verify some of the benefits when mixing foreign language teaching with visual arts. They point out that art and students' active participation on their learning process provides a motivational aspect that can boost the student performance and lower their level of anxiety when learning English, especially with those that have struggled with other methods and have had learning difficulties.

2.4.2. How should critical thinking be implemented when using images?

If we pay attention to the theory exposed so far, teaching critical thinking through images seems complicated, especially when our target group are sixth graders, however, certain aspects about the way in which we should look at audio visual materials and the visual culture must be taken into account in order to determine which the best way to implement these strategies with our students is.

2.4.2.1. Critical literacy

As previously stated, learning how to criticise or deconstruct art can be an open door to teaching, among other skills, intercultural contents to our students. Derenowski (2014) states that when working on projects that require the use of culture-oriented resources such as books, videos, magazines, posters, songs, movies, etc., the students' intercultural awareness and familiarity with other cultures widens, their motivation is increased and a sense of achievement that positively contributes to their attitude towards different people and their culture background is provided.

One way of achieving those goals with our students is indeed through critical literacy, which, as Smith (2015) emphasises, is a term that differs from critical thinking; as previously stated, critical thinking involves looking beyond facts using logic and mental analysis to solve problems, however, critical literacy involves not only to analyse and to evaluate texts critically, but it also includes the power dynamics inside of that written or oral text. Using McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) arguments, critical literacy allows students to "question, examine, or dispute the power relations that exist between readers and authors" (p.14). What's more, doing explorative activities that include those texts alongside art or music could highly

motivate English language learners towards learning language and comprehend oral and written texts (Schander, Blama, and Massa, 2013).

Janks (2013) states that an approach called critical literacy implies that when using texts in the education, neither texts (written, oral or audio-visual) nor images are created in a certain way just by chance or mistake. The author has an intention of inferring meanings that are beyond the obvious words or visual representations, that is why, in the case of images, certain colours or patterns are employed to, for example, give an oppressive sensation while others such as horizontal lines, can give a calmer sensation. Furthermore, the author implies that reflecting upon texts or images that show a different cultural background from that of the students', requires them to take into consideration many aspects for its analysis; geographical, political, environmental, social, etc. The richness of doing such practise relies on the fact that the more they discover, empathise with and investigate about other cultures, the sooner they will respect them and learn from them. Thus, Janks (2014) devises that, in order to work on critical literacy, and by large, to deconstruct images, we must pay attention to a variety of questions related to intertwined factors:

- Power: the way in which power is represented. Students can analyse the social class, age or role of the represented, the different sexes or races, and their wealthiness or properties.
- Diversity: different communities with their respective social and cultural background are represented.
- Access: questions should be appropriate to the students' knowledge and understanding.
- Design: as sometimes images are not accompanied by words, its appearance is crucial; the colours, their visuality, the use of symbolic figures, how and where something is placed in the image, the sensation of movement, shadows, etc. However, when analysing audio-visual pieces, students can also look at how and when discourse is done (body language, intonation, rhythm, etc.).

- Redesign: in this phase, students can recreate the piece of art in their own way in order to transmit their thoughts in an artistic way, e.g. using templates, changing the background, etc.

However, when looking at visual arts, we cannot only describe what we see and analyse what we see or interpret. Indeed, some of the authors treated in the next section, go beyond those ideas.

2.4.2.2. What is this image saying about myself?

According to Hernández's (2013) views on approaching teaching practices to visual culture, he states that it is necessary not to see artistic manifestations just as visual artefacts to be described, but instead, it is essential to analyse the relationships and ideas that we create by looking at them, by debating about them or just by simply being influenced by them without giving a second thought to what they do to us as a human beings. Such could be the case of advertising nowadays. For instance, how does advertising affect our perception of abstract concepts such as "having a successful life" or what love should be like or even what a woman or man should look like. It is obvious that for such young learners, the formulation of these questions in such a deep way could be far from their level of understanding, so it must be adapted to what they can reach. However, we could make them wonder about those abstract topics by comparing images or watching videos and then, make them reflect on their own vision, ideas and what they say about themselves. That is why art is such a powerful weapon in our arsenal, since, as previously stated, ambiguity means that interpretations, sensations and visual narratives can vary depending on the person's background.

2.4.2.3. Benefits of using audio-visual materials such as advertising in class

In their paper "Enhancing Student-Centered Learning through usage of Television Commercials via Wiki", Nah, Lim, Mah and Yih (2012), analyse the many benefits found in the use of advertising in the classroom. One of the most relevant ones is that audio-visual materials are tools that can strongly motivate students because they make learning exciting and meaningful, and they also allow the students to be the centre of the learning process. What's more:

Commercials can be in the form of jingles, catch-phrases or catchy dialogues that stays in the audience's mind. They also have a tendency to use phrases which are repetitive and simple. This is an advantage to language learning as it can help develop learners' listening and pronunciation skills. In reality, students do not want to spend hours going over gruelling explanations of grammatical items, mundane pronunciation tables or drillings of vocabulary in a classroom. Therefore, introducing commercials in a lesson can sustain students' interest and arouse curiosity of the new language they are learning thus motivating them to participate in their own learning. (Nah, Lim, Mah and Yih, 2012, p.148).

The document also compares the many benefits that the use of advertising has when compared to the use of films. It highlights that they tell a complete, informative and shorter story. Indeed, Canning-Wilson and Wallace J. (2000) suggest that the videos should not be longer than a minute, therefore, they can be a perfect tool to use at any time of the lesson for a specific purpose such as studying vocabulary, pronunciation, body language, etc.

Finally, other authors such as Salleh and Tan (2006), highly recommend the usage of television advertisings "to help students to gain critical thinking skills and disposition" (p.83).

3. Intervention proposal

Our proposal relates achievable examples of the use of visual content such as art and advertising in the context of an English classroom. The objective is to attain communicative competence while developing critical thinking. As previously discussed, students need to build up their English knowledge while developing critical thinking strategies within their level. That is to say, that even though the theoretical background about how to develop those skills implies a complex process of high order thinking skills, our students need to work on what is achievable for them and build up those strategies in a simpler and developmental way.

This proposal has been designed with the intention of using our students' real context and concerns in a productive way, therefore, the acquisition of communicative strategies, the use of critical thinking and the awareness of the potential use of the visual culture, will bring meaningfulness and reality to the project as well as to their learning process.

The final outcome of the project will be to hold a charity event in which students will communicate in English with other students, show what they have been doing in their English classroom and sell facial masks designed by them. As we are actually struggling with a pandemic, the products that they are going to sell will be in accordance with the actual struggles and necessities that the society has: the daily use of facial masks. If the school is willing to pay for a self-designed mask's invoice from a trustworthy website (an example of a website that sells facial masks is the next one: https://www.laimprentanaranja.com/imprimir-mascarillas-de-tela-personalizadas-de-diferentes-tamanos), the masks should be sold in the event. On the other hand, if they are not on board with the project, students will still hold the English charity event. Instead, they will charge a symbolic entrance of €3 and they will give their self-made masks as a giveaway. They will still communicate in English and show what they have been doing in the English classroom. In both cases, the money raised will be donated to a cause of their choice.

To carry out the project, our students will need first to understand the importance of helping others. To do so, through the use of artistic manifestations, they will analyse an intercultural problem. In this case, an image that depicts Gaza's conflict. As Gaza's conflict is a complicated

matter to discuss in a classroom with sixth graders, the material should be adapted. That is to say, that it must be treated in a sensitive way, using an appropriate tone and not getting into many political issues; they should just know that in Gaza there is and there has been a territorial conflict for a long time. What matters is that our students empathise with the devastation represented in the image, acknowledge that wars and conflicts still exist and realise that in their own country, there are powerless people that do not either have a home or are in need. As this is an example of the many problems that exist in the world, they will then look into their previous knowledge and ideas to find problems that are closer to them and need support.

After that, the students will need to find a cause for their charity event through reflection and democratic election. Once they know which one to support, a process of artistic creation will take place through different approaches. To do so, the students will use templates to decorate the facial masks that they will sell. Then, the school will invoice an order with their designs to the previously indicated [website](#) that prints cloth face mask that are reusable, washable and hygienically certified. Once this is done, they will analyse and then practise a role play as if they were sellers. They will also create a video with a static image and add their voice on top. This video is an online invitation to the event. Finally, the last step of the project will be to hold the charity event following the specific COVID-19 measures stated by the school. Needless to say, the event must be done in English, therefore, reduced groups of students from sixth grade will take turns throughout the day (or the time stipulated by the school) to show what they have done in their English classroom and sell their masks to other small groups of students from the same school (or others if it is possible), thus, the English teacher will be able to control that COVID-19 measurements are respected as well as to evaluate the process and control that customers and sellers use the target language.

3.1. Aims of the proposal

The key competences, general and specific objectives to be achieved with this intervention proposal, have been designed attending to the following legislation:

- Organic Law 8/2013, of December 9th, for the Improvement of Quality in Education. (LOE 2007 modified by LOMCE 2013).

- Law 17/2007, of December 10th, of education in Andalusia.

- Royal Decree 126/2014, of February 28th, by which the basic curriculum for Primary Education is established.

- Decree 97/2015, of March 3rd, through which the teaching and curriculum of Primary Education is established in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia.

- Order of March 17th, 2015, through which the curriculum of Primary Education in Andalusia is developed.

- Order of July 25th, 2008, through which attention to diversity is regulated for basic education in public schools in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia.

3.1.1. Objectives

Subsequently, the general objective of this intervention proposal is: to propose an example of how to develop critical thinking skills in a gradual, holistic and communicative way through the use of visual arts in the EFL classroom with a sixth grade of primary education.

On the other hand, the specific objectives that will lead us to achieve the general objective are:

- To develop communicative competence, putting an especial emphasis on oral reception and production.

- To develop our students' intercultural competence while promoting awareness of immediate and distant social problems.

- To analyse in a critical way several pieces of art, advertising and a short text.

- To imitate artistic and selling strategies to communicate ideas.

- To create their own advertising and artistic manifestation.

3.1.2. Key competences

The Foreign Language area is directly linked to the acquisition of the Linguistic Competence, but, with this proposal, we can also appreciate how it helps to develop other competences in

the Andalusian curriculum. From the 7 key competences, there are some that are worked more than others due to the nature of the activities, however, all of them are worked on a certain extent:

- Linguistic competence (LC): The Foreign Language area helps with the acquisition of this competence, especially if the students use the communicative dimension of the language in different contexts to carry out meaningful tasks (Krashen, 1981) such as explaining what they have done in class or selling products.

- Learning to learn competence (LTL): the proposal includes strategies that students must apply in order to facilitate the understanding or production of the message in spite of their linguistic limitations. That way, the teacher's role is essential to outline these limitations and explicit them. Furthermore, the students will use metacognitive strategies in order to reflect upon their learning process.

- Digital Competence (DC): technological and audio-visual means will be used in the teaching-learning process as a quick and significant tool to gather information, record and visualize their work and work with it. The role of the internet must be emphasized in order to communicate a message. Such is the case of recording a video as if the students were recording an advertising.

- Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship competence (SIE): the students must develop their confidence, motivation and determination. They are encouraged to make decisions, persevere and maintain a positive attitude. What's more, their ideas and decisions will be taken into account.

- Social and Civic Competence (SCC): inherent characteristics of communication facilitate social relationships and favour inclusion and respect, at the same time as they help develop cooperation, solidarity and a critical way of thinking. As the project is focused on holding a charitable event in order to help people, our students will work on this competence throughout different activities during the whole project.

- Cultural Awareness and Expression (CAE): a student must exteriorize ideas through different types of cultural manifestations. In order to develop this dimension, perceptive, communicative, sensibility and aesthetic skills are needed, as well as

imagination and creativity. An example of when students use this competence is when they will develop "the thinkers' wall".

- Mathematical competence and basic competences in Science and Technology (CMST): to develop this competence, activities such as selling products and exchanging money using English will be done.

3.2. Educational context and target group

This proposal has been designed taking into consideration the actual struggles that schools are handling, i.e. the pandemic resulting from the COVID-19. Therefore, we do not need to say that the school's normal development has been affected by the necessary measures that the Spanish government, the Andalusian autonomic community and the school's policy have had to implement in order to secure the community's health and welfare.

A specific measure regarding the school educational context that affects the development of the English lessons is that, in order not to share the common areas, the library, the English room and the computing room have been banned. However, if any resources are needed, the teacher can pick them up and take them to the classroom. Those resources should be sanitized and individually used. For instance, students can only use the tablets at their usual classroom individually.

3.2.1. The school

The State Bilingual School is located in Punta Umbria, a small coastal town belonging to Huelva, Andalusia. As regards to the social, economic, and cultural context of the students, in general terms, the families have an average socio-economic level. Their main source of income is the tourism during Summertime, as well as the construction and fishing sector, however, lately the local economy has been resented due to the pandemic. By and large, there are no structural problems of behaviour and the parents in most cases, attend the parents-teacher meetings.

The school has a nursery and one primary line. Among the usual facilities of the school, there is a computing room with 25 computers and 12 tablets, all of them with restricted access to

Internet. As it is a bilingual school and the students are having more input in English, the average level is high.

3.2.2. The group

This proposal has been designed for 24 students of a 6th grade of Primary Education. By all means, the students already have experience with the teacher's methodology and their average level of English is quite high for their age; they are working in a B1 level (Council of Europe, 2001). This is due to the fact that the sixth graders have received constant English input since nursery and their weekly schedule includes five lessons of EFL and five bilingual lessons of Social and Natural Sciences.

3.2.2.1. Catering for diversity

Regarding their personal traits and learning processes, as in most classrooms, there is diversity among the students' learning cognitive styles, their disruptive behaviour and their personal backgrounds. Most of the students in the group seem quite interested in learning English and are willing to take part in the activities, they also work well in groups and individually. However, there are two students, that when it comes to speaking, they are shier than the rest and feel anxiety when all of their peers are paying attention to them. When working in groups, those students should be carefully placed with those that they feel comfortable with, and when it comes to addressing them as a whole class, the teacher should not make them the centre of attention. Comments and feedback should be given when the rest of the class is doing something else. On the other hand, as praising them seems to build up their confidence, there is no problem in doing so in front of everyone.

As for the rest of the class, different activities will be carried out to work their predominant type of intelligence (Gardner, 1983) and therefore, motivate them. On the same page, activities will be carried out keeping in mind their opinions and interests (such is the case of the selection of the charitable cause among other activities). For instance, our students love to feel involved with their reality; they like to go home and show to their parents how much they know about social and real struggles.

Finally, even though the temporalization of the activities has been stipulated in the next section, the time of an activity should be extended if they need more time to finish it or if the teacher discovers that they can benefit from doing it for a longer time. Such could be the case of debating or role plays. Besides, the teacher should scaffold activities if there is a need for mediation for any student or, if on the contrary, a student needs to extend his or her knowledge, extension activities should be provided (e.g. to provide them with more vocabulary exercises such as finding synonyms or antonyms, etc.).

3.3. Timing

As the 6th grade of the bilingual school has got 5 lessons per week, the project will be done in two weeks and a half. To be more specific, in 11 lessons of 60 minutes each as well as the day of the event. However, there should be flexibility, especially in certain reflective and productive activities, that is to say, the teacher should consider if there is a need to use another lesson to finish, for instance, the recording of the video, or instead, if the teacher sees that students are highly motivated in an activity that would take 10 minutes, this activity should be extended due to the students' interest and benefit.

The charitable event is planned to be celebrated on the week previous to Saturday 20th March 2020 because, as the UN stated in 2012, this is the International Day of Happiness. On this day, the school should promote values such as the promotion of equality, love to others and love to oneself, therefore, to hold the event on this day it is the perfect excuse. However, if it is not possible, the date can be changed. Considering that, the first lesson should take place at the end of February or beginning of March. This date must be flexible because after designing the masks, we will need time to do the invoice, wait for the shop to make them, wait for the package to arrive in good conditions and finally, to organise the event (to see how many people are going to attend, how many people can be in the same open place together, which time slot have they got to be there, etc.).

3.4. Methodology of the proposal

Our proposal will be carried out bearing in mind some of the previously mentioned methodologies and approaches. For instance, following the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001),

the intention is to offer activities that promote communication and are of the students' interests. Furthermore, the context in which they live would be as well reflected. The linguistic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing would be worked in a holistic and natural way (Krashen, 1981) alongside visual arts. In this case, they will work on analysing a few images and the artists' intention and, afterwards, following Hernández (2013), they will reflect on what one of those images tells them about themselves, about their reality. Related as well to visual arts, as analysing advertising is a more complex activity, they will start to build up their knowledge about it gradually, therefore, in this project they will look at its characteristics and try to use them in a practical way i.e. by doing role plays, creating an invitation with Canva and recording their voice as if they were selling. Regarding other measures, in the next section they will be specified and concreted.

3.5. Sessions and activities

The project is divided into two parts, the first is composed by 5 lessons. This part is devoted to understanding the context and its purpose as well as to getting into the right mindset and sensitivity to choose the topic of the charitable event. Therefore, in this part images to promote critical thinking skills are proposed. On the other hand, in the second part, composed by 6 lessons and the event, students are going to look at basic selling intentions from advertising in order to analyse them and start to use them in different activities.

3.5.1. First part of the project: we are thinkers

In order to get into the right mindset to develop our high order thinking skills and to get to decide which charitable organization they are going to support with their event, students are going to do this first part of the project named "We are thinkers". It would take them 5 lessons. Following Crawford, Saul, Mathews and Makinster's (2005) phases for working critical thinking, the sessions have been divided into 3 phases:

1. An introduction where first, students will know what the project is about. The purpose must be clear for them. Then, the students' curiosity and interest must be raised towards the project. They must be hooked, for that, they will be given a Freire's quote (1997) that was used by Banksy in Gaza: "Washing one's hands of the conflict between

the powerful and powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral" (2014). This will be done in order to promote reflection (open-ended questions). Then, useful and key vocabulary should be worked on.

2. Building-up their knowledge progressively. As the intention is that they will be looking at "Rodin-riffing" (2014), Banksy's work in Gaza, they will start by looking and thinking critically about Rodin's piece of art: "The Thinker" (1904). They should relate these reflections with the initial quote from the introductory phase. After that, they will look into who Banksy is and then, into that specific work in

Figure 2. The Thinker, Rodin. Source: https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_pens ador **Retrieved the 09 of November of 2020**

Gaza. This phase will be essential in order to work on visual art in a deep manner, therefore, as previously mentioned in the methodology, once they have talked about the artist and reflected upon his work and intentions, they will relate what they know to their own reality and ideas (Hernandez, 2013). To express that comparison, they will use a cardboard.
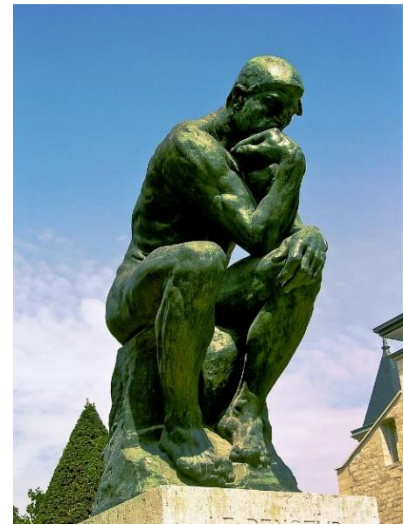

Figure 3. A Rodin-riffing (2014), work from Banksy amid devastation in Gaza. Source: banksy.co.uk Retrieved the 09 of November of 2020

3. Consolidation stage where they will share what they have done on their cardboards with the rest of the class and feedback will be given. Finally, they will use what they have done and learned in order to create a "thinking wall" in which they will depict issues that worries them.

As it can be seen, this is an explicative overview of the first part. More specific measures are going to be described below.

3.5.1.1. First part. Description of the lessons.

First phase: getting into context.

First of all, the project must be clearly explained. The students need to know that they are going to hold a charity event at the end of the project. They must know (if the school gives its approval) that in that event, they will sell their self-designed facial masks and also show and explain to other students (in English) what they have done during the project. What is really important, is that they feel involved. To do so, the teacher should tell them that they will be the ones to decide which is the social cause that they will be supporting and donating the incomes of the event. That is why, some reflective activities will as well take place during the project.

Table 1. First part. Phase 1. Activity 1: Attracting the student's interest

Activity 1. Attracting the students' interest	
Length	15 minutes or more if necessary.
Content	• Vocabulary as powerless, powerful or neutral. • Meaning of using the expression "washing one's hand". • Reflecting about the author's intention.
Objectives	• To awake students' interest and curiosity about the reason behind using the quote. • To promote self-reflection about their own actions.

	• To imagine a context where the quote could be used. • To do an initial evaluation on students inferring and reflective skills.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in rows. The teacher will be in the centre writing ideas in the flipchart paper as well as walking around the classroom to clarify doubts and address the students.
Resources	Flipchart papers (or cardboards if they do not have any) and markers.
Learning outcomes	The students will be able to understand the meaning of the quote, express their opinions and listen respectfully to each other.

Source: own elaboration

To focus the students' attention on the topic and get their attention, the teacher will start the activity by telling them that they are going to have a few clues about what they are going to work with. The first one is: the teacher will write a Banksy's quote (one that has been adapted from Paulo Freire, 1997) on a flipchart paper and will note down the students' ideas about it. The quote that will be written in the centre of the paper in a cloud-shape is "Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral" (Banksy, 2014). The quote should be given without further contextual facts so students can imagine its possible context and the teacher will promote willingness for discovery and curiosity.

Questions, first in pairs and then as a whole class will be asked in order to promote reflection, critical literacy and understanding. Questions such as "what does 'washing one's hand' mean?", "which do you think is the author's intention by saying this?", "why would someone say this?", or "in which situations can someone say this?". This way, students will start to think critically as a writer, imagining different situations and their possible outcomes. Then, this flipchart paper will be hung in the classroom for future references.

Table 2. First part. Phase 1. Activity 2: Working on key vocabulary

Activity 2: Working on key vocabulary	
Length	30 minutes.
Content	• Key vocabulary for further understanding such as thinker, devastation, sculpture, debris, conflict, stencil and despair.
Objectives	• To hypothesize about what the reflective topic could be about by looking at the vocabulary. • To work and discuss in groups of 4 and then share ideas in pairs. • To use the key vocabulary in meaningful sentences.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in groups of 4 and then working in pairs. The teacher will be going around tables to check that students are on task or if they need help.
Resources	Flipchart papers (or cardboards if they do not have any).
Learning outcomes	Students will be able to come up with ideas about what the reflective topic is about and use key vocabulary in meaningful sentences.

Source: own elaboration

As seen in table 2, students will work on key vocabulary. The teacher will tell them that those words are, again, clues about what the topic that will be analysed will be about. Therefore, in groups of 4, using a flipchart paper for each group, the students will match pictures with their related vocabulary word. After that, they will correct it all together while the teacher repeats the activity along on the board. As a resource for future references, one of the students' work with the vocabulary and the pictures will be hung in the class. Once this is done, in pairs, they will write down meaningful sentences in which the use of those words will make sense (students need to prove that they know the meaning). E.g. a sculpture could be made out of stone or clay. After that, sentences should be corrected out loud. To finish the class and leave the students thinking about the topic, the teacher should ask them again what the topic could

be about (to infer answers, it could be useful to point at both flipchart papers while questioning so students can use the vocabulary aloud).

<u>Second phase: Building-up their knowledge progressively.</u>

Table 3. First part. Phase 2. Activity 1: The original thinker

	Activity 1: The original thinker
Length	15 to 20 minutes.
Content	• Vocabulary as some descriptive adjectives, or words as semblance, posture, concern, etc. • Who Rodin was and data about his art; "The Thinker" (1904) and "The Gates of Hell" (1880–1917). • Reflecting about the author's intention.
Objectives	• To look for information on the internet. • To reflect upon the author's intentions. • To express their opinion in a written and oral way. • To work in pairs collaboratively.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in pairs in rows, working with a tablet. The teacher will be going around the tables checking that they are still on track or if they need any help.
Resources	One tablet for two students to look for information a worksheet with the questions. Bank of descriptive adjectives.
Learning outcomes	Students will be able to identify the outline of Rodin's Thinker as well as tell some of its characteristics (what is made of, what is it doing).

Source: own elaboration

To start commenting on a piece of art, the students will look at an image of "The Thinker" (Rodin, 1904). Next to the image, a few facts about the piece of art will be included as well as a little bit of background information about the artist. Once a brief explanation has been given, in pairs, they will fill in a worksheet in which they will have first to look for specific information about the sculpture and Rodin (no more than 4 factual questions) and then, they will answer reflective questions about it. An example of those questions from the worksheet could be:

- Factual questions could be: "when was this sculpture made?", "what is the sculpture made of?", "what is the connection between the sculpture 'The Gates of Hell' and 'The Thinker'?"

- Reflective questions could be: "what is the person represented doing?", "which could be his feelings and thoughts?", "use adjectives to describe his semblance", "what do you think about the sculpture body language?", "when you are profoundly thinking about something, is that the posture you used to have?", etc.

To attend diversity, a vocabulary bank of descriptive adjectives that they have already worked with, will be given in order to help them to answer the questions. Besides, the students will be allowed to use WordReference to look for words and expressions.

After that, they will discuss and share their answers as a whole class. While doing so, the teacher should note down key and new vocabulary so that the students can refer to it in future activities.

Table 4. First part. Phase 2. Activity 2: Who is Banksy?

Activity 2: Who is Banksy?

Length	10 to 15 minutes.
Content	• Discover who Banksy is and some of his pieces of art. • Vocabulary regarding Banksy's art.

Objectives	• To awake students' curiosity and motivation towards who Banksy is and his work. • To relate previous learning with this session. • To analyse the intention of the author and his actions.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in rows. The teacher will be in the centre ang going around tables to address students.
Resources	A short video: *Who is Banksy?* (YouTube, 2018)
Learning outcomes	The students will be able to discuss about who Banksy is and his art.

Source: own elaboration

In the second activity, the teacher will tell them that they are going to analyse, reflect and criticise another piece of art of a very special artist (students are welcome to consider if they consider it as "art" or not). Afterwards, the short video will be played. The video can be watched several times to pause it and read what it says. While watching and commenting on it, the teacher should note down key words on the board in order to promote debate (e.g. mystery, provoking, graffiti, unknown, vandalism, etc.). The intention is not to analyse the video; it is just to awake the students' curiosity and to understand the main idea.

After that, the teacher will briefly remark on the common knowledge about Banksy's identity and work. The conversation should lead to open questions such as "why does he do that?", "why does he want to be unknown?" or "is it vandalism or art?", furthermore, the teacher can relate the previous discussion with the topic; "which people could think that this is vandalism; powerful or powerless people?".

It is of crucial importance that the students get involved in the activity. Their thoughts and opinions should be respected and listened to. Once curiosity is in its climax and they have related the previous clues with what they are doing, the next activity should be introduced.

**Table 5. First part. Phase 2. Activity 3. Looking at Banksy's art**

Activity 3: Looking at Banksy's art	
Length	25 minutes of the rest of lesson and another lesson of 60 minutes.
Content	• Banksy's "Rodin-riffing" (2014). • Getting to know that there is a conflict in Gaza (explanation adapted to their age). • Discover where Gaza is. • Vocabulary: expression "being in my shoes".
Objectives	• To analyse the artist's intentions and reasons behind doing the graffiti. • To promote awareness about an intercultural problem. • To develop empathy towards other's suffering. • To reflect about their reality and compare it with the one in Gaza. • To awake their curiosity about problems of their immediate surroundings. • To creatively make their cardboard. • To relate previous knowledge with new one.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in rows, in pairs. The teacher will be going around the tables to check that they are on track.
Resources	Large cardboards, printed images of Banksy's Thinker and colouring tools. Tablets to look for words
Learning outcomes	The students will be able to tell Banksy's intention by placing "the Thinker" in such place, also, they will be able to compare their reality with imaginary children from Gaza.

Source: own elaboration

The teacher should present the image by talking about the intercultural content. An example could be to start by saying: "this is in Gaza, Palestine (to point where it is in a map). Banksy travelled there and did what you see among other graffities around the devastated zone. This is where children like you live nowadays".

Now, the teacher must listen to the students' questions and answer them. As previously indicated, details about this conflict must be carefully and appropriately treated and, of course, dealt with within their scope of knowledge. Therefore, the teacher will control the sensitive information that they can access. Here is when students will start to explore the intercultural problem and its possible social effects. First, questions as a whole class will be made regarding the composition. Students have indeed analyzed Rodin's Thinker, however, how does the context change the whole message? The teacher should make sure that students think about the artist's intentions. E.g. "why a Rodin's Thinker?", "why in that specific place from Gaza?", "what is it saying to you without words?", "think about Freire's quote, is Banksy a neutral person?", etc. Once the students have been set into that mindset, in pairs, they will use a large cardboard and stick the image of Banksy's Thinker in it. Then, in a spider web shape, they will make a comparison between their life and the imaginary life of children in Gaza. They will use drawings, words and brief descriptions. To do so, the teacher will use the students' answers and ideas on the board to model a possible answer and design.

Figure 4. Example of modelling their ideas on the board. Source: own elaboration

43
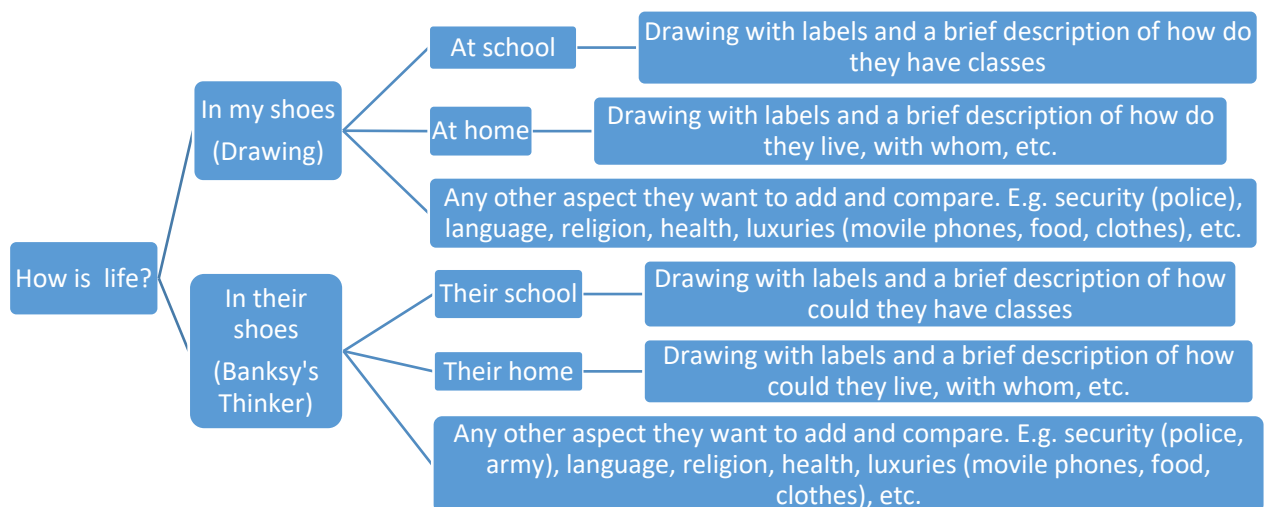
The teacher should monitor that they are on task, correct written mistakes, provide students with tablets to look up interesting words, help them with their ideas by questioning them and guiding them in the process, etc. It should be clear that there are no right or wrong answers because they are reflecting and noting down their ideas and thoughts. Thus, possible anxiety about the quality of drawings or "not knowing what to do" should be extinguished (while modeling, the teacher can draw badly on purpose on the board and say that there is no problem if they do not know how to draw. They need to try).

In the third session, while they are finishing the cardboard, the students will have homework: to ask their families after worrying issues of their culture. Those issues should indeed worry them. They need to bring images (or send them to the teacher if they cannot print them) that represents those issues (e.g. rubbish thrown by the beach, a homeless person from Spain begging for money, an immigrant selling objects on the streets, animals stuck in plastic, mobile addiction, etc.). The more images and worrying issues the better.

Third phase: Consolidation stage.

Table 6. First part. Phase 3. Activity 1: This is what we have done

Activity 1: This is what we have done	
Length	A lesson of 60 minutes or more if necessary.
Content	• To express themselves by showing what they have done. • To use body language and their cardboards to communicate.
Objectives	• To explain what they have done. • To work in pairs. • To give feedback and appreciate their peers' work. • To reflect about their learning process.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in pairs in a row. The teacher will be at the back of the class to listen to the students and take notes.

Resources	Evaluation rubric of the exposition and cardboard. Post-its.
Learning outcomes	The students will be able to explain in pairs what they have done in class.

Source: own elaboration

The students will informally show their cardboards in pairs to the class, they do not need to prepare the exhibition so that, it will be a more natural way of communicating. They will explain what they have done and why. They will also read the labels and brief descriptions. Feedback will be given by their peers and then by the teacher. In fact, the teacher will be evaluating their final work and communicative skills in an informal and free-anxiety way. Their cardboards will be used to decorate the classroom. Eventually, they could reflect as a whole class on the activities. What's more, as optional metacognitive and informal assessment of the activities, the students will have the option of sticking post-it into two columns: "What I have enjoyed" and "next time, better if…". The teacher should explain that this is optional, anonymous and that they can write as many opinions as they want in order to get to know their thoughts and feedback for next activities. For the next class, the students should bring the homework from the previous lesson, so the teacher should remind them about it.

Table 7. First part. Phase 3. Activity 2: We are thinkers

Activity 2: We are thinkers	
Length	A lesson of 60 minutes.
Content	• Different social issues that concern the students (homeless, immigrants, animals, etc.). • Using images to express their ideas.
Objectives	• To show their thoughts in an artistic way. • To promote reflection about social problems. • To express themselves as an artist.

Classroom arrangement	Sitting in rows. Later, standing in the school hall, taking turns.
Resources	Wallpaper, pictures of worrying issues (homework and extra ones), glue sticks, stencil templates of Thinkers, graffiti cans (or paint and brushes).
Learning outcomes	The students will be able to explain what the picture that they are sticking on the wallpaper represents.

Source: own elaboration

Imitating Banksy, students are going to decorate a wallpaper (The thinking wall) in the school hall with their pictures about worrying issues brought from home. Just in case, the teacher should print extra ones. Under the title (previously drawn by the teacher) in big capital letters at the top "WE ARE THINKERS", the students will stick their worrying issues on the blank wallpaper. Alongside those pictures, they are going to use stencil templates of Thinkers (look at figure 5 for examples) and colour (the inside) next to their pictures (if the school allows them to use graffiti cans it would be better, however, they could use normal paint and brushes).

This activity will be very useful to generate ideas for future lessons about cultural and social issues that worry them. They are indirectly showing their interest and what they know or what they want to know more about. Doing so, the students are using, as well, what they have learnt in order not to be passive about what worries them and to act like Banksy. They will be expressing without words (like an artist) what bothers them. Therefore, following Janks (2014a), this is a redesign of what they have learnt in which they express their point of view and make connections with their previous knowledge.

Figure 5. Examples of thinkers. Clipart Library (2016-2019). Source:: http://clipart-library.com/free/thinker-silhouette.html

3.5.2. Second part: we make a change

This second part of the project is composed of 6 lessons beside the charity event. It is divided into 4 main activities. In the first one, the students will have to decide which charitable cause they are supporting, for that, the teacher will use their worrying social issues from "The thinking wall" and relate them with actual charities. In the second activity, they will design their masks and the school will do the online invoice. After that, the third activity will take place. In this part, students will make a video that includes an image designed by them in which they invite people to the International Day of Happiness, and, on top of that image, they will record their voices talking to the audience as if it were an advertising. To do so, they must follow certain steps:

1. To watch an example of advertising and analyse it critically in order to identify basic structures.
2. After that, to practise those selling strategies that they have seen.
3. Then, to create the invitation, write a brief script for their advert and, finally record it (groups of 3 or 4).
4. Finally, to reflect upon their own videos and to practise basic selling dialogues for the coming event.

While waiting for the day of the event, the videos can be sent (with consent of the parents) to other schools from Punta Umbria in order to invite them and count how many people will attend. That way, the event can be timely organised.

3.5.2.1. Second part. Description of the lessons.

First phase:

Table 8. Second part. Activity 1: Making a change

Activity 1: Making a change	
Length	A lesson of 60 minutes.

Content	• Getting to know charities of their immediate surrounding and international ones. • Summarising ideas.
Objectives	• To look for relevant information. • To select the charity to support democratically. • To argue reasons to choose one charity or another. • To promote reflection about social problems.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in pairs. The teacher should go around tables to monitor the students.
Resources	Names of the charities with the hyperlinks, tablets or computers.
Learning outcomes	Students will be able to select a charity and argue why they have chosen that one.

Source: own elaboration

First of all, the teacher should have a list of possible charities that could be benefited from the money. These charities should be mostly local, but we can also include international ones. Then, in pairs and using tablets or computers, the students will have 30 minutes to click on the hyperlinks, look for information and make a brief description of the charities that the teacher shows. After that, they will put their answers in common and match together the charities with their worrying issues from "the thinking wall".

Figure 6. Example of how the activity could be presented. Source: own elaboration having in mind information from those websites

ONGs or charities	Description	Causes. The thinking wall
Cruz Roja Española: https://www2.cruzroja.es/	*National organization. It helps with food, blankets, etc.*	- Environment
Cáritas: https://www.caritashuelva.org/	*Religious and local. It helps local families.*	- Animal abandonment
ACNUR: https://www.unhcr.org/	*International. It helps refugees.*	- Homeless or local people in need
WWF Adena: https://www.wwf.es/?5640/	*International. It protects nature and the environment.*	- Diseases
Puntanimals: https://www.puntanimals.org/	*Voluntary local shelter for dogs.*	- Wars
AECC: https://www.aecc.es/es	*Cancer research.*	- Poverty in underdeveloped countries
		- Immigrants

Then, the students will indicate and justify the social cause they like the most. They can even try to convince each other by giving arguments. Finally, they will all vote for their favourite cause.

Second Phase:

Table 9. Second part. Activity 2: Designing our masks

Activity 2: Designing our masks	
Length	A lesson of 60 minutes.
Content	• How to design a facial mask.

Objectives	• To use their artistic skills to design their masks.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in rows. The teacher should go around tables to monitor the students.
Resources	Templates from the website (see annex 1).
Learning outcomes	Students will be able to design their mask.

Source: own elaboration

As indicated in table 9, the students will design and decorate individually their own masks. For that, the teacher will use the template provided by the website "la imprenta naranja", so measurements are precise (see Annex 1). Once they finish, the designs will be scanned in order to be sent and the invoice made. For the invoice, from the two types of masks the basic type is the most economical; 25 masks will cost €112.50, whereas 50 will cost €150 (two designs for each student). The final price of the masks will be decided by the school.

As indicated previously, if the school is not willing to pay for it, students will design and make their symbolic cardboard masks and give it as a giveaway at the entrance of the event. The entrance of event will then cost €3.

Third Phase:

Table 10. Second part. Activity 3: Analysing and making our advertisings

Activity 3: Analysing and making our advertisings	
Length	3 lessons of 60 minutes.
Content	• Basic structure of advertisings and invitations to events. • How to use Canva or PowerPoint as well as Apowersoft.

Objectives	• To reflect and analyse a video, possible selling strategies and its characteristics.
	• To write, practise and record their written script for the advertising.
	• To practise selling strategies.
	• To use ICT and their artistic skills to design their invitations.
	• To work in group cooperatively.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in groups of 3 or 4. Students can also use the playground to record their voices far from each other. The teacher should monitor and guide them.
Resources	Advertisement to watch and analyse, example of invitation to an event, tablets with the Apps Canva (or PowerPoint) and Apowersoft.
Learning outcomes	Students will be able to identify basic selling structures, create an image and record their voices using those strategies.

Source: own elaboration

First phase: learning how to sell. (1 lesson).

In this activity, the students will watch an advertisement and analyse its most basic components and some strategies to sell; the target audience, how to address the consumer, using emotions, attractive images, etc. For instance, in "Always #LikeAGirl" (2014). The students will start by deconstructing a stereotype of what doing something "like a girl" means because in the advertisement, they ask young women to run like a girl, hit like a girl and so on. What those young women do, is to run or fight in a vexing way. Later on, they ask young girls the same questions and they just try their best when doing those actions. Apart from analysing the video by talking about its content, its language, its implied social biases and so on, what the teacher could do once they have reflected on these issues, is to ask students what that video tells them about how they perceive what doing something like a girl is. The students could be encouraged to talk about their previous experiences, opinions or misconceptions.

This way, as Hernandez (2013) suggests, an audio-visual material "is talking to them" about themselves. Afterwards, they will note down the strategies used to catch the viewers' attention (the use of emotion, attractive images, addressing the viewer or not, etc.). Indeed, the teacher should try to make the students say the answer and note down those strategies for later practise. Finally, the students will do a role play where they will use those selling strategies in groups of 3 by picking up an object and improvising how to sell.

Second phase: creating an invitation for the International Day of Happiness. (2 lessons)

The students will create in groups of 3 or 4, an invitation for the event using their tablet, and then, they will record their voice on top in order to invite people. To create that image, they could use Canva or PowerPoint, depending on how comfortable they feel using any of them (see annex 2 for an example). Once they have finished, they will write a script of what they would like to say in order to invite people as if it were an advertising. To do it, they will use the App Apowersoft, which is free and available for computers and tablets. This software allows the users to easily record their voices on top of the screen, therefore, it is perfect for orally inviting people to their event.

Those videos can be sent to invite the audience, also, the invitations can be printed to decorate the school's hall.

Table 11. Second part. Activity 4: The International Happiness Day. Our charity event

Activity 4: The International Happiness Day. Our charity event	
Length	1 lesson to practise and a day for the event.
Content	• Basic selling strategies, body language, polite speech, etc. • Thinking about how to adapt their linguistic skills to those guests that have not got the same level of English.
Objectives	• To get ready for the event. • To communicatively use what they have learnt and practise. • To work in group cooperatively.

	• To sell their masks.
	• To maintain a conversation if possible: to show other students what they have done and ask them for their opinion.
Classroom arrangement	Sitting in groups of 3 or 4. Students can also use the playground to record their voices far from each other. The teacher should monitor and guide them.
Resources	The necessary ones to organise the event: tables, chairs, boxes, masks, etc.
Learning outcomes	Students will be able to communicate using English and paralinguistic strategies.

Source: own elaboration

As it can be seen on table 11, the students will devote a session to get ready for the event. Depending on the school's space that they will use for the event, for instance, the lunchroom or the playground. Then, they need to prepare the stands: decoration, boxes to keep the money, where and how to note down what they have sold, where to put their thinking wall and English projects, etc. What's more, the teacher could use prompts for dialogues to prepare them to sell their masks using grammar as "how much does it cost…", etc. In order to prepare them for learners with low level of English, they must use body language to express themselves (e.g. to show 6 fingers when saying that the price is €6).

Once this is done, it should be clear that students will have rotations turns to go to the stand and attend "customers" during the event. Sixth graders will do this in groups of 3 or 4 and always accompanied by the English teacher, who should be evaluating them by observing them and, indeed, just try to be a mere spectator during the event.

3.6. Assessment

3.6.1. Learning assessment

Having in mind the objectives of this intervention proposal, it is necessary to assess if, in case that this proposal would take place in the school at some point, the proposed activities would

successfully help to develop critical thinking skills in a gradual, holistic and communicative way through the use of visual arts in the EFL classroom. Therefore, the activities should show evidence of having a special emphasis on developing our students' communicative competence, social and intercultural awareness as well as using some of the analysed and reflected features of the visual arts (e.g. recreating Banksy's Thinker on their own way or using basic marketing strategies in their speech, invitation or narrative video).

Taking our sixth graders personal characteristics as well as their B1 level of English (Council of Europe, 2001) into consideration, they should be evaluated having in mind the Order of March 17th of 2015. This order indicates that, in this case, the project, must be evaluated considering the assessment criteria for the third cycle of primary education. In other words, the evaluation criteria, established by the Andalusian legislation, are the standards of reference upon which the degree of achievement of educational objectives are measured. They allow for the appreciation of the type and degree of acquisition and learning of objectives, and they are the fundamental reference in order to assess the achievement of the key competences.

Specifically, this suggested project can be evaluated depending on the moment in which the evaluation takes place.

- The initial or diagnostic evaluation takes places at the beginning of every important activity in different ways (bell ringers, brainstorming, etc.) and with different tools. To exemplify it, in the first lesson of the project, the teacher will try to get to know their previous knowledge by using a quote and asking them questions, whereas in other activities, such as the second one, when vocabulary is worked, through informal questions, observation and doing the activity, this evaluation can take place because the students will match the vocabulary that they already know.

- Continuous or formative evaluation: this evaluation is essential in order to address possible problems that may arise during the development of the lessons and provide the necessary scaffolding or extra activities that students might need, and the teacher have not foreseeing. Furthermore, the teacher needs to constantly pay attention to the learning process through different tools such as observation, a rubric (see the annex 3), a class diary, their tasks, metacognitive tools such as the European Portfolio

of Languages (Council of Europe, 2001), etc. Besides, to evaluate the liking an effectiveness of parts of the project in order to improve in future practices, among other activities, reflective or the post-it activity can be done.

- Final evaluation: the students, the project and the teacher's performance can be evaluated by looking at the whole picture (including continuous evaluation and its tools). However, the final results are also important. For instance, there are activities done by the students which are more important because they consolidate their learning process. Such activities are the final video that includes the invitation and the record spoken part (see annex 3 for the rubric), the cardboard with their reflections and comparisons with imaginary children from Gaza or even if the design of the masks were finished or not. To do so, students should have reached the learning outcomes. Regarding the final evaluation of the teacher's performance, the final results of the students will directly give feedback to the teachers' performance, that is to say, that if most of students fail or seem unhappy, the performance has been negative, whereas on the contrary, the performance would have been a success.

Finally, it is important to mention that metacognitive ways of assessment should take place through the process of implementation of the proposal. Consequently, activities that give students time to think about their own learning process and to evaluate each other in order to learn from one another, should take place as well. There are many ways to do so, for instance, in the proposal, they are giving peer feedback when they are showing and explaining their cardboards to the whole class.

3.6.2. Assessment of the proposal

In order to evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of this intervention proposal, it would be necessary to carry it out in the school and evaluate the results so that, necessary changes and improvements could take place. Unfortunately, as the proposal has not been carried out yet, it cannot be assessed effectively. However, it can be foreseen that the results might be positive due to the adaptations to the students' level, personal characteristics, likelihood of the topics and high level of sensitivity when doing the activities, specially the one about Banksy's art in Gaza.

A possible drawback might be that if another teacher tries to implement our project in a different context, changes might be necessary, especially in the election of the central topic of the images and some of the features that has been suggested. At the same time, this is something positive because even if those students are not interested in that topic or if the topic is too complicated for their cognitive or linguistic level, our adapted way of working critical thinking skills through visual and audio-visual materials could be implemented in many different themes and ways; the most important matter to have in mind is the process. When developing critical thinking and deconstructing visual arts, students need guidance that is truly adapted to what they are capable to do and to understand.

To sum up, as this proposal intends to have a student-centre approach in which the students participate actively, their interests are taken into consideration and it uses a communicative angle, it could be foreseen that it might, indeed, be a success when it comes to start developing a different way of looking at visual arts and making our students think beyond what they see.

4. Discussion

When deciding on the topic of the Master's Dissertation, we had only a few notions about how to start to implement critical thinking skills in the English classroom, especially in primary education because the students' maturity (due to their age) was considered to be a challenge. On the other hand, from personal experiences, we had the feeling that visual arts were the perfect tool to start reflective conversations with the students. With our intervention proposal, we have tried to implement some of the methodological approaches indicated by remarkable authors that have pointed out ways of starting to work on critical thinking skills. At the same time, considerations related to effective and meaningful ways of looking at artistic manifestations have been considered as well. Doing this, having in mind as well that the way we want our students to acquire linguistic competence was through communicative activities was, indeed, a hard project to do.

Nevertheless, now that the research and the project have been done, we can assure that our knowledge has improved noticeably, and new horizons of curiosity are knocking at our door. We strongly believe that with our project we could achieve our previously indicated objectives that, at the same time, they could be evaluated not only through the section "learning assessment", but also through observing our students' future behaviour and gradual improvement when looking critically at artistic manifestations.

5. Conclusions

The intervention proposal that we have presented for this Master's Dissertation centres it development around achieving communicative competence in English through using specific teaching tools and strategies, such as visual arts (which includes pieces of art and advertising) and, for sure, the inclusion of critical thinking skills. The main reasons behind this research and intervention proposal are the desire of learning how to link such possible reflective tools with learning acquisition in EFL, as well as learning and offering applicable examples of the use of critical thinking skills in a classroom of primary education (in this case, a sixth grade).

To carry it out, one of our objectives was to analyse the concept of critical thinking and its implications in the EFL education as well as looking at many of the benefits that the inclusion of visual arts can bring to our classroom. We can confirm that the more research was carried out, the more relevant the topic seemed to be for any time of formal education. Most of the researched authors coincide with the idea that motivation drives successful learning. Therefore, the fact of implicating students on their learning by giving them a voice, a chance to express their agreements or disagreements without feeling judged by the quality of their answers, certainly, is what open reflective questions (such as the ones proposed when learning through critical thinking) can achieve: there is no right or wrong answer if they can argue it. This fact can attenuate students' anxiety about their learning process, so that, more participation and implication can be accomplished.

What's more, another of our objectives was to analyse the pedagogical value of visual arts in the English classroom. The conclusion is that the use of images and videos could highly contribute to shaking students' motivation and curiosity due to its highly appealing content for the new generation, as well as bringing practical and real materials to the classroom's context. At the same time, this makes that communication reaches a more real and meaningful level. Indeed, this is the intention when offering the examples in our intervention proposal. For instance, with our project, through the use of art as a teaching tool, students reflect about a distant country problem, a concern that seems to be detached from their

reality, however, they finally project it into their own problems, so we could achieve that art "talks" to them about themselves.

Another reason to argue that indeed, we have achieved our objective of highlighting and analysing the pedagogical importance of including visual arts in the EFL classroom is the following one: it is no secret that when studying a language, the culture in which that language is spoken comes along, that is to say that language and culture are concepts that should not be studied in isolation or separated from each other. When teaching English, we face the challenge that this language is not just spoken by a minority, it is indeed a lingua franca that includes and touches many cultures around the globe. On the other hand, as visual arts are a remarkable tool used to represent many cultural aspects of a multitude of cultures, we can certainly imply that visual arts are a powerful tool that facilitates English meaningful acquisition. In other words, there is a correspondence between English and visual arts because both are global languages: one is spoken and the other is visual.

Finally, specifying that our focus group are sixth graders is not an accidental fact. As it can be seen throughout the proposal, waiting for students to grow up and mature in order to start teaching them to think reflectively could be a dangerous mistake. It is a well-known fact that we are creatures of habits, therefore, if our students acquire the habit of questioning what they see, of looking for answers behind from what they consider as normality, we would have potential critical thinkers as students. For sure, it is naïve to believe that young children can argue with an average adult's maturity, nonetheless, we can teach them to start thinking reflectively within their possibilities and scope of knowledge. For that, we need to use what they know, what they want to know and what they are actually capable of reflect upon. If we achieve this arduous task, our students could start the process of seeing through manipulative behaviour of some people and their little concern about others' welfare. Such is the case of advertising, that is indeed very present in our society and does not always look for the greater good. Obviously, students are not aware of this process but if we teach them in a meaningful way, like when using images or advertising in their benefit, they will implicitly learn from it.

This process cannot take place without the teacher's clear notion that all voices must be respected and listened. For sure, students are entitled of maybe feeling offended or not agree

with something, however, if their empathy is worked appropriately, they could start to feel less uncomfortable by others' opinions because they are also entitled to have it and express it respectfully. In fact, this is indeed what a democratic society needs: free and respectful thinkers.

6. Limitations and further research

This proposal has its limitations, especially because it has not been implemented yet in a school and therefore, its success cannot be evaluated in a real context. It could be interesting if, at some point, this proposal got implemented with its appropriate adaptations to the students' needs and context. Another limitation could be that the school might not be willing to pay for the event, however, this has been foreseeing and there could be other alternatives to maintain the final activity of the proposal.

Another limitation is the age group. The drawback of selecting sixth graders is that activities cannot be too complex, meaning that critical thinking skills should not be expected to be developed in depth, therefore, students will just scratch the surface of what could be done when using visual arts and critical thinking. Besides, that is also something positive because learning must be adapted to their needs, and, at that age, students need to build up their reflective skills within their scope of knowledge.

Regarding further research, as a teacher, doing this proposal has been highly beneficial for my own development as a professional. As many other colleagues such as the ones previously named, I did not feel that my training in developing my students' critical thinking had been enough, nor had been my training in deconstructing visual arts. Therefore, one of the clearer conclusions that I have come to reflect upon is that, a part from the fact that there is not enough training in the teaching programmes regarding those matters, there are not enough studies on how to develop critical thinking skills through the use of visual arts in EFL. There are many authors that have studied the relationship between art and critical thinking, yet, it had been difficult to find evidences that combine all three factors. For this reason, this would be a perfect topic for further research. For instance, case studies could be done showing students' outcomes in their learning processes, metacognitive and reflective skills when having two groups to compare: those who have been taught English through the use of visual arts in order to promote critical thinking skills, against those students who have had a different methodology.

On the other hand, further research can be done into which are the reasons behind why there are teachers that feel so insecure when including visual arts and critical thinking in their teaching practices. If its correct use in the classroom could be beneficial because it intrinsically motivates students, it allows to use a learner-centre approach and, in short, it helps students to face an image-bombarded reality in which we live nowadays, why do we not incorporate it more often in our teaching practices?, why, universally speaking, universities do not go deeper into this matter? Of course, I can only speak from my personal experience; none of the four universities from three different countries that I have had training in, have included a deep instruction into this matter, they have only touched the surface of what we could do as teachers. Therefore, we, teachers, need more training. I guess that, indeed, that is the paradox: as Socrates stated, "I know that I know nothing".

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Annexes

1. Example of the website's template alongside its measurements.

Source: https://www.laimprentanaranja.com/imprimir-mascarillas-de-tela-personalizadas-de-diferentes-tamanos/
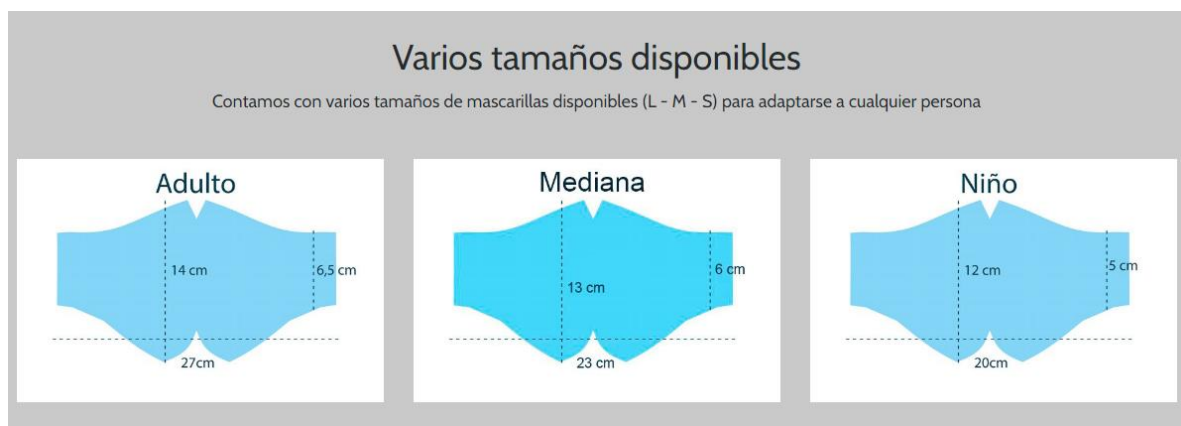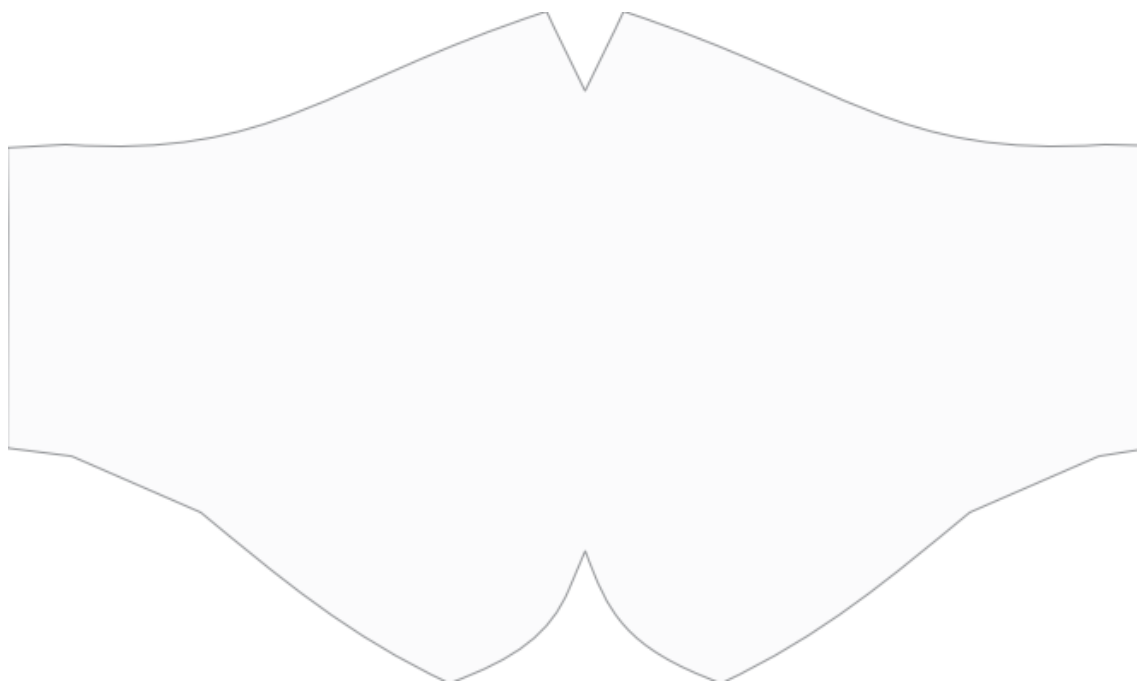
2. Example of invitation.

Source: example of template invitation from Canva (2020). Retrieved from: https://www.canva.com/templates/EADailLM4yw-blue-green-red-music-icons-open-mic-night-flyer/

3. Example of rubric. Second part of the project. Activity 3: analysing and making our advertisings.

The student shows that he or she is able to:	1	2	3	4	5
…reflect and analyse a video, its possible selling strategies and its characteristics					
…practise selling strategies.					
…use ICT and their artistic skills to design their invitations					
…work in group cooperatively in writing, practising and recording their written script for the advertising.					

Source: own elaboration.