

DECONSTRUCTION AND REDESIGN OF LEARNERS' SOCIAL ISSUES AND
PRACTICES OF POWER UNDER A CRITICAL LITERACY APPROACH

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AFFIDAVIT

I, Diego Alberto Piedrahíta Marín, hereby declare that this master's thesis has not been previously presented as a degree requirement, either in the same style or with variations, in this or any other university (Article 92 Advanced Education Student Code, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana)

Diego Piedrahita

To my mom, my angel

*As love goes beyond eternity, may my sacrifice and goals be eternal to reach your
pride as a sample of the moment you ever dreamt of sharing by my side.*

Love, your son.

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I gratefully acknowledge the help provided by those incredible human beings who stirred me up to make this dream come true. First and foremost, thanks to God for being my intimate friend whom I have trusted my biggest fears and wishes, as this one He allowed me to live when I did not believe it possible to. And special thanks to those hardworking, loyal, and humble parents God rewarded me with. Thanks for silently lighting my steps from distance and eternity. Your nobility inspired me to become the person you worked hard to grow. No words to thank the values and discipline you instilled in me to reach this goal and many others that life continues to challenge me to.

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Wherever I find myself teaching English, there will be a human being attempting to contribute to a more just society, since the project described along this paper is just a springboard!

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Abstract

This research project was carried out in a public school in Medellin, (tenth graders ranging 15-17 years old). It explored how teens react to, deconstruct, and reconstruct social issues and practices of power unveiled in physical and virtual scenarios and texts through a critical literacy approach. This qualitative study was conducted in order to provide learners with a critical lens to interpret their own social interactions and life experiences while learning English language.

Class observations in virtual rooms, interviews, and learners' artifacts were used to collect data.

For this study, learners used English language as part of their personal way of expression to talk about social issues. They found in the English classroom a space to promote social justice by deconstructing and reconstructing texts they read using critical literacy perspective, rather than decoding and encoding words. The findings concluded that learners expanded their possibilities to critically unveil social injustices in multimodal texts when reading them from different perspectives. As consequence, learners questioned discourses such as gender inequities, stereotypes, exclusion, male chauvinism, and racism, among others, while connecting them to real-life experiences in order to promote social justice through the media. Most significantly, the study demonstrated that drawing on talents, needs, emotions and expectations favored learners' redesign of texts to reconstruct their identities and promote a more equitable context.

Keywords: literacy, critical literacy, critical media literacy, language as power, multimodal texts

CHAPTER ONE

EXPLORING CRITICAL LITERACY TO TRANSFORM REALITIES

Teaching English in Colombia is not alien to the concept of literacy as simple acts of decoding and encoding words, and comprehend printed alphabetic texts (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Therefore, these literacy practices are reduced to mastering linguistic skills (acts of reading and writing) through classroom practices and teaching resources detached from the needs of the local context and its potential as source of learning. These conventional methodologies contrast with the characteristics and interests of current adolescents and the texts and worlds that they “compose and live every day” (Mora, 2014a, p. 16) in the new “language ecologies” (Mora, 2014b, p. 116). Hence, the school is seen as a scenario to reproduce decontextualized print text content, consume and internalize out-of-date information, shape behaviors, transmit ideologies, foster learning by heart, limit thinking skills and ignore learners’ experiences and expectations. The ultimate goal is to cover the mandate curriculum; in a practical sense it means that, from this traditional perspective, the classroom walls separate learners from the external world, its realities and demands. In this regard, Freire (1998) pointed out “teaching that does not emerge from the experience of learning cannot be learned by anyone” (p. 30).

This disconnection deprives learners of a critical awareness towards the influence of sociocultural interactions in “ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting in the ‘right’ places and at the ‘right’ times with the ‘right’ objects” (Gee, 1999, p. 17) while interacting in physical and multimodal settings; in addition to this, this

conventional teaching-learning process reduces the possibilities to question the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987) to further transformation of their conditions.

As a teacher in permanent concern to create contextualized learning environments that correspond to social demands, I strongly believe in learners' potential to reconstruct realities. I think that students go to school not just to collect information to comply with classroom activities, but to do something with that information out of the classroom. Regarding schools, I agree that these are "places where students can learn to transform society" (Gainer, 2010, p. 372). This transformation is linked with that one that addresses literacy through learning to "read the word and the world" (Freire, 1987). In turn, this change involves the traditional school to transcend and transform its curriculum (Vásquez, 2010) to bring into the classroom the social practices that affect and influence learners; in doing so, the school would become a place where social inclusion is favored (Freire, 1970) rather than a place of oppression and reproduction of inequities and social injustices (Nieto, 2010). However, I consider it necessary to recognize learners' "tiny worlds" and lived experiences in order to connect their realities with pedagogical resources aimed at questioning, challenging, deconstructing (Janks, 2014) and combating injustices (Bacon, 2017).

My concern to adapt content and classrooms practices are, in turn, the result of the exploration of concepts in my Master process regarding literacy, critical literacy and the relationship between language and power in the settings adolescents engage in. The immersion in critical literacy studies in my Master helped me realize that I was developing a passive form of literacy, and consequently I was not considering learners' social issues as

a potential to be deconstructed and redesigned to promote social justice. From this reflection, I decided to observe more deeply and differently how my students interacted in physical and online classes, what they did, felt, talked about, how they reacted, and what their artefacts revealed. A new vision of what being literate means (Vásquez et al., 2019) and new “ways of being in the world” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007, p. 230), from a critical literacy perspective, gave me lights to frame my teaching practices beyond the critical thinking I had been focusing on.

On the other hand, interactions in physical and multimodal sites have become favorable places to understand literacy processes in which adolescents “read the worlds and the texts that [they] compose and live every day” (Mora, 2014a, p. 16). By the same token, Vásquez (2010) includes multimodal texts to expand the spectrum where learners socialize. She refers to Multimedia literacy as tools for “making meaning in the world using combinations of print-based text and music, art, or technologically based text such as websites, videos, or podcasts” (p. 3).

This said, I understand critical literacy as the possibility to question, problematize and transform everyday texts and social interactions that influence learners, where social issues emerge from. To this end, it is necessary to open spaces for critical literacies that stem from learners’ lived experiences and own discourses (Vásquez, 2000). In addition to this, it is equally important to unveil what the power of language entails and hides, whose naturalness and ‘normalcy’ (Funk et al., 2016) are commonly taken for granted. In this regard, the authors show their concern about how ‘normalcy’ “contributes to many layers

of injustice hidden under a metaphorical baseline to which most people become accustomed” (Funk et al., 2016, p. 10).

These “hidden messages” and ‘bits’ asserted as values, gestures, beliefs, actions, interactions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011), integrated in sociocultural practices, go beyond learners’ family, school, and social contexts. According to Janks (2014), the term “text” is conceived as a world, everyday objects, “any issues and topics that capture students’ interest” (Vásquez, 2017, p. 3) which can be written or spoken (Vásquez, 2007). These interactions occur in spaces such as the Internet, magazines, television, music, objects...where meaning is not only made but also produced (Vásquez, 2003; Gee, 1996; Green, 1998; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Therefore, given the easy and fast dissemination, creation, and access to information in different formats, it is essential to raise students’ awareness about the need to read and write critically in order to avoid running “the risk of perpetuating dominant ideologies” (Freitas & McAuley, 2008, as cited in Hushmendi, 2018, p. 52)

PREVIOUS CONCERNS EMERGING FROM THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

At this point of the exploration of concepts, I consider it relevant to provide a clear picture of my school realities, in order for the reader to have an approach to a traditional Colombian public-school context. It is important to consider the existing differences between contexts, but it is also necessary to recognize the sociocultural, economic, and political issues that spread to fields such as schooling.

Grammar translation methods are commonly implemented in English teaching education, as a response to the national demands to ‘train’ learners in linguistic skills to reproduce grammar and vocabulary concepts. In this sense, schools are socially pressed to equip learners with strategies to succeed in internal and external tests. These tests, consequently, determine the extent to which schools are accomplishing their goal of transforming the quality of education in the country.

My English classroom, then, where more than 40 learners meet, has been a place to deal with the struggle to change the concept of English as just grammar, and to attempt to solve real problems coming from learners’ contexts. In this regard, English concepts fall short to offer students the help they require to face their own issues.

These external factors that affect learners’ personal and academic growth comprise socioeconomic difficulties, lack of family accompaniment, exposure to illegal practices and domestic and social violence, among the most evident. However, although these phenomena do not represent a general view of the school community, the influence that these social issues exert over kids and teens deserves a closer attention. Therefore, being exposed to social issues leads to common practices that exclude and marginalize some populations, especially when few or no tools are provided by the school to mitigate through education the negative sociocultural influence. Examples of these kind are seen in situations in which learners are forced to drop school to face specific issues, or ironically, forced to attend the school to avoid them. More contextualized and clearer examples will be shown in further chapters.

With the description abovementioned my intention is not to critique my school context or similar settings; by the contrary, when these realities and their possibilities to be transformed are ignored, a new form of exclusion arises. For this reason, my aim lies on the need to recognize the real problems to be intervened. This, in turn, involves distorting the traditional belief of textbooks as portrayers of the true problems the school community needs to explore.

Textbooks have traditionally been used as teachers' guides to address teaching processes. This practice results in filling learners with information, rather than with critical skills to interpret this information. In addition to this, for the case of my school English textbooks, the information found in them represents foreign contexts that promote an ideal foreign culture to be admired at the expense of our own culture and realities. The effects are seen in Eurocentric views of the world, which do not place learners in their specific context to know how it works and how it can be transformed.

These traditional practices that I have found in similar contexts to my school reveal passive ways of teaching and learning that promote the concept of reproduction as the main goal of the educational field, while the real issues to stem from are ignored. This teaching method, thus, which I also used to implement, responds to both national policies demands or teachers' fear to delve into learners' though social issues. Therefore, as it was briefly described, learners are individuals that urge to be addressed as such (individually), not from standardized views, as I detail below.

LAWS RULING THE ENGLISH TEACHING IN COLOMBIA

After understanding about critical literacy and the language as power, I analyze to what extent addressing standards of competences to English teaching proposed by the Ministry of Education (MEN, 2006) contributes to construct more aware communities facing adverse realities.

With the aim to create a bilingual country, and insert citizens into the global economy, the Colombian government has set different agendas and policies to foster competitiveness through the mastery of English (González, 2010). In fact, the current Common European Framework of References adopted in 2006 was a response to the lack of clear criteria and references to regulate, create and evaluate courses until then. However, as some researchers explain below, the CEFR and standards of competences have not considered the “educational, social, linguistic and economic reality of Colombia” (González, 2010, p. 341).

Researchers such as Bermúdez et al. (2015), Janks (2014), Mora (2014) and Usma (2009) agree that standardizing competences and learners based on a Common European Framework of References (CEFR) generates inequality, stratification, and social exclusion, in addition to silencing local knowledge which entails a detriment to our own culture; additionally, this standardization does not make any connection with learners’ daily life experiences. However, in 2016, the MEN launched the Basic Learning Rights (BLR) as an adaptation of the standards to the national context. These BLR’s and their corresponding textbooks have allowed a greater approach to national realities through featured theme

clusters (modules) that seek to empower students to read, analyze and suggest possibilities for improvement, rather than pontificating the situations they get exposed to.

At this point, it is crucial to recognize texts as portrayers of messages that sometimes transmit personal views of the world. Vasquez (2017) asserted that “since texts are not natural representations of the world, they can be interrogated, deconstructed and analyzed to uncover the view of the world they represent” (p. 117). Additionally, Luke and Freebody (1999) add that texts have an intention since they are written from different vantage points and with specific purposes. Building on these assertions, I gained insights on how to problematize the texts that are considered neutral or natural, where relationship between language and power plays an important role in the process to deconstruct and redesign the texts to create a more just and socially equitable world (Janks, 2010).

From these foundations and conceptions, I explored adapting the BLR’s contents to personal, family, social and school situations, where through teamwork I promoted debates and conversations about common topics that influence and affect learners’ daily lives. To this aim, I encouraged learners to bring the outside world to the classroom, regarding power relations, which turned into possibilities to explore and learn about injustices (Comber, 2011). The products that emerged from reading the influence of the media and the contexts in their ways of thinking and acting (Piedrahíta, 2019) showed linguistic skills to “problematize the given” (Pennycook, 1999), which resulted in inequities such as male-chauvinism, drug addiction, early pregnancy, power abuse, discrimination, stereotypes, bullying, prejudices, and others, that students critically managed to interpret.

The digital artifacts that resulted from the adaptation of the curriculum to learners' real worlds aligned with Freire's (1974) *conscientização* (critical awareness) towards an understanding of their marginalized positions in terms of exclusion, stereotypes, prejudices, gender inequities, among the most evident. Even so, my lack of experience in developing critical literacy activities did not promote a further step to take action and express their voices to transform these realities.

In view of this first approach to critical thinking, and the significant texts created from learners' own worlds, some personal reflections have arisen, which complement my concerns along my teaching practice. I question myself what other types of popular-culture texts represent their wishes, interests, and daily life; how language favors or promotes inclusive or excluding practices in digital media and physical settings; to what extent Internet-mediated tools influence attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs; and in what way collaborative work allows learners to read their worlds from different perspectives, deconstruct social injustices and in turn redesign and disseminate more just ways of perceiving their realities.

The previous concerns become a challenge that involves approaching students' worlds, knowing their realities, using their own texts as literacy tools and their languages as a form of inclusion. Meanwhile, the role of English as mediator between students and their social interactions favors permeating the curriculum (Vásquez, 2010) and finally taking a critical stance to "transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of everyday life" (Luke, 2012, p. 5).

In this sense, the present study seeks to determine to what extent students respond to social inequities and practices of power through language in the worlds they daily engage in, how they intend to deconstruct and reshape these phenomena and what these artefacts reveal. For this, the question that will guide my study is: How do learners respond to, deconstruct and redesign social inequities and practices of power through a critical literacy approach?

As the studies under review share similar conceptual underpinnings, I present an overview of Literacy, Critical literacy, and Critical Media Literacy, in order to establish a connection among them.

LITERACY

Coding and decoding words and texts have been conceived, even today, as the definition for literacy, which has privileged a cognitive perspective towards learning. Therefore, the concept of “traditional” education has been bound to classroom practices such as learning by heart, repetition, and reproduction. From this perspective, the student is a passive receptor who is filled with knowledge posed by the teacher. The latter, then, is seen as someone who has the knowledge and in which learning is centered. Consequently, learners are trained to obey, follow instructions, and receive information, rather than promoting critical questions to “critique the text and question the status quo” (Meller et al., 2009).

According to Freire (1970), “Banking system” summarizes what this teacher-student interaction is like, where learners are not given an active role within the school and

thus within the community, despite the pass of time and social demands of new ways to read the word and the world. Freire and Macedo (1987) explain the importance of learners' background in reading processes, as "reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world" (p. 19).

In terms of literacy processes and conceptions, illiterate societies can be compared with marginalized populations where the concept of literacy has its roots. In "Cultural Action for Freedom" (Freire, 1970), education is hopefully understood as the means to promote freedom, especially in marginalized sectors of the populations such as unemployed, drug abusers, pregnant teens, among others, whose low levels of skills to read and write led them to be socially excluded. In this sense, social injustice was evident, as in today's society, since not all the citizens had the possibilities to acquire basic reading and writing skills as a requirement to access the working field and to enter the adult world (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011).

Building on the point above, literacy is closely attached to the concept of language as power; the lack of ability to interpret words or texts beyond the literal meaning deprives illiterates of identifying power relations portrayed in texts (Janks, 2014). Therefore, and as Freire and Macedo (1987) state, "reading the world always precedes the word, and reading the word always implies continually reading the world" (p. 79). It means that the process of reading goes beyond coding and decoding, it involves thinking about how these words may impact our own worlds (lives). This explains the need to place life experiences and knowledge when reading a text to find a connection between the printed alphabet and our

own worlds. In doing so, education would reach the aim to free us from social injustices derived from power relations that texts convey.

In addition to the worlds Freire (1970) refers to, in the act of reading beyond the lines, Lankshear and Knobel (2011) consider the understanding of learners' worlds as the result of a "critical consciousness of their world via a reflexive or 'cyclical' process of reflection and action" (p. 5). In this sense, reading becomes a bridge that allows 'readers' to understand the impact of their actions as a basis to recognize how the world works. From this critical and deep perspective of what reading stands for, the authors also assert that as social injustices are created "through human activity, they can equally be changed through human action" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 5). This transformative cultural action entails a great change in the ways writing is also taught. As *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) opened the paths for new manners to understand social and marginalizing acts, oppressive meanings were interpreted. To this end, the vocabulary centered on words "highly charged with meaning for them [adults]" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 6) which had to do with their own daily life experiences. In this way, the forms in which phrases and texts were read and written involved feelings, emotions, expectations, dreams... which were collaboratively discussed to find out how the world worked and then how it produced "inequal opportunities and outcomes for different groups of people" (Lankshear and Knobel, 2011, p. 6). This analysis, then, provides participants with critical views of their world as a starting point to take action to transform their realities on the basis of "informed decisions" (Vásquez et al. 2019., p. 307).

Central to a sociocultural standpoint of literacy are Gee's Discourses (1999). Due to the characteristics of my study, I build on his ideas of primary and secondary Discourses, as they focus on the role that social interactions play in new ways of reading the world. These Discourses are divided into primary and secondary: the former involve the distinctive language used in our immediate group which shapes "what we initially are" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 20), and classified by social class, ethnicity...; and the latter refer the social groups having their own beliefs, language uses, ways of speaking, acting and believing, such as schools, community groups...from which our identities are shaped as we interact with them in different settings. These Discourses match new concepts of literacy since the act of reading transcends from words to actions and attitudes.

Social interactions are then the scenarios where identities are shaped as individuals engage in groups where they are 'identified and identifiable' (Lankshear and Knobel, 2011, p. 19) Through the integration of "words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (Gee, 1990, p. 142), individuals show their appropriation of secondary Discourses. Thus, individuals take on particular roles in social groups or networks, understood as "people who associate with each other around a common set of interests, goals and activities" (p. 142). Put differently, Discourses involve more than language when individuals share and interact in specific contexts: members of a family, classroom, an ethnic group, a community group, a research team, etc . Drawing on Gee's (1999) definition, a literate person is someone who has "control or fluent mastery of language uses" (cited in Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 19). Here lies what Gee (1990)

defines as “powerful literacy”: the ability to analyze and critique secondary discourses and how they position people in specific manners within society.

This concept of literacy that with the pass of time acquires more relevance in the educational field, entails the adaptation of new realities. According to Knobel and Lankshear (2014), the current generation is immersed in new means of interaction, such as digital media, which involves reading not only words, but also images, gestures, texts, etc. In this regard, Paul Gilster (1997, as cited in Lankshear and Knobel, 2008) defines digital literacies as:

The ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers. The concept of literacy goes beyond simply being able to read; it has always meant the ability to read with meaning, and to understand. It is the fundamental act of cognition. Digital literacy likewise extends the boundaries of definition. It is cognition of what you see on the computer screen when you use the network medium (p. 164).

Given some historical definitions of what literacy represents, the present study involves a connection between literacy as the act of reading beyond the word (Freire, 1970), the concept of language as power (Janks, 2014), the definition of texts (Vásquez, 2010), and the concept of Discourses (Gee, 1990) as shapers of behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes.

CRITICAL LITERACY

Critical Literacy “refers to the use of technologies of print and other media communication to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of everyday life” (Luke, 2012, p. 5). However, going through Critical Literacy practices involves changing conventional school systems’ views of learners’ limited linguistic skills as preclusion to be engaged in “academic engagement in complex social and moral issues” (Lau, 2012, p. 325). Additionally, Mora (2014a) advocates Critical Literacy as a social imperative which also involves a teacher preparation to deal with the current social needs. His ideas are in line with conception of CL as empowerment tools to connect in-school texts with learners’ lives (Janks, 2014), and the concern about possible marginalization practices in classrooms and curricula (Luke, 2012). On the other hand, Harste (2001) asserts that children not only need to know the language, but as much on how to use it to critique. This confirms my vision of English as a bridge to connect learners with their realities, rather than a goal in terms of linguistic competences.

At this point it is important to make a difference between critical thinking and critical literacy, given the misconceptions of the process of reading. Although thinking involves awareness of the outside world, it also involves a self-awareness. Vygotsky (1998, cited in Hushmendi, 2018, p. 11) states that “thinking in concepts” is the process in which we read realities as well as ourselves. To put it simply, critical thinking focuses on the understanding of texts in relation with the world, and how it affects the reader. I consider it an act of fostering thinking skills. However, critical literacy goes beyond the analysis of

relations between text and the outside world. In his “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1970), Freire’s ‘conscientização’ (p. 26), understood as a critical consciousness invites to “perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (p. 17). And for that transformation, critical democracy is called to join teachers and students in a common goal: relate literacy practices to shape or change every day’s issues.

Thus, critical thinking, as Lewison, Leland, and Harste (2008) put it, is more centered on comprehension, while critical literacy is more concerned about action through a deep analysis of how ideologies, reproduced through language, rule the society. Then, this analysis must consider ideological changes that can promote more social justice through ‘taking action’.

These dialogs among important scholars shaped the path for my study, where CL practices must overcome misconceptions of age and linguistic skills as limitations, and “mobilize their existing linguistic, cultural and cognitive resources” (Lau, 2012b, p. 329). In doing so, CL would provide learners with active stances and roles to problematize the given (Pennycook, 1999) in conventional views of knowledge as taken-for-granted by passive and receptacle learners (Freire, 1970).

Given these considerations, the curriculum, as Vásquez (2010) claims, must be focused on learners’ needs, where daily “artifacts” reveal practices of power through language that requires to be unveiled. In this regard, Janks (2014) broadens the spectrum of literacies in the new digital era where language needs to be critically read in daily

situations, objects and media: television, books, magazines, Internet, candy wrappers, social networks, conversations, among others (p. 2).

However, having learners become aware of their oppressions (Freire's *concientização*) without any pedagogical support to challenge their unjust social conditions, as Pennycook (1999) criticizes, would only lead to pontificate existing cultural and ideological inequities. Equally important are Discourses (Gee, 1991), since, as he states, culture shapes and influences "who we are and how we act" (p. 19); in other words, Lankshear and Knobel's (2011) "bits" (values, gestures, meaning and context, actions, objects, interactions, tools and spaces) determine how culturally we are engaged in a specific group, which also regulates the inclusion or exclusion.

In my particular case, my goal aim is to provide students belonging to those "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) with elements to problematize and inquire their ideologies by critically using language to read and unveil the 'hidden message' in practices of marginalization, privilege and injustice (Cano, 2013; Comber, 2001). Given the fact that texts (spoken or written) are never neutral, Vásquez (2003) and Janks (2014) argue that they can be interrogated, analyzed, redesigned and deconstructed.

This concept of deconstruction becomes a key element in this study, since it equips learners with a more critical vision of the world that through a reconstruction may overcome stereotypes, exclusion, and different types of social inequity. This process to reconstruct and reshape realities is built on Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys' (2002) Four-Dimensional Framework, whose steps guide both the selection of activities and questions to foster reshaping the social issues found:

- Disrupting the commonplace: questioning a text and identifying the ideologies promoted in it.
- Interrogating multiple viewpoints: recognizing the voices that are heard and silenced in the text.
- Focusing on socio political issues: identifying the relationships between power and language found in the text.
- Taking action and promoting social justice: focusing on the previous reflections to promote a change.

Given the multiple and multimodal scenarios where my study takes place, and the sensitive social issues found in the exploration stage of critical thinking, ethical dimensions have to be considered to promote equity “where no student feels marginalized or neglected” (Mora, 2014a, p. 18). Finally, as Vasquez (2010) conceives texts as non-neutral, teacher must also take a critical stance to recognize that education is neither politically neutral. Thus, promoting democracy to challenge the taken-for-granted would meet the main goal of critical literacy.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN DIFFERENT SCENARIOS

Since the main goal of critical literacy is to transform relations of power that marginalize populations, it is important to recognize the effect of the media in the reproduction of social ideologies. Its unlimited capacity to spread information regardless of a target public, suggests critical literacies to require critical pedagogies to ward off this

phenomenon; at the same time, taking the media as a means would expand the possibilities to critically transform even more worlds in which learners interact.

The invention or evolution of new technologies has “changed, irrevocably, the nature use and use of literacy” (Larson & Marsh, 2015, p. 68). Internet and social media have become the site where information, entertainment, and social interaction converge, rather than in traditional means as television, newspaper, and radio.

Scholars as Jenkins (2006) and Prensky (2010) assert that the growing expansion of technologies are changing the way current society interacts. Access to digital platforms, technological tools and social networks is easier as pocket-sized devices are close at hand, which provide reading and sharing messages and information in seconds. Different forms of media include either conventional or new tools such as print (magazines, newspapers), computers, video games, music, films, television.

As well as Vásquez (2010) asserts that texts are never neutral, Moore and Bonilla (2014) argue that media and technology are either neutral; Similarly, Stoddard (2014) asserts that these texts are “embedded within sociopolitical contexts”; it means, all types of literacy tools involve socio-political acts and interests. This assertion demands not only the incorporation of technologies in school, but also, and most importantly, critical analysis and interpretations of these media: its information and representation.

CONCERNS UNDERPINNING MY RESEARCH

Thinking about learners as individuals prone to being influenced in their school and family contexts limit the scope of possibilities to impact their lives in a larger scale. Social

interactions have transcended from physical contact to more dynamic means of information and communication. Therefore, considering the spaces where students can be negatively influenced is more than worthy.

The present study, then, attempts to meet learners' expectations in terms of tools to find, interpret and change the situations they think are influencing and affecting their lives.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEWING CRITICAL LITERACY CONCEPTS AND RESEARCH IN THIS FIELD

Reviewing past-to-present literature, this analysis describes the roots of critical literacy, scholars supporting its principles, and their contribution to praxis through class transformation. Additionally, it describes its implications in the new era of digital contexts.

CRITICAL LITERACY ROOTS

Critical literacy is attracting considerable attention due to its impact in nonconventional forms of reading and writing daily social practices. As a result, small but significant transformations have been given to the educational field as scholars, schools and teachers are daring to question the failure of educational systems in terms of low social transformation. Besides, the new Information and Communication Technologies are contributing to the expansion of new literacy-based practices and its possibilities to be replicated across the globe.

I use the term “small” to refer to the challenges that imply leading the universal education to such positions where critical literacy has placed the contexts intervened. In a practical sense it means that the struggles to reach more pertinent teaching-learning models are gathering strength.

When talking about literacy, critical literacy and critical pedagogy, Freire’s work becomes a referent to start from (Bacon, 2017). This literature review evidences how his

work has contributed to the increasing interest in taking education beyond the traditional view of knowledge as content to be filled with. Rather, education is seen as a means of humanizing the world by appealing to social justice. Reading and writing as concepts tied to how literacy has been understood, have transcended to views “where multiple forms of expression, technology, and alternative and multicultural text have come into play” (Mora, 2011, p. 3) Thus, we “can ‘read’ film, clothing, gestures, pictures, photographs, bodies and so on” and “We do not talk about writing photographs, drawings or bodies” (Janks, 2010, p. 18), rather we can design them.

Critical literacy has its roots in Freire’s political work with marginalized communities (Comber & Nixon, 2005), founded on a Banking model of education that did not acknowledge learners’ lives and cultures (Luke, 2012). Therefore, Freire’s concern led to question education system and its potential role in raising learners’ voices to consider their “problems, struggles, and aspirations” (Luke, 2012, p. 219) as basis for social justice.

“Humanization” is a key concept in Freire’s work, understood as the process by which equity is promoted to free humans from social inequities. Consequently, as Bacon (2015) recognizes, when the oppressor dehumanizes others, he dehumanizes him/herself. Thereby, the focus of pedagogies on the concept of oppression challenges teachers, researchers, and theorists to reach a complete humanization. Thus, the author questions the role of those who within the society are placed “in a position of relative privilege” (p. 229).

I consider the previous concerns relevant, given the struggles to theoretically define who the oppressed are, but the few studies to name and categorize the oppressors, which results in a sense of inequity. From a Freirean view, these marginalized populations were

represented in terms of race, nationality, sex, and class, but the exponential growth and convergence of digital media has increased the scope to exclude additional groups.

CRITICAL LITERACY ADVOCACIES

In Freire and Macedo's (1987) "reading the word and the world" (p. 79), their notion of literacy is a call for promoting social justice as learners' realities be considered into teaching practices. Rather than seeing learners as "banking systems", the authors claim for active roles where both educators and learners understand the deeper meaning of texts and new ways of knowing how to act upon the world. Alternatively stated, a social transformation based upon new possibilities to rewrite the world where people's "interests, identities and legitimate aspirations are more fully present and are present more equally" (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993, as cited in Lau, 2012, p. 6)

Critical literacy, then, is a part of critical pedagogy, whose proponents question the inequal power relations that are evident in social interactions. Therefore, CL is seen as a cultural practice (Gee, 1996) where language plays an important role in both promoting inclusion or exclusion depending on how these practices are read. Language, then, according to Janks et al. (2014), is at the center of critical literacy practices:

It comes at us in conversations, arguments, and love letters; when we hear it on the radio or watch television and movies; we see it on billboards, on walls and on sweet or candy wrappers; we find it in books and magazines and on the internet. We use it on computers, on our cell phones and on blackboards; we use it for research, and

text messaging and social networking. When we use language, we produce spoken or written 'texts' for others to consume (p. 10).

Street (1995) argues that literacy practices are socially situated, and then, the school is not the only place where they occur. He asserts that the society is a place where individuals are influenced in their way of reading and writing, accordingly, these literacies must be interpreted from the real scenarios where they occur. In this regard, McLaren and Giroux (1990) contend that critical pedagogy and thus critical literacy practices are informed by some principles. One of them relates to "the specificities of the experiences, problems, languages, and histories" of specific communities (p. 163). This means that each context has its own ways to interpret their realities, and therefore different perspectives arise when reading texts.

Under the previous relationships between social context, language, and critical literacy, reading involves more than problematizing a text. It entails the power relations that language promotes through texts in specific scenarios. This suggests the reader to see the world with different lens as texts are never neutral (Vásquez, 2010). This said, an important element in critical literacy is to promote in learners their ability to read their own context. "Since these texts are not natural representations of the world they can be interrogated, "deconstructed" (Janks, 2010) and analyzed to uncover different views of the world they could represent" (Vasquez, 2017, p. 116). In this concern, Janks (2010) reminds us of the important distinction between "read with the text" and "read against the text" (p. 97). The former focuses on reading to comprehend and make meaning, while the latter centers on reading to critique and interrogate the author's intention, from a critical perspective about

“how texts can be transformed to represent a different set of interests” (p .22). This type of texts includes different versions of traditional printed ones; products created by authors, musicians, painters, among others, (Leland et al., 2020) also depict particular views that seek to position readers in specific ways.

CRITICAL LITERACY AND THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

The way the reader is positioned by texts depends on how power is exerted from dominant groups over marginalized ones through ideological meanings in these texts and social interactions. As Janks’ (2010) “Language and Power” presents, power is closely tied to oppression, but most paradoxically disturbing is her idea of “consent” oppression in common scenarios such as “the family, the school, the media, and the church” (p. 36) This aligns with Gee’s (1999) Discourses in terms of social influence, which corroborates the imperative need to deconstruct traditional forms of reading the word even within families and schools.

Janks draws on Thompson’s (1990) ideologies and how they operate. Common social modes of interaction through language (linguistic and non-linguistic symbols) such as ‘histories, films, novels and jokes’ (p. 37) as well as euphemisms, customs, traditions... bring oppression with them, as a specific social class is being privileged while other is marginalized under the belief of natural and inevitable order of things.

Concerning the term ‘reconstruction’, which was previously used as a balance between deconstruct and reconstruct, the term ‘redesign’ was adapted by Janks (2010). It

entails a creative process of making meaning in “the production of texts that use multiple sign systems” (p. 18) across multiple modalities such as content on the media.

I return to critical literacy to connect the previous concepts to CL goals. Hushmendi (2018) states in her doctoral thesis that “it [CL] involves making connections between controversial/sensitive topics in the world at that particular time and period” (p. 28). The controversial topics, that are silenced in traditional teaching practices (Luke, 2012) are part of the goals of critical literacy. Shor (1980) believes that the aim of critical literacy is to provide learners with class practices that consider their own issues, which then can be reproduced in real scenarios in daily life. Another important goal in CT is stated by Morrel (2004), who asserts that it consists of:

...the ability to challenge existing power relations in texts and to produce new texts that delegitimize these relations; a consciousness of the relationship between the dominant culture's use of language, literacy and social injustice; the ability not only to read words but to read the world into and onto texts and recognize the correlation between the word and the world; and the ability to create political texts that inspire transformative action and conscious reflection. (p. 57)

This questioning and transformation of the world must go beyond the “language of critique”, where values and knowledge, established by dominant ideologies, “may not factor into real transformative effects” (Lau, 2012, p. 23); rather, a “language as possibility” through which social transformation is possible (p. 5). Here lies the difference between critical thinking and critical literacy (McLaren, 1989). This is what Freire’s

concientização (1970) refers as a goal of Critical Literacy, where actions, connected with the previous reflection, leads to transform the preestablished structures.

Referring back to Vásquez' (2010) concept of texts, as key tools to read the word through them, Luke (2012) defines CL as “use of the technologies of print and other media of communication to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of everyday life” (p. 5). On her part, Lau (2012) states that “any cultural texts, be it a book, a film, television, radio, music, etc., are not neutral or value-free” (p. 24). In the context of texts found on the media, Funk et al. (2016) understand Critical Media Literacy (CML) as a framework that “encourages people to read information critically in multiple formats, to create alternative representations that question hierarchies of power, social norms and injustices, and to become agents of change” (p. 2). Janks (2010) conceives multimodal texts as the revolution in communication thanks to digital technologies, which combine a great number of modes “verbal, visual, aural, spatial, gestural” (p. 4) to make meaning.

For Vásquez et al. (2019) CL is a “way of being and doing in the world” (p. 308). They argue that there is not a text as such to create spaces for critical literacies. Vásquez (2017) insists that the world itself is a text that “can be read from a critical literacy perspective” (p. 7). Similarly, Frank (2008) states that the world is a socially constructed text, and thus it can be read. She concludes that texts that are of interest of learners with which they participate in the world, can and should become texts to build curriculum. To this end, she says, learners' topics, issues and questions must be considered. Likewise,

Ferguson (2001) asserts that what is omitted in the curriculum has more relevance than what is included.

SCHOLARS SUPPORTING CRITICAL LITERACY PRINCIPLES

As a representative scholar in the Critical Literacy field, found in this review, Vasquez' contributions not only include traditional print-texts, but also technological tools that allow learners to make meaning as they interact with the world. Like Vasquez, Comber (2001) agrees that multimedia literacy practices should also be added to cultural knowledge included as texts to work with in class. Concerning these texts, Vasquez (2010) argues that they are “created by someone, somewhere, for some reason” (p. 3). In this respect, she asserts that they can be revised, rewritten, or reconstructed in order to change or adapt the messages they convey. This adaptation requires a critical analysis that precedes the action, otherwise, analysis without action would keep the reader “in the same places as when we started” (p. 17).

The new settings where inequities are also questioned start including “virtual spaces” (Mora, 2014b) where texts acquire more dynamic features. These virtual spaces then become “multiliteracies” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), given the numerous forms of expressions of individuals and their own representation of the world through technology. However, these texts considered as portrayals of different versions of the world (Comber & Nixon, 2015), are in consequence tools that help reproduce dominant ideologies (Janks, 2000; Vásquez, 2007) especially in digital media.

Luke (2000) asserts that when texts are read and explored critically, it helps us reconstruct our cultures, worlds, and identities. Vásquez (2000) questions texts, their different forms, and contexts they come from, and how privileged traditional texts are. She claims for literacies that emerge from everyday texts. Reid (2007) goes further in the analysis of the world as a text. Rather than narrowing the spectrum, she maintains that the technologies and means to communicate must extend the repertoires of spaces for building literacies.

In this position, it can be concluded that as texts bring ideologies with them, a lack of critical reading skills influences people's ways of thinking and acting. The analysis of Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model permits to question both the ideologies portrayed in texts and the personal assumptions from which these texts are read. This model understands language as tools for learners to become literate rather than a series of rules (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). I will provide a quick definition of each model, which also works as learner's roles in sequencing literacy processes:

1. Code breaker: it emphasizes on how learners access to and deconstruct vocabulary, grammar and sounds and visual texts.
2. Text participant: it emphasizes on making meaning while reading texts.
3. Text user: it emphasizes on the production of texts in regard to the audience, intention, and sociocultural function.
4. Text critics: it emphasizes on how texts position the reader according to their perspectives and ideologies and how to question them to consider and create new alternatives.

This model remains rather similar to Lewison et al.'s (2002) Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy. These dimensions emerged as response to their wish to synthesize the multiple definitions of critical literacy found in professional research. Below they define each dimension:

1. Disrupting the commonplace: seeing the every-day through new lenses
2. Interrogating multiple viewpoints: standing on the shoes of others
3. Focusing on sociopolitical issues: going beyond the personal and attempting to understand the sociopolitical systems to which we belong
4. Taking action and promoting social justice: engaging in praxis—reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 4).

From these models some questions arise: who is advantaged? Whose voice is heard? Who is silenced? Whose reality is presented? Whose reality is ignored? Who is advantaged? Who is disadvantaged? (Vásquez, 2010, p. 15) These questions are relevant to unveil sociocultural practices maintained in texts and how they take control of practices over others. In other words, how sociocultural issues are reproduced on the basis of inequities (race, gender, class)

The previous questions are understood by Vasquez (2007) as opportunities to raise awareness on children about the importance of being agents to both reproduce or reshape social relations. Her classes turn into spaces to develop critical literacies from real-life situations. Additionally, her idea that “critical literacy curriculum needs to be lived” (Vásquez, 2017, p. 115) suggests that the curriculum can and needs to be negotiated with children. “This negotiation involves constantly listening to what children are talking about,

their passions, their interests and using these to build curriculum” (Vásquez, 2017, p. 116). Bringing to the classroom what learners know to be connected to their outside world is what Dyson (1993) calls “permeable curriculum”. However, as Vásquez, Tate and Harste (2013) believe, moving the curriculum to the community is part of the action promoted by critical literacy perspectives.

The community then, and given the new technologies, transcends the physical spaces to go into the media. Gee’s (1999) Discourses also occupy a significant space in a networked world. When it comes to analyze how the media favorize the reproduction of oppressive practices, Bacon’s (2015, p. 228) question “is critical pedagogy relevant to these groups [oppressor]?” gains importance. As he affirms, little work has been explored towards the site of oppressors. Teacher’s pedagogies that encourage marginalized populations to take action, give the oppressor a sense of maintaining a socially accepted behavior. Rather, the justice sought by CL would be possible when oppressor realizes the impact of their actions in society. All in all, Bacon claims for critical pedagogies among the privilege, as he feels concerned about the role of this side of the social structure where oppression stems from.

As noticed before, the media also plays an important role in favorizing spaces to social interaction, and thus a continuity of practices of oppression and exclusion. The "bits", defined by Lankshear and Knobel (2011) as actions, objects, interactions, tools, and spaces non inseparable from literacy, are integrated in sociocultural practices. Therefore, power through language is also present in multimodal settings for the purpose of maintaining social gaps.

Modes of power and oppression hidden in hyperreality through the media, can be unveiled through semiotics (the study of symbol systems and cultural signs). As Steinberg and Kincheloe (2010) affirm, “semiotics helps equip individuals with a new critical consciousness – a way of seeing that empowers men and women to move beyond beliefs that have been shaped by domination and moral regulation” (p. 141). The authors also state that learners “employ their critical mode of meaning making to develop a democratic vision of what they can become” (p. 141). In the actual digital society, where users tend to take for granted all they interact with in the media, critical semiotics work as mediation to comprehend what the outside world contents through Internet. Nevertheless, this involves a process for users to learn how to deconstruct multimodal texts, as “Video texts usually combine visual semiosis with movement and sound, making analysis ever more complex” (Janks, 2010. P. 205).

CRITICAL LITERACY IN ACTION

Mora (2011) points out that to understand “literacy beliefs and practices” it is essential to “listen to the voices of those engaging in different practices and acts of creating and interpreting text” (p. 4). Therefore, below I share relevant practices carried out in real scenarios and which bring on ideas to develop critical literacies in my school context.

Before delving into literacy processes in real scenarios, I consider relevant to expand the differences between critical thinking and critical literacy, as approaches explored in my research process.

Koh (2002) analyzed the incorporation of critical thinking as part of the school reform in Singapore and how it could affect learners as trained to succeed in texting processes through rote learning. He argued that learners (assumed as future work-force members leading to sustain the competitive economy) would lose capacity to invent and innovate. His critics to this approach grounded on the narrow concept of critical thinking as creative problem-solving. Therefore, he proposed a critical literacy approach, since it “encourages students to challenge taken-for-granted meanings and ‘truth’ about a way of thinking, reading and writing the world” (p. 259).

Finally, he offered options for teachers to include in their practices. Rather than focusing on ideas to understand a topic, he proposed exploring the topic from politic, economic and cultural perspectives; in doing so, he asserted, learners would discover the power relations affecting them as they learn to write “against dominant views and challenge hegemonic power relations” (p. 261).

In her article “Using the Everyday to Engage in Critical Literacy with Young Children”, Vásquez (2007) opened spaces in the school curriculum “to take up social issues from a critical literacy perspective” (p. 6). She stemmed from kids’ interests and daily artifacts such as Peel-Out boxes to explore how dominant and powerful discourses are portrayed in daily texts kids are exposed to. She maintained that common texts position kids as passive readers and idealized subjects in terms of thinking, being and acting in the world. The products interrogated, deconstructed, and redesigned uncovered cultural values constructed through language (words and images). Her findings reiterate learners’ capacity, from early ages, to develop critical literacy practices.

Vasquez (2000) documented how she fostered a step-by-step process to build community through concerns raised by three of her 18 kids related to the lack of books that represented cultural features of some foreign partners. From the question “do we see ourselves in books that are in our school library?” the inquiry and findings were interpreted as marginalization, since most of the kids did not see themselves in their own library books. Accordingly, the kids constructed a community to participate in a social action project aimed at suggesting the librarian some books to be purchased in which they would feel not only seen but also heard.

In a similar vein, Lau (2012) contended that the traditional assumption that “students’ limitations in English will preclude academic engagement with complex social and moral issues” (p. 1) could be challenged. Through kids’ interests and needs to transform class issues such as bullying as result of low English proficiency, she encouraged them to rewrite their experiences and give them a more just ending. They also used media literacy skills to create visual presentations and then socialize them in the school context. In addition to a sense of empowerment through taking action to promote antibullying campaigns, her kids gained linguistic skills. Therefore, regarding her previous concern about teachers’ view of language as a barrier to critical literacy practices, she concluded that kids “are quite capable of complex language learning when they are given the adequate support” (Lau, 2010, p. 2).

In her doctoral thesis, Lau (2012) expanded the scope of the previous bullying campaign and highlighted the class opportunities for learners “to find ways to improve, if

not to totally resolve it, to re-imagine themselves as an assertive and strong person” (p. 148).

Another relevant text was deconstructed and detailed in her thesis. Lau (2012) took up Cinderella story. I consider these texts interesting since she opened the path for teachers who like me are willing to bring to class texts charged with social ideologies. After deconstructing the tale, learners undertook the task to reconstruct the story by challenging some ideological assumptions such as the relationships between gender and class with sociopolitical and economic hierarchies (p. 258). Along the exploration of the power of language to both include or exclude (Luke, 2012), kids found connections to their personal, critical, and transformative dimensions (p. 269). These connections resonate with Lewison et al.’s (2002) Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy.

By the same token, Comber (2005) detailed two critical literacy practices carried out in Australia. The first practice focused on problematizing, deconstructing, and challenging dominant discourses found in a local television show. Principles emerging from the correlation between “language and discourse, and unequal power relations” (p. 4) led kids to explore cultural diversity features; this analysis gave “children the opportunity to re-vise, to re-work, to change the ways things usually are” (p. 7). Then, interactions with local people and cultural places, beyond the classroom, helped produce multimodal texts to represent a more just version of historically marginalized populations. The political counter-texts produced helped both make marginalized refugees visible and update material about Afghani culture and history.

STUDIES COMBINING THE INFLUENCE OF BELIEFS, MEDIA, PARENTAL AND SOCIALLY-GIVEN IDENTITIES

A second practice was carried out in (2005) in an Australian poor multicultural suburb, and simultaneously developed in a South African city. Scholars like Pat Thompson and Barbara Comber (University of South Australia) and Hilary Janks (University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa) took part. Their interest centered in a project entitled 'Critical literacy, social action and children's representations of place' where learners were encouraged to become ethnographers of their place. Thus, learners in their corresponding contexts created the same book in which they used the letters of the alphabet to recount memories; they wrote entries to represent the way they perceived their everyday lives and how much they got concerned about troublesome aspects. In both books, 'A is for Arndale' and 'A is for Atteridgeville', children based their complex analysis on the changing circumstances of their neighborhood. Additionally, they turned a traditional alphabet book into "an inclusive multi-vocal contemporary text inviting conversation about their lives, cultures and times" (Comber & Nixon, 2005, p. 13).

Both practices met a critical literacy principle, as the texts were produced as response to specific "experiences, problems, languages, and histories" (p. 5) in specific communities. Additionally, learners included their own perspectives that the authors considered are not found in "dominant" cultural texts.

In their paper, Walsh et al. (2013), analyzed bullying and gender representations in media content, and the influence of media in elementary school children under a media

literacy curriculum. Their core goal was to introduce kids to explore media violence and how discussions would promote analysis of different forms of gender aggression (physical, verbal, and relational), stereotypes and Cyberbullying. Under a grounded theory approach data were interpreted through written interventions. The analysis revealed how children used different levels of thinking to make meaning, which led them to critique the effect of media on them.

Regarding the importance of books, Lewison et al. (2002), conducted a study with a group of teachers to examine their understandings of critical literacy in classroom practices. Newcomers with no previous engagement in critical literacy and novices with a previous exploration composed the participant group. Through the four dimensions of critical literacy, participants explored their own beliefs and likely ways to implement these dimensions in class. Social issues books were used to support teachers' conversations and real-life controversial topics in class as actively engaging in reading. The authors concluded that participants' process provided them with more critical perspectives to develop critical literacy strategies in their classrooms, as they changed their practices.

Understanding multiple perspectives and focusing on sociopolitical issues were the dimensions teachers recognized to have better developed in learners, as they connected the texts with their lived experiences.

Equally important are Parlindungan's (2017) exploration of parental influence in their kids' development of literacy skills. His review on "literacy development and out-of-school literacy practices" (p. 115) demonstrated how parental engagement in kids' school activities promote literacy practices; on the other hand, a lack of parent-children interaction,

illiterate parents and low-income families affect “students’ literacy interests” (p. 8). This exploration accounts for the influence of learners’ surrounding in promoting and provoking literacy skills, as a key concept in my study.

Building on the point above, Gee (2015) reminds us of Heat’s (1983) “Ways with Words” in relation to literacy events and their limitation and potential by bedtime stories. Heat compared these childhood reading practices supported by parents (as well in oral stories) as repeated behaviors that are also practiced in schooling. He argued that promoting questions from books without any shift to real contexts would foster in kids their abilities to give predetermined answers. Heat suggests parents to assume a tutorial role within the family setting where ‘imaginative talk’ (p. 41) allows linking events from real life.

These connections between traditional bedtime stories from parents to kids, and social interactions through language share Freire’s concerns towards reading the word and the world.

In Knobel and Lankshear’s (2011) ‘Studying New Literacies’, they explain the concept of “new” as evolving conditions for literacies which include digital electronics, which “involve a shift from material inscription to digital coding, from analogue to digital representations” (p. 98), rather than merely including traditional print paper. Through a teens’ engagement in the Hunger Game trilogy and her devotion as media producer, the authors gave the new literacies a sense of social practice. The teen’s writing skills to post, socialize and create media content for an informed audience showed how her literacies are tied to knowledge and particular interests.

A more recent study shows Golden's (2017) concerns about how dominant ideologies distort identities, especially of those being marginalized. Golden carried out a narrative case study to analyze how repositioning resists assumptions of race, sex orientation, class, and location, among others. The study, framed within a critically responsive pedagogy, enacted the voice of a socially excluded young black boy who used narratives to both tell and resist adverse positions he was socially placed in. Golden, acting as a literacy coach at The Opportunity Center (USA), went beyond the participants' samples of literacy to critically 'read' how making his own identity is a way to take agency against "the dominant discourse of young men of color as "nobodies" (p. 362).

Through significant building-tools portrayed in the participant's written discourse, the literacy coach found out how a strong identity may position ourselves within more equitable and just social practices, rather than on marginalized positions from others' eyes and subjectivities.

CRITICAL LITERACY IN COLOMBIA

Much work on the potential of critical literacy has been carried out in Australia, USA, and Canada, mainly, according to my exploration. In contrast, as reported by Mora (2014a), critical literacy in Colombia remains new. Still, interesting steps have been given to increase research in the field through classroom practices. This lack of studies in critical literacy puts my research in an interesting position to favorize further explorations in this field.

Relevant to this literature review in Colombia are Bonilla's (2008) exploration of the concept of culture, and its relationship with textbooks to promote English teaching. From anthropological and sociolinguistic views, she recognizes culture as ways of living of communities, which include language, thoughts, traditions, rituals, values, music, artifacts, and practices, among others, and how they develop through social interaction. In this frame, textbooks are considered as transmitter of cultures, making the reader a passive consumer of information conceived as true or unquestionable.

A project carried out to determine the appropriateness of textbooks in teaching corroborated her previous assumption. By exploring textbooks used in language institutions in Bogotá, she found out how an American culture is promoted through verbal and visual language. The places and people used to represent cultures reinforced social stereotypes by appealing to highlighting specific cultures (American) while underdeveloped countries were ignored or given partial or incomplete characteristics.

The textbook content, argues the author, attempted to impact on the readers' beliefs about consumerism, cult to body, gender inequity, and general dominant ideologies towards a value to the target culture being promoted. Therefore, she claims for teachers who rely on different texts to center their classroom practices, which enable learners' different visions of the worlds portrayed in popular culture (artifacts such as entertainment, sports, technology, clothes, etc.) that represent identities of groups of people.

Under Mora et al's (2018) conceptions of English as a pedagogical resource out of school, he carried out an ethnographic study to know the literacy practices, their modes of expressions, and implications in urban spaces. Supported by his LSLP (Literacies in

Second Language Project) colleagues at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, different city places were explored to identify how new literacies were being constructed, given the emerging English use in cultural spaces. Semiotic resources (advertisings, signs, menus, billboard) and modes (image, color, icon) were interpreted across the city walks.

The findings showed how much people used English language to convey messages that represented their culture (creativity, moods, feelings), and with commercial purposes, where English seemed to be a bridge to respond to globalization. In their exploration, polylinguaging was evident, but which showed how multimodalities supported the transmission of meanings.

Regardless of the ongoing use of English to approach this language with particular purposes, which falls short to be considered a multilingual city, special value was given to the city and its interest to open to the world. However, the study concluded the need to reform curriculum and language policies to a better appropriation of foreign, but also local (indigenous) languages.

These new literacies confirm the exposure of learners to different forms to read their contexts and then their world in external scenarios rather than within the classroom. However, and aligned with Bonilla (2008), schools are called to be the sites, in addition to parents' support (Heat, 1983), where learners acquire critical thinking processes to better read and rewrite social inequities in their settings.

In this sense, approaching kids to critical literacy from early ages, through picture-books (Rodriguez, 2017), and multimodal storytelling (Lopez-Ladino, 2017), may be the basis for learners' engagement in new perspectives towards their present and future

realities. This exploration confirmed that curriculum can be integrated to CL and simultaneously foster both language skills and critical thinking. Besides, teacher's guidance was essential to move kids to explore and connect the texts and stories to their real worlds for then to transform social injustices uncovered.

COLOMBIAN ENGLISH TEACHING: REALITIES AND IMPLICATIONS

Rubiano (2013) mentions Colombian educators' realities in terms of rights, struggles and goals as basis for motivations to encourage "directivity of education" (Freire, 1998). This concept involves utopias and dreams that must characterize the teaching practices from which educators feel empowered to promote social justice under ethical considerations. 'Directivity of education', then, involves the recognition of the Colombian social context to adopt a non-neutral position against injustices.

Rubiano's concerns also include lack of teacher's preparation to deal with social issues; a claim that connects with Mora's (2014) concept of teacher's ethical dimension to avoid injustices within the classroom.

These realities position the Colombian educators in both sites: a) disadvantaged positions in terms of preparation to face the issues to be found in common classroom, and b) challenging realities to put the pedagogic knowledge at the service of marginalized populations in terms of lack of academic investment by the government.

In her article about "Beliefs, attitudes, and reflections of EFL pre-service teachers when exploring critical literacy theories to prepare and implement critical lessons" Gutierrez (2015) stems from the social injustices in the Colombian contexts to justify the

need to intervene the curriculum towards a social transformation. Three language teacher participants' beliefs and experiences were considered as preconceived ideas may determine the impact of adopting critical literacy stances in their teaching.

By exploring CL approaches to language teaching, critical class planning and implementation, the study demonstrated different experiences and responses to CL implementation. Two of the participants did not feel CL could be an option to be implemented due to learners' low English proficiency and the difficulty to adapt a mandated curriculum. The easy adaptation to the existing curriculum and lesson plans, and parental pressure to avoid such tough topics in class were also elements that prevented two participants to actively being engaged in CL class strategies. Only one teacher experienced the viability of this approach for social transformation. However, the three participants agreed the possibilities CL offers to impact the learners' real issues.

In a similar study based on teachers' experiences and teaching practices, Echeverry and Perez (2014) detailed how critical pedagogy was explored by a group of university professors in Medellín to analyze the impact of instrumental and critical orientations. Reflections on the need to shift from a linguistic-based approach to a more social-based pedagogy emerged as they explored how teaching practices must correspond to the oppressions and injustices in the Colombian context. The study concluded that more peer collaboration is needed in order to understand theory and take it to the classroom, while improving informed practices.

In another school context in Bogotá, Vaca and Gómez (2017) implemented a project-based learning to foster speaking skills in students, due to their reluctance to

develop this skill in class. Although this study is not totally related to critical literacy, its focus on learners' active role to raise awareness about their own socialization constraints, linguistic limitations and social issues suggests a special consideration.

By offering learners spaces to use English as a strategy to engage in problem-solving activities, they recognized how language can promote a social change as they get to know each other, improve personal relationships, and challenge common behaviors and attitudes that affected their school and social environment.

This study corroborated what some scholars along this study have found out in terms of a) low linguistic competences as non-preclusive to take agency, and b) adapted and flexible curricula as empowering elements to impact learners' social contexts.

As can be seen, not enough information was found in critical literacy practices in Colombia, but language teachers are showing a great interest in using English with more impacting aims other than just providing learners with grammatical competences.

At this point of the literature, social inequities were reviewed to understand learners' forms of oppression; However, as Rubiano puts it, teachers have also been marginalized through national reforms and ongoing "pervasive, hierarchical and internalized oppression" (p. 8).

Under the previous concerns and realities, social justice in a country as Colombia deserves more than teachers' pedagogical training, it involves an ethical and challenging attitude to make a great change. This change is possible, according to Figueiredo-Cowen and Gastaldo (1995, as cited in Rubiano, 2013) if teachers dare to question Freire's criticism: "the dream of maintaining the status quo of society as it is now" (p. 9).

LEARNING FROM THE CRITICAL LITERACY APPROACH

During the exploration of critical literacy in different parts of the globe, which I contrasted with the Colombian context, I gained insights as to what a qualitative research may offer and involve.

First, I greatly found out that regardless of the language and settings, critical literacy approaches can impact any student population. Meaningful goals can be achieved when empowerment stems from our own interests and emotions. The connection between texts and emotions are a key element to make meaning of common daily interactions and their effect in our identities and roles within the society. The scholars brought to discussion reaffirmed the potential of teachers' commitment and preparation to allow learners to question the taken-for-granted. However, I also felt concerned about how biases are even harder to be changed when learners and teachers have been more exposed to social influences. But also, I understood the role of critical literacy approaches to shape more just beliefs and values as to avoid prejudices and reproduction of marginalizing attitudes. This reaffirms the ethics that must characterize teachers, since they (we) are the ones called to consider external factors that intervene in learners' process of growing both personally and academically.

This review offered me a more humanistic view of what it means to be a teacher. Those traditional practices that silence learners while ignoring their background and individualities only lead to promote the banking system concept. Thus, in line with critical literacy tenets and a more active role by learners and teachers, their contexts are the true

texts to be intervened as they are conceived as sources of learning. The more inequitable a context is, the more perspectives it offers to take agency. I could find this as I contrasted studies in foreign contexts with my learners', and the result of recognizing that any society is riddled with injustices; therefore, our goal as teachers is to be aware of them and promote strategies to turn them into spaces for informed decisions and intervention.

Finally, with this study I hope to contribute with a) ideas to build up classroom practices that transform the curriculum and enable learners' voices in different scenarios and realities; and b) findings and limitations to stem from in further research that promote and make new practices in Colombia and South America more visible and socially just.

LEARNING FROM TEACHERS' AND SCHOLARS' TEXTS AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Despite the limited information I found in the literacy field in the national context, the practices that emerge from teachers' questioning of their role within society indicates that no limitations exist when there is a will to promote social change.

For the case of Colombia, regardless of the textbooks schools are supplied with, the partially-wrong concept of target culture portrayed in those texts and in the media, the adverse conditions some learners live, and the social and political pressure teachers face, a critical literacy approach may foster a great change.

A general literature review showed how scholars, teachers, and schools, rather than critiquing the current social conditions affecting students' learning process, attempt to take a critical stance to create a mutual engagement towards social transformations. By turning

English texts into a means to question how the society works, significant changes are being made as teacher-learner interaction seek to intervene the real problems affecting some sectors of society.

This conclusion ratifies the Freirean view of the education as a place to humanize and free the world through a critical reading and writing of the world itself.

CHAPTER THREE
DESIGNING A METHODOLOGY FOR WORKING CRITICAL LITERACY
IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

In this chapter I discuss a methodological process framed with a critical literacy perspective. It bases my qualitative research on how learners respond to, reconstruct and redesign social injustices derived from language and the influence of social interactions. To this end, I will present the research question, the setting, the target group, the participants, and how the data were collected and analyzed.

Of particular importance to this study is to understand the direct exposure to daily texts with which learners interact, both in physical and in multimodal scenarios; this leads to detail the phases to prepare and implement the project. In consequence, the participatory action research carried out sought to have participants be aware of social phenomena from different critical perspectives. Additionally, it sought to empower learners to fully participate in a social change.

RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS

The present research stems on the idea of schools as places where inquiry must be fostered, rather than instruction (Wegner, 1998), which makes building significant knowledge possible. This statement represents my interest in transforming teaching

practices that give the teacher and learners active roles in understanding ‘how things work’ (Stake, 2010) in the scenarios where social interactions occur. Under this consideration, I began investigating different methodological paradigms that could best fit my study.

According to Stake (2010) a qualitative paradigm “relies primarily on human perception and understanding” (p. 11) and thus “research is inquiry, deliberate study, a seeking to understand” (p. 13). In the same line, Harste (2001) affirms that “education as inquiry provides an opportunity for learners to explore collaboratively topics of personal and social interest using the perspectives offered by others ... and various sign systems (art, music, mathematics, language)” (p. 1). Accordingly, a more equitable, just, and thoughtful world is expected to be produced.

Qualitative research is then defined as the exploration to understand the complex social phenomena from people involved in these interactions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). This research, therefore, follows the grounds of a qualitative study due to some characteristics taken into consideration: My role is a teacher-researcher because I act as “an instrument, observing action and contexts, often intentionally playing a subjective role in the study, using his or her own personal experience in making interpretations” (Harste, 2010, p. 20). On the other hand, “observation, interviewing, and examination of artifacts (including documents) are the most common methods of qualitative research” (p.20).

These characteristics provide this research with a solid foundation to explore and interpret learners’ experiences and an understanding of how their world works in order to transform it.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The specific question that will guide my research is: How do learners respond to, reconstruct and redesign social inequities and practices of power through a critical literacy approach?

RESEARCH SETTING

I conducted the study at a public school in a neighborhood located northeast Medellin, Colombia. The school population is divided into elementary and secondary levels, with an average of 510 students in both shifts: morning for secondary (7° to 11° grades) and afternoon for kids (1° to 6° grades).

Since the school installed capacity is limited, the institution is made up of a small amount of the neighborhood student population, but characterized by hosting members of the same families, who also come from close neighborhoods. Most of the population belongs to low-income communities, and kids and teens belong, mostly, to single parent, extended or stepfamilies. These social realities motivated me to see this context as one in need of critical literacy practices to empower learners to transform their settings (Giroux, 1997; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011).

Students receive 3 fifty-minute classes a week. Although the time is limited to cover the mandate curriculum, the digital and print resources such as TVs, teacher laptops and Internet connection, as well as BLR (Basic Learning Rights) books favorize their

permanent exposure to multimodal content. Additionally, we adapt the physical booklet¹ created by ourselves to design interactive presentations to explore common social issues in the neighborhood. This exposure to multimodal texts in and outside the classroom has promoted a wish to use this language in a more practical manner.

However, it is necessary to recognize how the Covid-19 emergency changed the traditional school. This world reality reminds me of the concept of schools as “places where students can learn to transform society” (Gainer, 2010). Therefore, and as learned from Freire and Macedo (1987), this challenge led me to read new words in a different world. That is to say that this unexpected phenomenon enabled me to implement a critical literacy approach by appealing to a critical literacy stance.

TARGET GROUP

I teach English in 7°, 8°, 9°, 10° and 11° grades. For the purpose of this study, I selected 10th graders to be part of the research, given their active participation in the first textbook designed the previous year. Consequently, they felt more engaged in this new class strategy than the remaining groups. This consideration is relevant, since I want to explore how this study can transform their previous designs and critical thinking processes into greater possibilities to take action.

By the time the project was about to start in the school setting, the pandemic led me to adjust the participants, methodology, mediations, schedule and texts. For this reason, I

¹ First version of the textbook (2019): <https://cs.calameo.com/read/004272735ffc066987ebf>

decided to offer extra English classes twice a week through Meet platform. During these sessions we would determine the participants and requirements.

As the school had to adapt its curriculum and join subjects into cross curricular projects, English was planned to be taught once every two weeks in the whole school. Nevertheless, to develop this study with this specific group, English classes were offered to be taught twice a week, in a program that I called “Together in pandemic/difficult times”.

“TOGETHER IN PANDEMIC/DIFFICULT TIMES”

I prepared an introductory class to invite students to participate in this English Project. I used Meet platform to share samples of similar texts we would work with, and to discuss their possibilities, interests, and expectations to be part of the research. While I pushed the discussion further through critical questions to foster their interventions, I showed songs, memes, comics, social networks (Tik Tok), commercials and local newspapers. 24 out of 32 learners attended the introductory class.

I explained to them the critical literacy concept and elicited participation in different activities. Discussions, opinions, and debates were used to quickly deconstruct some texts in a two-hour class. Then, we interpreted how social injustices were immersed in images, colors, words, etc. One of those texts we could deconstruct and propose alternatives to its redesign was a song called “Te compro tu novia”. We agreed to replace the words that somehow reproduced social inequities, and in group different opinions arose to collaboratively rewrite the song. Since the class was about to finish, any multimodal design was possible to be created, but learners proposed a new version from their own

interpretation and use of English linguistic skills (See table 2). At the end, some students decided to voluntarily participate in the project to practice English language in a more innovative way.

Table 1.

Excerpts of songs analysis

Spanish version	Translation into English	New version
Y sabe hacerlo todo en la casa	And she knows how to do the house chores	She knows how to respect herself
No creo que saldría cara, aunque cueste un millón	I do not consider she would be expensive, even if she costed a million pesos	I strongly believe she is worthy
Tú me has dicho que es linda y apasionada	You have told me she is pretty and passionate	She has shown to be intelligent and courageous
No sale ni a la esquina, no habla con la vecina	She does not leave home, and does not talk to neighbors	She leaves to work and socializes with people around her

SAMPLE SELECTION

A purposive sampling (Yin, 2011) was previously used to select the participants, based on a list of characteristics that I considered to the study: disciplinary issues and immersion in previous critical thinking processes. To give the study a more inclusive sense, I selected students who met at least one of the following requirements. The first category involved inclusion of participants who have shown or show a disruptive behavior in class or within the school that has ended up in disciplinary measures. This is a key focus to analyze how a CL approach can equip them with critical awareness about their role within

the community and the effects of conscious and unconscious acts that marginalize others (or even themselves).

The second category was associated with learners who once felt (or still feel) bullied or excluded from society. I wanted to analyze how a CL approach can give voice to marginalized populations to transform their adversities. The third category considered neutral attitudes toward injustices seen in class or community. I felt a strong desire to find out how a CL process can promote an active stance to support those being marginalized.

Concerning English proficiency, this was not considered a category to classify students, but as a bridge to connect learners with their real worlds. In contrast, empathy, emotions, and affect worked as personal pedagogical mediations that I believed interesting. I expected this to give me insights on the influence of teacher-students relationships to foster the wish for learning.

To my surprise, at the end of the introductory class 15 attendees agreed to keep on with the project, but more surprisingly was the fact that from my personal list, 12 learners asked me to include them; the remaining 3 students were new to school. This was a great surprise, but also a great challenge to meet their expectations and “affect”, as some of them argued. Regarding the number of participants, I realized that following up, collecting, and analyzing data from 15 students would be hard and time consuming, but the characteristics of the group would hopefully prove to pay off.

PARTICIPANTS

I conducted the study with 5 girls and 10 boys, whose ages ranged between 15 and 17 years old. They were registered in tenth grade, and for the purpose of this research they were separated from the whole group to form a new one. The school adopted the Google Classroom platform; thus, I created a particular room to register the target group, upload multimodal resources and contact them through Gmail accounts. The virtual room selected was Meet, to attend 2 ninety-minute classes a week for a period of three-four months (a school term consisting of 14 weeks).

Table 2

Student participants

Girl student	Boy student
Diana	Lawer
Dulce	Hopkins
Maria	Daniel
Melanie	Junji
Caroline	Kelvin
	Andrew
	Kristopher
	Simon
	Benjamin
	David

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the participants in the study were teens, and whose personal life experiences would be read, interpreted, and redesigned along the classes, I took a very serious stance to favor spaces for collaborative construction of knowledge. I considered advocacy of “solid ethical dimension that helps them [the teachers] choose practices that promote equitable learning where no student feels marginalized or neglected” (Mora, 2014a, p. 3).

The concept of ‘equitable learning’ responded to a personal assumption of teaching as a social responsibility that entails respecting and valuing differences and learners’ interests. To this end, I encouraged them to freely share experiences and opinions with no fear to be questioned in terms of language use and ways of thinking. In fact, their contributions were recorded to be used in further quizzes; that would promote both an exposure to linguistic skills and a reinforcement of relevant statements derived from class conversations.

With the purpose of giving confidence and a sense of being heard in the virtual room, I turned on my camera to be seen. I also used a soft motivating voice and body language (facial expressions) that could express my interest in their participations. Humor and informal dialogs were also used to break the ice when tensions or misunderstandings were noticed. As per my experience in connecting content with emotions and affect through role-plays and polite manners, respectively, learners felt more comfortable to participate. This is due to the connection I respectfully but purposely made between multimodal texts content and their family, school, or social contexts.

Considering the personal experiences and opinions shared and their subsequent proposals to transform the issues found, I ensured their confidentiality by using pseudonyms. They chose their names and asked me to find English or Japanese ones for those who did not have any special pseudonym. Then I deleted the class recordings once I had taken notes and interpreted the results to write this report.

SECURING CONSENT

As the lockdown was mandatory and the school staff was not permitted to have any physical contact with families, I sent the parents the consent letter through email and talked to my school director via phone call. The latter did not reject, since she had greatly surprised with the textbook that we had produced a year before; rather, she offered me all the help to make this project bigger.

As the commutation was totally virtual, I could not meet the parents, but learners downloaded the letters and explained what it was about. Some learners argued that their parents knew what the project was about because when this group was registered in ninth grade their parents had heard about the methodology. Moreover, during the current classes some of them watched me through video conferences (online classes) and heard the debates, role-plays, and group participation. Therefore, the whole families agreed to participate in the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

CLASS CONTENT

Once the group was classified, I selected the content to be explored, deconstructed, and redesigned (Janks, 2014), which also involved a redesign of lesson plans, since the existing lessons were focused on communicative competence rather than on critical literacy.

The emergence of learners' interactions in multimodal settings caused by the current pandemic would pleasingly give the project a wider perspective to explore critical literacies. This is how learners' social engagement, developed in their own contexts and in digital media, allowed to rethink the content to be covered from three different needs, interests and perspectives: a) previous products as potential to be reshaped, b) local and international scholars' practices as models to follow, and c) virtual worlds and media interactions as objects of study.

MODELS FOR CRITICAL LITERACY PRACTICES

As mentioned before and considering the relevance of my initial approaches the previous year, the literature review, and the exploration of the media, I describe below the three main sources I draw on.

The first approach to critical thinking based on social injustices ended up in graphic representations of these phenomena; however, the critical thinking did not transcend the status quo (Lee, 2011). Taking these results into account, I resolved to have my learners take these issues beyond their awareness, where social equity might be put into practice through action (fair reconstruction of these issues)

Equally important are the findings in critical literacy practices around the globe, where common issues such as power, social exclusion, and stereotypes are called to be questioned, by drawing on scholars' expertise, findings, and advocacies (Janks, 2014; Lau, 2012; Mora, 2014; Vásquez, 2010; among the most salient). Thus, the related literature in my field worked as a preparatory guidance to empower learners to transform inequities into social justice through the media.

Finally, and as response to the increasing interaction of learners in digital worlds and my wish to have them problematize their own and other discourses, I endorsed the previous foundations. I took up students' daily experiences to provoke a critical stance. This approach sought to unveil issues in social networks, YouTube content, musical genres, Colombian tv series and famous influencers, among others.

CRITICAL LITERACY PRACTICES

Learners' social interactions in real scenarios mediated by physical meetings (family, neighborhood) and virtual encounters (Facebook, YouTube, online music, digital books) were the tools I used to explore critical literacy. Departing from definition of critical literacy as "the use of technologies of print and other media communication to analyze, critique, and transform the norms, rule systems, and practices governing the social fields of everyday life" (Luke, 2012, p. 5), I recognized daily texts as potential to be deconstructed and redesigned (Janks, 2014).

These texts, written in English, entailed a vocabulary that somehow prevented learners from making meaning in a first exploration; however, the media (television,

Internet, magazines, tales) and their modes (visual, spoken, written, gestural) described by Janks (2010, p. 40) helped them comprehend the messages and also foster the communicative competences (reading, writing, speaking, listening). The amount of time spent in each of the four texts varied depending on my guidance and students' ability to interpret the linguistic codes and then the hidden messages. Additionally, the interest in a deeper exploration of specific content made their engagement more time consuming.

In the following paragraphs I detail the texts selected and their connection with learners' lives, along with the strategy, the class sessions, and some samples of type of questions used to foster critical conversations.

INITIAL TEXT SELECTION

The material I selected was purposely thought to deconstruct social problems such as power, social class, marginalization, social stereotypes, gender inequity and social ideologies, among others. These texts were previously analyzed by me, the novice researcher teacher, given my lack of experience to critically interpret content. In the light of the scholars that inspired this study, I drew on their critical questions, processes, and methodologies to develop a carefully designed plan.

Bringing my first introductory class back up, this quick first exploration of digital texts led me to design new texts (see Table 3) that could entail dominant mainstream

ideologies through music, Facebook, print texts, tales, etc. From the list of ten² texts designed for the project (See Appendix C), learners decided which one to cover, based on their interests. Musical videos, tales, classroom practices and influencers were selected along the term. The selection of the subsequent texts had me come up with more critical questions related to texts that would not be covered due to the limited time (i.e. online ads were not covered, but they were interpreted in texts such as tales, where colors, characters, body language, etc, were contrasted with TV ads). In chapter 4 I detail this information.

Table 3.

Learners' texts used

Music genders	Author	Synopsis	Critical literacy perspectives
Musical videos	Ed Sheeran (2017) – Karol G & Nicki Minaj (2019)	Both musical genres' lyrics, characters and settings represent different views of human relations and ways to deal with adversities.	Social class Multiple perspectives Power relations
Childhood tales	Charles Perrault, 1697	A story that narrates the injustices suffered by a humble girl and her fights to reach an equitable social status.	Marginalization Power abuse Male chauvinism Power of language Gender inequity
Bullying cases	English please 10 th , (p.104) Students' own	It includes audio, comic and text related to bullying: practices and effects; also some learners' voices through descriptions and reflections	Bullying Social exclusion Multiple perspectives Purposes

² Ten proposals: <https://view.genial.ly/5ec369b0a7a2300d93b8df6c/horizontal-infographic-lists-critical-literacy-advertisings>

	production	after having experienced such issue.	
Influencers	Critiqued and admired local influencers, as well as well-known Youtubers such as Julio Alberto Ríos (Julioprofe) and Nubia y sus hijos	The Youtubers selected represent both how teens get influenced by lifestyles and consumer society, and how they can also be inspired by altruist citizens.	Multiple perspectives Author's purposes Exclusion Social class Social stereotypes

CONNECTION BETWEEN TEXTS AND LEARNERS' LIVES

I adapted the initial proposals to digital resources that could meet learners' interests and life experiences. I underpinned my selection on the literature review and the inclusion of multimodal texts in similar studies. The results of this search motivated me to think about my learners and their context as a suitable challenging practice, despite the limited literature in this field in Colombia and South America. The characteristics of the Colombian local and national context, along with the issues resulted from the interaction with the media enabled a wider spectrum of pertinent and contextualized audiovisual resources. In this sense, the analysis of practices of power and social inequities as the main goal of this study would be easily found in interactive tools. Nevertheless, reaching such level of literacy entailed reading skills that had learners become more skillful to decode words, make meaning and question texts. In consequence, I considered Lewison et al.'s (2002) Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical viewpoints, and taking action and promoting social justice.

Table 4.*Texts: reason, content, and intention*

Text	Reason	Content	Intention
Musical videos	Learners' decision to explore songs and musical genders they listen to.	Learners' choice includes reggaeton; my proposal includes pop to produce contrast.	To determine how language (visual, written) conveys and reinforces social practices
Childhood tales	Content is reproduced from generation to generation, with no awareness towards hidden messages.	A traditional tale that reproduces power, social stereotypes, gender inequity and social class.	To uncover social inequities found both in traditional tales and in the current society.
Bullying cases	Curiosity of learners who have suffered, practiced, or witnessed exclusion.	Learners' personal experiences of power and psychological abuse.	To question roles in bullying cases and how antibullying campaigns could help the school community.
Influencers	Learners' ongoing use of social networks and the influence of Youtubers in beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.	Learners' type of content found on YouTube, and my proposal to find influencers based on the national context's needs.	To value Youtubers who contribute to social justice as basis to promote new influencers that Colombia may need.

CURRICULAR ADAPTATION

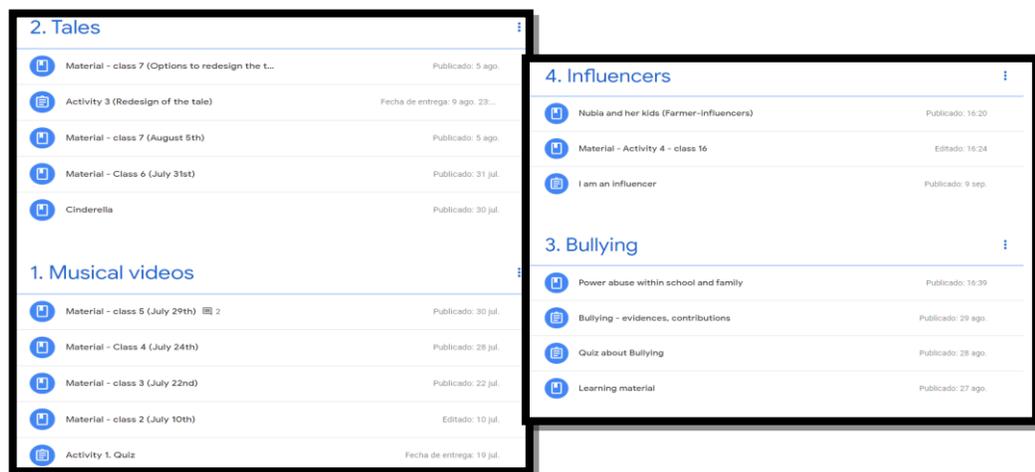
After the division of the tenth-grade learners into two groups, I followed the school curriculum to adapt the Basic Learning Rights according to both groups focus: Healthy

habits at home during pandemic and Critical Literacy Project through the media. Then, I adapted the vocabulary and structures to their respective topics and needs.

I designed audio visual presentations and I included links to games, YouTube videos, audio books and quizzes on the presentations. This learning material worked in class was also uploaded to Google Classroom in the corresponding weeks and themes (See Figure 1) This helped students catch up or go back to concepts whether they missed the class or lost track in the process.

Figure 1

Google Classroom content



The classes and meetings were carried out in Meet platform, and the recordings were directly kept in my institutional Gmail account. During the classes I took notes of relevant information such as comments, questions, body language, emotions, answers, etc.

CLASS DEVELOPMENT

I started the classes with flashy presentations to catch participants' attention. I introduced the topics by means of memes, songs, videos, or comics. Besides, I combined language with semiotic resources or modes (i.e. images, language, music, gestures, etc.) to allow learners make meaning more easily. Besides, I added questions to assure they were activating their previous knowledge. These questions were previously designed after my own exploration of the content. I did it with two purposes: a) familiarize myself with the content to anticipate possible doubts or questions by students, and b) design a lesson plan that would foster critical questions and debates. I followed Lewison et al.'s (2002) Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy to inform my methodology.

After the initial exploration of each text (meaning), I explained some vocabulary and structures. This helped them have a better approach to linguistic and reading skills. Additionally, we watched the texts again and stopped the videos or songs when we noticed some misunderstandings of words or expressions; the doubts were clarified by themselves, who at any part of the presentation felt able to explain the partners any concept (vocabulary meaning or word order). Otherwise, I explained without focusing on grammar or giving the sense of following a grammar-translation approach.

During the conversations about the texts, they expressed how easy it was to understand the meaning, since they had already listened to the songs, heard traditional tales, used social networks, and witnessed common class problems. I consider this as a wise choice because I got to connect content with topics they interact with. However, we agreed

to interpret the written language from English rules, since they showed to know the meaning or ideas but supported with the subtitles they found on videos or messages. Although my intention was not to focus on grammar rules, I found important to interpret single words, for them to figure out the power of language as a means to exclude, marginalize, etc.

Each stage of the analysis comprised Lewison et al.'s (2002) dimensions. In the first stage 'disrupt the commonplace' I asked questions related to elements included on the content, such as color, objects, characters, rhythm, etc. Through debates, contributions and even more questions, the class turned into a scenario where taking-for-granted elements were interpreted for the first time.

The second stage had to do with 'interrogating multiple viewpoints'. The role-play strategy was crucial for them to put in someone else's shoes to recognize the voices being heard or silenced. I promoted questions to understand the author's intentions through dialogs, debates and representations of different characters that intervene in the texts: singers, authors, writers, spectators, victims, teens, adults, YouTubers, users, among others.

The third stage involved 'focusing on socio political issues'. In this stage the analysis went further and transcended the status quo (Kim, 2014). Here assumptions related to practices of power, inequities and social excluding ideologies were carefully explored. I used the term "carefully" in two senses. First, meaning a deep analysis of language (written language, visual language, body language) and how it includes or excludes populations. Second, meaning a sense of caution to socialize the relationship between texts and local and

national realities in terms of politics, culture, etc. Thus, identifying sociopolitical aspects meant interpreting how the society is ruled.

Finally, and as an opportunity to transcend the awareness and Freire's 'conscientização', the social transformation was approached through 'taking action and promoting social justice'. It consisted of transforming the injustices uncovered in real life practices by proposing manners to build off more just versions of the world (Janks, 2010). The products involved creating multimodal texts, especially drawings as representative ways to communicate (Lau, 2010), which learners accompanied with oral and written messages.

On the other hand, the media were used to produce and spread campaigns that reflected learners' critical manners "to act as responsible citizens with the skills and social consciousness to challenge injustice" Share, Douglas and Funk (2016). See **Appendix B** (lesson planning).

Table 5.

Sample of critical questions through Lewison et al.'s (2002) dimensions

<i>Dimensions of critical literacy</i>	<i>Critical questions used for Cinderella tale</i>
Disrupting the commonplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the concept of man/woman through language? • What do colors, objects and settings symbolize?
Interrogating multiple viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the author's intention? • Who are the decision makers in the story?

- | | |
|---|--|
| Focusing on sociopolitical issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What connection do you find between the text and real-life situations? • What is the relationship between skin color and people's fate in the story and in the society? |
| Taking action and promoting social action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you do to change the social injustice seen in the story? • How would you improve the story plot through language? |

BASIC LEARNING RIGHTS ADAPTATION

The following chart represents the BLR proposal by the MEN and how it was adapted to the CL project. The chart includes the four communicative competences, learning objectives and generative topics.

Table 6.

Basic Learning Rights adaptation

Competence (DBA): evaluate the impact of cultural and social practices (piercings, tattoos, extreme sports, and sedentary lifestyle) on health.		
Adapted competence: evaluate the impact of cultural and social practices (in physical and digital environments) on beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, and promote campaigns to deal with these phenomena.		
Communicative competence:	Learning objectives	Generative topics
Listening:	Recognizes words and expressions about certain cultural and social practices in readings and oral texts.	Grammar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present, past and future tense and perfect tense. • Conditionals • Modals
Reading:	Identifies information about the most common cultural and social practices.	Lexical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical appearance • Body image
Writing	Produces advertising texts on	

	cultural and social practices causing social injustices for people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free time activities • The media • Classroom
Speaking	Orally and respectfully justifies his point of view on the most effective campaign based on vocabulary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My neighborhood • Sociocultural practices • Biographies

DATA COLLECTION

To answer my research question, the data collection is based on three different common methods of qualitative research (Harste, 2010; Yin, 2011): teacher's journal, students' interviews, and learners' artifacts. These instruments were designed to enhance credibility and trustworthiness, in addition to compensate any limitation or lack of information. In this section I describe each data instrument and how communication through email, WhatsApp, Facebook, and phone calls supported it and its subsequent analysis.

OBSERVATION AND TEACHER'S JOURNAL

During my study I observed my learners' interactions among them and with multimodal texts. I drew on Saldaña's (2011) observation method focusing on "human action, reaction and interaction" (p. 58). To this end, I took notes of critical literacy events in class, such as connections between texts and life experiences, questions emerging from role-plays, reflections, and informal debates. I also wrote down the exact time in which these events occurred, and at the end of the class I watched the video recording to find the

exact time and information I had previously made a note of. As to digital communication, I took snapshots of written messages and downloaded audios to be analyzed in dept.

As I had a two-role play in class (instructor-researcher) the lack of awareness to interpret relevant data in my research mode while I was acting as a teacher, the recordings and extracts helped me complete the information I had missed.

INTERVIEWS

I implemented semi-structured interviews to find out the learners' general attitude towards their approach to critical literacy and how they connected it with lived experiences and social interactions. Throughout the research there were also informal conversations with them, especially after class or through online communication (social network, email, WhatsApp). The main aim of these interviews was to facilitate 'collaborative reflection' and 'communal reflection' (Rearick & Feldman, 1999, as cited in Lau, 2010).

'Collaborative reflection's purpose was to check biases or lack of information in teacher's notes. It was also used to "discuss and interpret each other 's observations and perspectives concerning the in-class student-teacher/researcher interactions and the perceived student progress in critical/literacy development" (p. 64).

'Communal reflection', on its part, was aimed at reflecting on how the critical literacy actions "promoted or obstructed the transformative ideals" (p. 64). Then the difficulties encountered in the process would determine ways to change or improve instructional practices to "enhance students' critical literacy engagement and development" (p. 64). In sum, these interviews helped me gain complex in-depth information from

participants (Wengraf, 2001), as well as direct the research and adjust instructions when teacher-student discussions revealed possible deviations.

INTERVIEW DESIGN

As to make the focus group more comfortable to develop a casual conversation rather than a questionnaire, I designed a semi-structured interview. With these open-ended questions I sought to delve into their answers and opinions. My aim was to understand how they had been responding and deconstructing situations explored and lived through multimodality and real life, respectively. Besides, given the nature of the interview, it allowed me to control the conversation and ask follow-up questions to clarify any concept or to help express ideas that otherwise could be misunderstood. I focused on seven student participants, who represented the characteristics of the participants described before. The individual interviews took place in the last week of the project implementation, after some final classes or in spontaneous meetings through Facebook or WhatsApp (Video calls).

In the pursuit of creating a nice interview I followed some recommendations by Bryman (2012) to establish rapport such as balance between length of time, mood of friendliness, eye contact (p. 218). During the interviews we turned on the cameras to see each other's faces, body language and gestures. This gave a sense of friendly conversation about topics that I noted in observations to talk about as the communication flowed. The interviews were also designed mainly for "data triangulation and dialogical data collection to ensure that students 'voice was included'" (Lau, 2010, p. 65).

CONSIDERATIONS

As to avoid power dynamics in teacher-student interaction, as CL aims at teaching literacy to “challenge coercive relations of power” (Lau, 2010, p. 119), the choice of language, time, topics, and length depended on a mutual agreement. Therefore, the term ‘interview’ was considered as a space to dialog and talk, rather than to question.

The semi-structured interviews were held individually, to assure confidence, and to find out opinions, reactions, and participants’ engagement in critical literacy processes. I asked participants to set the schedule depending on their availability. Some meetings took place after class, but most of them were held in the evening through video calls. This choice was due to my interest in giving them voice to have them feel active agents as we set up an inclusive environment. Despite the empathy among us, I made sure to create an environment where no fear to talk nor sense of authority were present. Rather, I took comments, opinions, participations, and products (images, videos, texts, audios) from my journal and folder to let them know their contributions were being taken into consideration. From these personal artifacts we talked about their first impressions, the new points of view and how their productions related to their near context. I used English to recall some literal contributions or extracts to introduce relevant topics to talk about, but our native language was used when learners showed not to feel comfortable or able to give clear ideas. Therefore, using Spanish (except with 1 participant) allowed us to talk about personal, family, school, and social issues as response to their interest in connecting the CL process

with real life experiences. In fact, most of the interviews lasted more than 10 minutes, due to the confidence and wish they felt to share the impact of the project in their life.

During the conversations I did not ask all the preestablished questions since they were answered along the talks. I just brought some topics of interests into the conversations when I felt learners were losing track. I did it in spontaneous and congratulatory manners to increase their motivation to express their feelings and thoughts concerning the impact of CL in their learning process. This, in turn, provided me with useful information to analyze their way of responding to CL approaches.

LEARNERS' ARTIFACTS

My intention was to analyze how learners responded to social inequities and practices of power, and how they deconstructed these phenomena in physical and multimodal settings. Hence, I recorded their process by collecting initial and final productions in different formats: snapshots, videos, chats, drawings, questions, and campaigns. The language used was either Spanish or English, but collaboratively edited in this second language. The purpose of collecting the whole process was due to my interest in knowing also how CL approaches could provide them with linguistic skills along the process.

The artifacts, thus, became relevant elements to demonstrate how learners' voices were raised through the actions proposed and undertaken by themselves. These final products turned into school campaigns to promote social justice mediated by digital tools such as videos, comics, tales, infographics, songs, and audios, among the most salient. This

‘audit trial’ (Vásquez, 2014) enabled to publish campaigns in the school web page and social media accounts to foster critical awareness of social injustices and how to solve or deal with them. The audience was the school community and Facebook users.

I shared with learners the final versions of their products, after edition, to allow them to revisit these events and improve any aspect that they would consider pertinent. The products were also shared with their family context to generate dialogs among them and facilitate an approach to new forms of reading their daily social interactions.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this stage I categorized the data into four sections based on my research question, conceptual framework, and literature review. Emerging themes formed categories that I placed into Lewison et al.’s (2002) Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy. Additional themes that did not match any of these dimensions formed new categories. These dimensions are as follows:

LEARNERS READING TEXTS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

In this dimension I analyzed how the participants interpreted multimodality in texts, which include written language and nonlinguistic modes such as “images, movement, sound and layouts” (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007, p. 52). Then the categories resulted from learners’ capacity to uncover social injustices while reading “other modes of encoding

meaning. So one can ‘read’ film, clothing, gestures, clothing, pictures, photographs, bodies and so on”. (Janks, 2014, p. 18)

LEARNERS’ LIVES CONNECTING WITH SOCIAL ISSUES

This dimension entailed learners’ ability to recognize how authors and writers position readers and spectators to take a specific stance towards what is read. The categories that emerged stemmed from learners’ reactions after stepping on someone else’s shoes and their understanding of texts as never neutral (Janks, 2014; Vásquez, 2010).

LEARNERS AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONAL ACTIONS WHEN USING CRITICAL LITERACY LENS

In this dimension the categories came up as response to learners’ capacity to interpret sociocultural and political connections between texts and real life, and how these ideologies rule their social life.

DATA REDUCTION

Given the number of 15 participants and the 20 classes taught during a term (13 weeks), each of an average of 90 minutes, I needed to reduce the data collected to avoid losing track. The instruments I applied were “descriptive summary and coding”.

DATA TRANSCRIPTION

For the transcription of the class events I used a digital voice recorder found in Google, where I registered the research process. I listened to the interventions and then I described them orally in English; next I included punctuation marks, quotation marks and verbatim quotes.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Once I watched the recordings after each session, I documented data in a digital journal where I detailed notes on students' active participation in the classroom and our communication through email, social networks, and instant messaging (WhatsApp). These journals included descriptive field notes to summarize the relevant aspects that arose from the analysis of interactions and out of class teacher/student conversations. The notes related to this analysis, together with my own questions, reflections, and analytic memos, would help guide my research, which also opened the path for subsequent class interventions/improvements. Finally, these descriptive summaries were reduced to codes.

CODING

I drew on the concept of coding as "...a portion of language-based or visual data" consisting of "interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents, drawings, artifacts, photographs, video, Internet sites, e-mail correspondence, literature, and so on" (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2019, p. 63). I selected coding to

symbolize interpreted meaning from data, for then to detect patterns which would lead to themes. From these themes some categories emerged. They were labeled into the four dimensions I developed to answer my research question. New categories were considered when themes did not fit these dimensions.

As well as my role of English teacher, my role of researcher involved analyzing data from different sources to understand diverse perspectives. Therefore, I triangulated the information gathered in the three methods. This triangulation prevented my biases from interfering in the data interpretation.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

As my study focused on sociocultural issues, it does not represent a general characteristic of the population where participants live. It is a small-scale research whose data are carefully and ethically interpreted to avoid social stereotypes that the study itself attempts to unveil. The participants' confidence and parents' acceptance to bring personal experiences and opinions to class are, in turn, given back in form of more just versions to encourage their social transformation. This corroborates the authenticity and gives credibility to the work.

The in-class discussions and interactions that made the class sessions comfortable sites to share, dialog and debate, were recorded to guarantee the quality of the data analysis through triangulation to rigorously write the final report.

Finally, the products that resulted from the critical analysis of social and media phenomena were also shared with the school community to give the research a deeper reliability.

ROLE OF THE TEACHER/RESEARCHER

As noticed along the description of teacher/student interactions, I strongly believe in “mutual humanization” (Freire, 1970, p. 156) through “a profound trust in women and men’s creative power” to transform their worlds. Thus, my role was not limited to teach concepts and lead research processes, but to be a facilitator who teaches and learns at the same time. To offer “a democratic learning environment” (Lewison et al., 2002) I engaged learners in critical consciousness to “understand the reasons behind acts” (Degener, 2001). In different terms, the critical literacy research that I carried out allowed me to reshape my role in a society whose student population needs to be trusted and encouraged to show their potential to intervene their daily life acts.

This study also transcended the school context, since my personal view of the world, as well as my learners’, turned into critical lens to interact with the world through the media. This is a reason that corroborates the great impact of a critical literacy project under the passion, rigor, effort, and inspiration by those who have already crossed this path along the globe.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEENS RESPONDING TO A CRITICAL LITERACY APPROACH

In this chapter I present the significant findings after my data analysis, which provides a clearer picture of how students responded to, deconstructed and redesigned social injustices and practices of power through a critical literacy approach.

Since most of the oral and written participations in real time in class were in Spanish (except Lawer), for this report I translated their interventions into English to favorize a comprehension of their process. However, English was used by the teacher to introduce topics, explain concepts, and foster conversations. I also used Spanish to paraphrase my own interventions and those of learners who, like Lawer, used English in all the moments of the class. In this case, I also paraphrased his contributions by using more common terms and examples in second language, supported by body language and gestures.

Given the virtual scenarios where the project took place due to the lockdown, I used numerous images and links to present students' work and collect data. To answer my research question: How do learners respond to, reconstruct and redesign social inequities and practices of power through a critical literacy approach? I used three main categories: a) Learners reading texts from different perspectives, b) Learners' lives connecting with social issues, c) Learners and social transformational actions when using critical literacy lens.

LEARNERS READING TEXTS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.

***LEARNERS RECOGNIZE SOCIAL INJUSTICES THROUGH DIFFERENT
MULTIMODAL COMPOSITIONS***

The songs “Perfect” and “Tusa” were the first approach to language as power through words, phrases, scenarios, colors, characters, attitudes, and body language included in the videos. Although I asked them to explore the videos some days before the first class, it was difficult to understand that there are hidden messages in videos they were used to watching. In fact, I found it hard to bring to class clear examples of power relations in both songs, and in the second text: a childhood tale. “Teacher, the song [reggaeton] is very famous. I know it” (Class observation, 03/07/2020) and “Cinderella is the same story that I have heard since childhood (Class observation, 27/07/2020)”. These interventions represented a general reaction to ‘disrupting the commonplace’ dimension, so I proposed paraphrasing and role plays to have learners engage and understand the intentions and messages behind the previous modes. Meanwhile, I did the same exercise to anticipate further doubts by learners in their attempt to approach inequities in the texts explored.

After two weeks of class debates, conversations, examples, and opinions in the room chats and orally, learners identified how reggaeton lyrics (Tusa) foster revenge, bad decisions, sex, drugs, hate and a sense of feminism. This analysis borne a close resemblance to conclusions found in Cinderella story, which they found a bit easier to deconstruct as many injustices were evident. Students collaboratively selected words that promote male-chauvinism, social stereotypes, and racism. After exploring written language,

we delved into visual language in texts. The following chart represents some of their comments and interpretations.

Table 7.

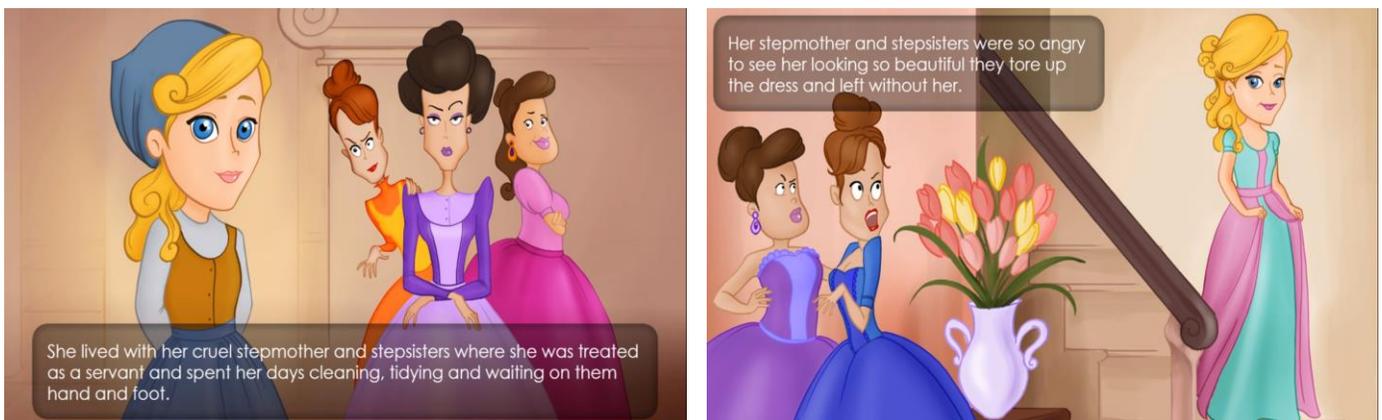
Unveiling injustices in texts

Text	Excerpt or situation	Interpretation
‘Tusa’ song	“The baddest bitch”	Loss of values and identity
	Colored-pink scenario, singers’ attitudes, and Pegasus	Feminism, hate and a sense of power over men – then – gender inequity
	Song message	revenge, infidelity, sex, drugs, power”.
	Characters	Stereotype of beauty: models, athletic men, voluptuous figures
‘Perfect’ song	“You’re perfect tonight”	Inclusion: ‘normal’ people
	Song message	Value and respect for women
Cinderella story	He declared “I will marry the girl whose foot fits this slipper”	Love tied to respect and simple actions
	“Be kind and courageous” and Cinderella’s facial gesture	Declare: Power abuse - disregard women’s right to decide
	“The magic will last until midnight”	A sense of being submissive and accepting injustices
		Magic as a metaphor of money, power

The following extracts from the video revealed stereotypes of beauty, Eurocentrism, racism, and marginalization of nontraditional types of families:

Figure 2.

Excerpt from Cinderella story



Note. Images taken from the original video: <https://youtu.be/jMvbEqsVwFA>

Dulce noticed Cinderella's eyes color, hair style and sight as reinforcing the socially constructed stereotype of beauty. Meanwhile, her stepsisters and stepmother were given non-European-like characteristics. Additionally, Andrew observed that "they are behind Cinderella, as if the writer tried to silence them". Then, he went further and said "teacher, look, the servant's skin color ... it is black, like me" (Class observation, 31/07/2020). His voice sounded upset because he interpreted a relationship between the social role and the skin color with racism. "All the bad works or bad things are for black people" he said. This concern was brought up again during the personal interview, where Andrew expressed his disagreement with the type of characteristics black people are given in the media: "mmm, teacher, and what happen in television or films happen as well in the street. For example, when a black-skinned person visits a mall, or drives a car... they are prejudged, as if they had stolen the car, or wanted to rob" (Personal interview, November, 07/11/2020).

In a following class Andrew questioned why in the most recent Walt Disney's version of Cinderella the servant was still black, while the other characters were white. His plaintive voice and facial gestures demonstrated how the text had positioned him in a marginalized manner, after having questioned the racism it portrayed. However, "During the interview, once the project was over, Andrew's soft tone of voice, laughs and funny/ironic comments about 'how inoffensive some texts looked like' seemed to show a less indifferent attitude towards the influence of media content, and social prejudices in his context" (Teacher's journal, 08/11/2020).

These analysis of social prejudices in traditional media such as music and tales favored the comprehension of two remaining texts: bullying and Influencers. Concerning bullying, we worked on listening and reading comprehension ³through audios and comics designed by participants the previous year. I promoted conversations that would equip them with abilities to recognize how bullying comes from simple daily actions, as the ones in the audio story. “when I bother others in class” said Daniel, or “when I don’t include a partner in a class activity” asserted Melanie. But what I found even more interesting was that Kelvin, known for disruptive behaviors in class, recognized that “teacher, I bother others and make fun of them, but without a bad intention. I didn’t know that it was bullying”. (Class observation, 20/08/2020). The rest of the group discussed about their role as victims or as neutral. This reflection was considered in the text redesign.

In YouTubers text, we watched some videos of famous Colombian influencers. They concluded that these ‘idols’ share irrelevant content, which is ironically well paid, as Andrew said (Class observation, 02/09/2020); he argued, just like Caroline, that the true influencers in times of pandemic are nurses, doctors, and farmers. This was the basis for their proposals to ‘take action’. They got to this conclusion after I presented in class two Colombian influencers: ‘Julio Profe’ and ‘Nubia y sus hijos’, a math teacher and a rural family (See Appendix C).

In contrast with reggaeton music and the YouTubers, they disrupted the concept of ‘fame’ as synonyms of ‘beauty, power, and a perfect life’. They found interesting how

³ Bullying presentation: <https://view.genial.ly/5f8b951ba5514210473adec3/interactive-content-no-bullying-allowed>

normal people might become positive role models, without any luxuries, fake life, or mandatory physical attributes. They also felt identified with them and, as Andrew said: “I can be an influencer, too” (Class observation, 02/09/2020), meaning that he had understood that Colombia needs other type of YouTubers. He ratified this comment during the interview “teacher, I feel embarrassed when foreign people think Colombians are like these YouTubers. That is why we are stigmatized” (Personal interview, 07/11/2020). David also turned on his microphone to ironically state: “[mmm] and they are there [on the top] thanks to us!” (Class observation, 02/09/2020)

This first dimension we explored equipped us with strategies to take our reading skills beyond the literal meaning in common texts we interact with, and we learned that words and images have the power to include or exclude.

LEARNERS INTERPRET REALITIES FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES WHEN USING CRITICAL LITERACY

Following the curriculum, I planned topics such as present and past tenses through Wh questions to favorize inquiry, which I also worked with the rest of the class (students who were not part of the project). I adapted it to musical videos to propose a role-play activity. Learners, and even me, as they asked me, chose a role from some options. We needed to stand on others’ shoes to know what people thought about music, how it influenced teens and what were the messages they portrayed (See Table 8). To my surprise, indeed, learners acted as they were supposed to, despite not enough time to prepare their questions. Reggaeton was the genre they selected as the most stereotyped.

Table 8.*Unveiling injustices in songs*

From	To	Question
Tusa director	Anyone	<i>Why do you think I am bad just for directing the video?</i>
Adult woman	Karol G	<i>Do you think your clothes in the video makes that women be seen with sexual sense and not as ladies?</i>
Family mom	Reggaeton songwriter	<i>Why do lyrics represent sex?</i>
Adult man	Karol G	<i>Have you ever thought that unless all of the money that kind of music and lyrics give you, you're also giving a bad message to children'</i>
Perfect - director	Adult woman	<i>What messages portrayed the songs in the 1980's?</i>
Family dad	Perfect - director	<i>What makes you think that those scenarios generate love?</i>
	Ed Sheeran	<i>Why was the woman the center of attention in your song?</i>
Teen boy	Tusa - director	<i>Why do you allow that type of lyrics?</i>
Adult woman	Karol G	<i>Why is your song so famous if it doesn't give anything positive to society?</i>
Ed Sheran	Karol G	<i>Why do you refer to men as bad?</i>
Teen girl	Reggaeton writer	<i>Why do you think teenagers feel identified with these kinds of songs?</i>
Family mom	Ed Sheran	<i>Do you think love is everything to make someone else feel happy?</i>
Teen girl	Ed Sheran	<i>Does your song express your feelings?</i>
Pop writer	Tusa director	<i>Why have you included those scenarios and characters?</i>
Family dad	Ed Sheran	<i>Why do you see woman wonderful?</i>
Perfect - director	Karol G	<i>What was your impression when reading the lyrics of Perfect?</i>
Adult man	Reggaeton writer	<i>How do you get inspired to write a song? who or what do you think about?</i>
Karol G	Adult woman	<i>How were the songs in the 1998's? what were the messages?</i>
Adult woman	Tusa - director	<i>You as a man, how did you feel when writing this song that puts the same man in an unfaithful position knowing that there are also women who are unfaith?</i>

Learners felt enthusiastic to question their partners, as there was a sense of confidence among us. Carolina, for instance, interpreted her mom, and acted like her. She questioned why the lyrics in reggaeton promote sex, and not values. Similar questions arose as students shared their questions and worked together to write them properly.

The same strategy was included to identify the roles in *bullying* cases. The second conditional was the language focus that allowed us to recognize that each of us are represented either as bystanders, aggressor, target, or interveners (Lau, 2010, p. 127). I designed a quiz to know how much they saw themselves represented in different roles found in a comic designed by them during the critical thinking process (See Figure 3)

Figure 3

Example of quiz that represents learners' perspectives

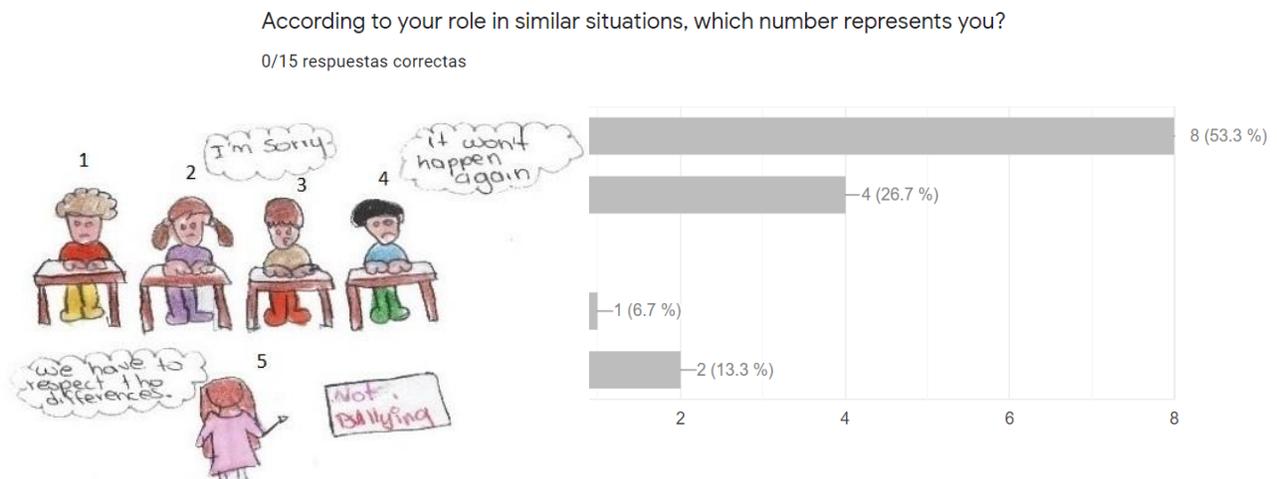
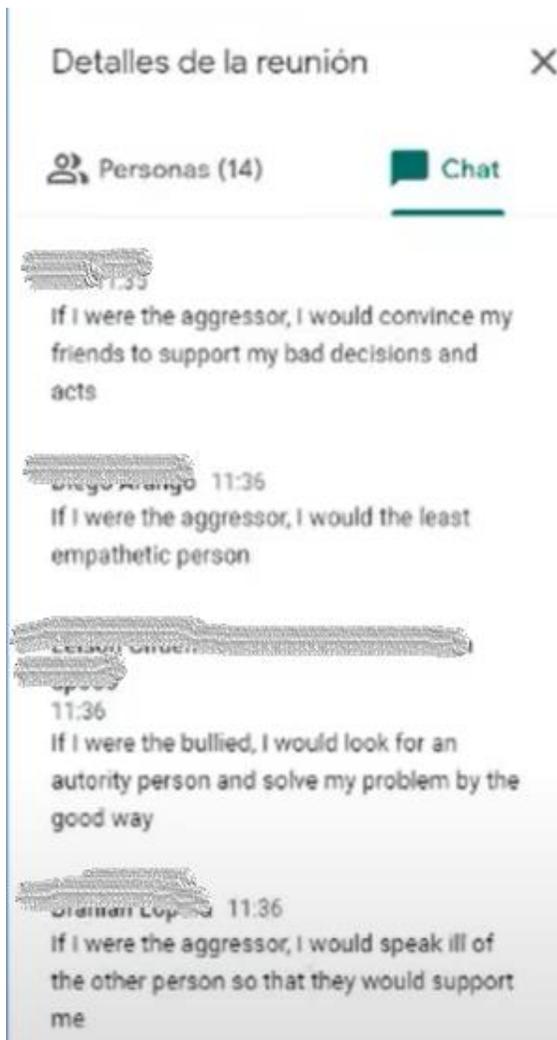


Figure 4

Chat participation



Additionally, they used the chat to post opinions that represented better forms to intervene in social injustices, rather than promoting violence as the solution (See figure 3.1). However, they also asserted that becoming interveners in bullying cases can lead to violence against them. “Teacher, but sometimes I don’t do anything to avoid getting into trouble. In Colombia it is dangerous to defend another person, mmm we can be punished or killed!” explained Andrew. Then, Daniel replied that “yes, teacher, in class it is not good to say anything when there are problems or things like that” (Class observation, 20/08/2020).

Note. Using English language structures to take perspectives.

“In class I did not know how to lead the conversation, since in my role of teacher I need to be aware of the class environment, and promote respect for each other’s rights, but it may involve asking well-behaved students to intervene and risk their integrity. (Teacher’s journal, 20/08/2020).

In Cinderella story, participants understood the author’s position. “He promoted male-chauvinism because he sees the woman as an object, and the man is who is valued

and highlighted” Caroline said (Class observation, 12/08/2020). They felt concerned about these ideologies, especially the girls, who asserted that it was difficult to understand why after so many years (the tale was written in 1697) the society stills promotes gender inequity.

Youtubers were also questioned, especially their role during the current Covid-19 emergency. Andrew showed his disagreement with the idea of ‘pretending’ to be a sensitive person in difficult times. “teacher, I don’t like when a YouTuber gives poor people some help, to later take photos and post them on social networks” (Class observation, 04/09/2020). Once more he read the context from their own perspectives and noticed how low-income people are used as a means for YouTubers to get ‘followers’. Then Lawer questioned the role of the media to promote that type of ‘events’ and content. He asserted that those influencers are not a good influence for society, but he also recognized how difficult it is to change people’s minds. In Lawer’s video acting as a YouTuber, he highlights the importance of developing cultural activities to avoid falling into the media’s intention. These interventions demonstrate how standing on others’ shoes permit different perspectives for then to take an analytical stance.

As the tale encouraged active participation, I documented descriptive field notes in my journal, which I triangulated with other data sources (interview and artifacts) to gain a better understanding of what learners expressed in and with their contributions. in this sense, I recognized that they not only read their realities from different perspectives, but also reimagined them through their critical opinions and conclusions.

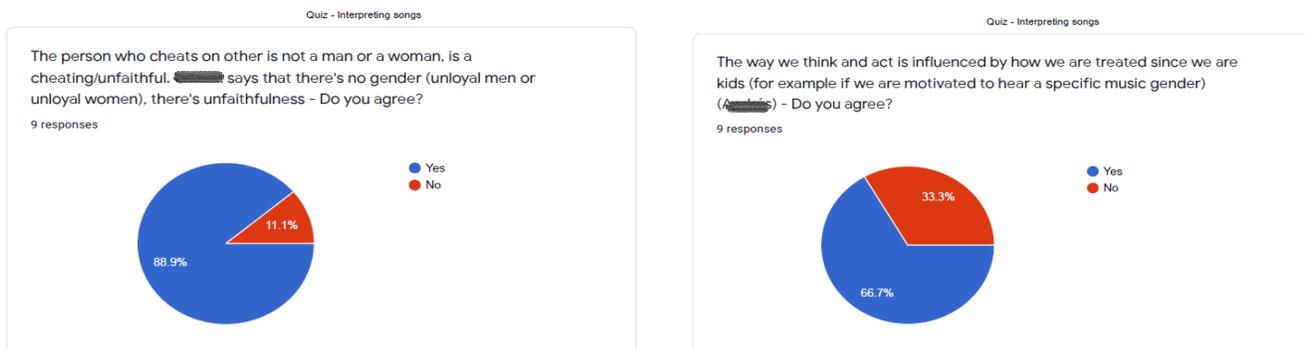
LEARNERS’ LIVES CONNECTING WITH SOCIAL ISSUES

LEARNERS AS PROMOTERS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE WHEN QUESTIONING DISCOURSES

Disrupting the commonplace of taken-for-granted texts was the basis for understanding how learners' context is influenced by sociocultural interactions. While paraphrasing the song, Caroline expressed how infidelity is seen as an act accepted in men but condemned in women. She argued that “the man is not who cheats on a woman” and concludes that the person who betrays another is an unfaithful, and thus “infidelity does not have any race or sex” (Class observation, 08/07/2020). This opinion was included in a quiz I prepared for the following class, to know learners' agreement or disagreement with her assertion (See Figure 4)

Figure 5.

Opinions as basis for quizzes



The result revealed their perception about how they are exposed to social beliefs regarding infidelity, which highlights men's disloyal acts and thus promotes male chauvinism. David also expressed the influence of music when kids are exposed to specific genres since an early age. Lawer, a musician, agreed with this comment, and shared his

experiences in music process after his exposure to religious music events when he was a child. In the interview (29/09/2020) and video⁴ (0:55) he explained how much his parents contributed to his wish for classical and religious music. Those whose answer was "No" to David's assertion, changed their mind as we, in group, redesigned the song lyrics and the rhythm. "teacher, I can help to create a soft rhythm in the new version to generate kinda [a kind of] sensation of peace" said Lawer (Class observation, 29/07/2020), his partners agreed and felt encouraged to participate and contribute from their skills and interests: drawing, writing, painting, pronouncing, designing, etc.

When we questioned the physical attributes given to Cinderella, learners agreed that beauty is a social stereotype. I think that these physical attributes seen in the reggaeton video offered them a major understanding of the marginalizing role of physical appearance in society. Andrew connected this tale with YouTube videos and the media content as they promote specific characteristics of women and men. In the role-play questions, Caroline acted as an adult woman, and asked: "Do you think your clothes in the video makes that women be seen with sexual sense and not as ladies?" – she questioned how reggaeton positions listeners, which leads to stereotypes towards people according to their music preferences. Andrew and Dulce also brought conversations from Cinderella, where the tale conceives women as the main goal for men. Andrew concluded "many female teens, even from early ages, want to be like the women on the reggaeton videos, because they show like ... a type of woman that all the men want". (Class observation, 14/08/2020) Junji and

⁴ Art influencer: <https://youtu.be/3LXA4eo4c-I>

Simón also mentioned the clothes some girls and boys wear, and their ways of talking and acting, as in the musical video. Andrew's comments and examples included different texts such as tv programs, commercials, and advertisements where women are objectivized.

While interpreting how the texts connected with learners' lives, more social beliefs showed up.

Simón shared a common saying in his social environment: "get dressed properly so that you can improve your life and ours" (Spanish version: *vístase bien para que nos saque de pobres*), he explained that this saying is as a form to encourage the family girls to marry rich men. "this type of comments emerged due to learners' immersion in deep analysis of social phenomena, based on the tales" (Teacher's journal, 14/08/2020). Then, Caroline posted on the chat "boys don't cry" as another example she finds in common conversations. She connected this idea with her analysis of Tusa, where she paraphrased "dice que por otro man no llora" (she says she will not cry any more for a man) and then "le da una depresión tonta, llorando lo comienza a llamar" (she feels depressed and while crying she calls him; own translation). She concluded that we must show our feelings, regardless of how positive or negative they are. This point of view was seen in bullying cases, where fatal consequences are death, suicide.

Given the fact that some learners have experienced bullying, we debated about its effects and noticed how the lack of confidence to express feelings make depressive people suffer and even to commit suicide. Learners argued that society does not allow men to cry, and thus they cannot show any sign of weakness, otherwise they are rejected or mocked. But paradoxically, we concluded that women 'can' and 'must' cry, reason why men are

socially pushed to exert their right to make them suffer. Male-chauvinism, then, was one of the main issues analyzed in learners' interpretations of their own family and community.

When Andrew mentioned his concern about racist comments and situations in Cinderella, tv programs, movies, etc, a dialog allowed a new reflection:

Melanie: "black people are like poor people".

Teacher: why?

Melanie: because they always lose

David: yes, and in the films the people who die or suffer tragedies are black, poor or ugly.

As I did not feel totally prepared to lead such critical conversations, I previously drew on Lau's (2010) class practices related to bullying and Cinderella to guide my process. Her students, along with mine, concluded that "Good people will have a good ending; bad people will have a bad ending. "Good people will be rewarded; bad people will be punished" (p. 256). However, my learners went further and criticized the society's perception towards these bad endings.

They agreed that stereotypes cross emotions and values, since society feels ashamed when white people suffer, but shows indifferent when black, poor, ugly people have bad endings. A common Colombian saying and joke summarizes this assertion, as they said "y como era de bonito" (and he/she was actually beautiful); this was a way of rejecting a white persons' terrible fate, but an excuse to justify marginalized people's adversities. These popular sayings and jokes demonstrated how non-privileged groups' identities are determined by the values that elite groups exert over them.

Something that I considered relevant was to bring to class news we watched on TV. Although learners expressed they dislike tv news, they also expressed that national news go quickly viral on social networks. Therefore, I asked them to interpret the previous saying in Colombian real contexts, and their answer had to do with social leader's deaths. They said that in Colombia people are indifferent when social leaders are killed, because they do not belong to a top social class, but they reject when a famous person suffers any adversity.

To foster basic comprehension skills, I included prediction and guessing meaning by stopping the videos and asking participants what would happen then. Students drew on the original version in Spanish (tale) to make meaning of words and plot, but failed to find a literal translation. However, with practice they managed to interpret the author's stance through single words, phrases, or images. Once we critically analyzed the meaning of the phrase "the magic will last until midnight" from Cinderella, and the graphic representation (video), this statement impacted most of the learners. They took this statement to their own context by understanding that magic can be metaphorically compared with money, power or beauty that people use to abuse while it lasts. Real examples from personal and social interactions were brought to class to connect their real world and the text. Consequently, we analyzed how drug dealers in neighborhoods get rich, but soon they are killed or prisoned. In the same line, Simón's saying about beauty as a key concept to assure better life conditions justified what they [Samuel and his partners] interpreted in reggaeton.

I can conclude that they understood why women are seen as sexual objects in musical videos, because beauty and youth "will last until midnight (very soon)". Or why rich or socially privileged men (as the most evident, according to the participants) attempt

to ‘buy’ people or luxuries (clothing or jewels as seen in the musical videos), rather than attempting to effort to ‘gain’ respect, affection, or honestly make a living, etc. Again, the magic represented by money will not last forever.

Then, a political stance was taken to refer to bullying and influencers. Learners’ debates and conversations ended up in a common agreement about the power influencers exert to get followers with their speech and fake life. The same happens with politicians, according to them, because, as Lawer said “politicians wash our brains” (Class observation, 04/09/2020). They talked about this in a moment in which political differences were promoting violence in the country. They asserted that people kill each other because “they don’t think” and just follow politicians’ ideas (Class observation, 04/09/2020). From these discussions, they concluded that social differences in local and national contexts are due to a lack of critical reading that may question common social practices.

Connecting texts with real life events, even tragedies, encourage learners to use the media to question what is ‘normal’, and although things may not change so easily, surely they will stop being part of those passive spectators supporting these ideologies.

LEARNERS MAKE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TEXTS AND REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES

Going back to Tusa video and its content, learners concluded that what is presented in the video is lived in real contexts after a love disappointment. “People go to parties, get drunk and try to forget what they lived” (Class observation, 17/07/2020) was one of the answers. “What can we do to change this ending?” – I asked again. They offered a list of

options that did not include revenge or become “the baddest bitch” as the song incited to. We related the concept of “the baddest” with people who lose their values to adapt new forms of thinking, dressing, talking, and acting. Dulce referred to this change as those who try to “fit” in other social groups. Kristopher mentioned the term “servant” to characterize those who leave their families’ ideals to start a life of drugs and negative acts. Then, Maria kept on bringing Cinderella’s characters to talk about those princes that use their money and power to buy girls (especially those who meet social stereotypes or beauty standards).

Teacher: who can be the prince?

Maria: a person that has money

Dulce: and the Cinderella is the girl that permits to be bought

Teacher: and the servant?

Daniel: mmm, a friend of the prince?

Students worked together to recreate texts from their own contexts. The characters they contrasted were included in new versions of the tale. But when we covered the bullying case and what the media users promote in social networks, Andrew shared a lived experience. He mentioned that ‘memes’ are common on Facebook, and he used to enjoy and share, but he stopped supporting this content after a family experience. “Teacher, with ‘memes’ people mock others because of physical conditions, like an illness, you understand me?” yes, I do, go ahead - I said, “well, one day I saw a ‘meme’ of a person with a cleft lip. I felt bad because my mom suffers from cleft lip. From that day on, I don’t share memes nor mock sick people anymore”. (Class observation, 20/08/2020)

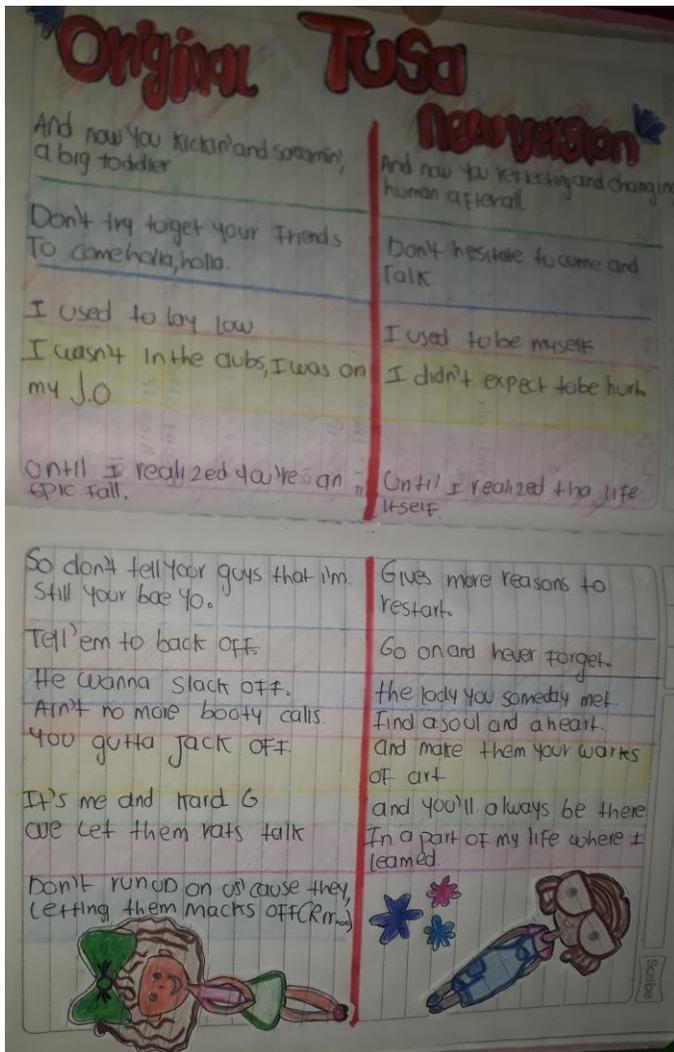
Although this experience was painful, Andrew taught us that stepping on others' shoes would equip with critical views and careful manners to deal with digital content. From this shared experience we talked about the importance of being critical when using social networks, since a user's intention might end up in a bullying case when supported by careless users.

In a following class, I selected a specific social network to share a viral video of a girl carrying out a dance challenge. It was not difficult for learners to identify that she was rejected and mocked because her background did not resemble an expensive scenario, but a common house. "We could conclude that social networks are the representation of social injustices but in digital formats, where people who don't meet standards tend to be excluded" (Teacher's journal, 04/09/2020).

LEARNERS AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONAL ACTIONS WHEN USING CRITICAL LITERACY LENS

LEARNERS' CRITICAL LITERACY PRODUCTS EMERGE FROM INTERESTS, TALENTS, PERSONAL NEEDS, AND EMOTIONS.

Learners feel more engaged in CL when they are given the spaces to be themselves; I mean, when they can share experiences that in some cases become needs, and also when their talents and interests are considered to improve their own literacies.



Learners' talents and interest "became a very powerful affirming message to these students that they were not inadequate, inferior and deficient as the mainstream discourse would describe them", as Lau (2010, p. 271) detailed in her findings after carrying out a similar study I stemmed from (Cinderella and Bullying).

Figure 6

Song reconstruction

The song was collaboratively written, from each other's contributions in terms of structures and the adoption of a more pertinent

language that positions men and women in equitable levels. The lyrics were thought to recreate their own contexts and change the negative influence of social ideologies. We all agreed to understand disappointment as a reality, but which can be lived and learned from. Therefore, the song's name was changed: We are human after all (Human after all).

Having comprehended the non-neutral position of texts, our aim was to change people's minds in failure situations. So, no revenge, drugs or wrong decisions were promoted, but respectful and informed decisions to overcome adverse experiences.

What we accomplished then was the inclusion of talents and interests. Lawer created a soft rhythm to generate calm and peace. On the other hand, Caroline practiced her pronunciation to sing with the original rhythm (style). Her intention was to disrupt the stereotypes against those who, like her, prefer this type of musical genre. Additionally, learners who were well at drawing and editing designed the cover, and the scenarios to include common people and places. Since most of them had been considered as excluded (or had witnessed exclusion) due to social stereotypes, they changed the characters; facial gestures and attitudes were considered as well. Finally, the reflections from the role-plays were materialized in perspectives that gave each person involved in the song a more equitable position (See final product⁵)

One of the texts that caught learners' attention was the tale. I think they felt directly identified with ideologies that have ruled society. They found marginalization, male chauvinism, stereotypes, power abuse, through visual and written language even in their close contexts: family and social networks. But what they questioned was the fact that through the last decades these ideologies have increased, especially with the invention and spread of social media (Teacher's journal, 21/08/2020).

In group we agreed to rewrite the tale. Speaking, reading, writing and listening skills were used at the time -not explored separately- while reconstructing the story. We based the choice of characters and plot on the society' needs and realities. They put their types of families in the tale by asking to include a non-traditional family, but one which

⁵ Final version of the song: <https://view.genial.ly/5f92325994f5810d1720ffee/presentation-were-human-after-all>

included stepsiblings or stepparents. By the following week they showed up with different versions of the story (See Figure 6), despite the limited writing skills and vocabulary.

The versions show their rejection towards injustices such as woman discrimination, power abuse and male chauvinism. By giving the woman voice to decide whether or not to marry, they challenged the prince's aim to own the woman. Besides, the family members were given more just characteristics, rather than reproducing a negative concept of stepsisters or stepmothers. Meanwhile Dulce and Diana decided to work together (through WhatsApp) to design the drawings.

Figure 7.

Different versions representing the current Cinderellas

Different versions representing a more just plot/ending of Cinderella.

Version 1						
Cinderella: ugly girl. Her parents had an accident and died. She lived with a rich family.	She was treated very well, and the new family took care of her.	There was a dance at the Prince's palace. All of them were invited.	He saw the girl, and although she was ugly, he felt in love with her values and personality.	He asked her to be his wife, but she said: NO.	Everybody (Including her family) got surprised about the answer, since every girl would be pleased to marry him.	She said that she did not know him, and maybe in some time she would choose or be chosen by her real love.
Version 2						
Cinderella lived with her stepmother and stepsisters.	She was treated in a bad manner. She liked reading and wanted to be a teacher.	One day she met a family whose children also liked reading and were as brilliant as her	They offered them a place to live in (with them)	She was empowered, and so faced the stepmother and left the previous home (hell)	She moved to a mansion, where she found libraries. She prepared to make her dreams come true	She married a scientist, became a teacher, and lived happy forever. Her stepmother and stepsisters became slaves
Version 3						
She lived with her stepmother and stepsiblings (stepbrother, stepsister)	She was respected and supported. She also had the power to make her own decisions.	She lived in a city called Medellín.	In the neighborhood there was a man who controlled the illegal business.	The Prince is a drug dealer. He thinks to exert power over other people (low-income neighborhood)	The servant was the drug dealer's assistant. Both promoted social injustices.	They could not "buy" the girl.
Version 4						
She lived in a luxury palace, full of comforts.	She was respected and supported by her stepsisters and stepmother	One day they were invited to a party, by the Prince's father. He wanted to find a wife for his son (Prince)	The stepmother hired the best designer to create the most elegant dresses for them (4)	The prince fell in love with her, but they had to leave before midnight. She lost her slipper	The prince got to find the girl whose foot fit the slipper and asked her to marry him	She did not accept, because she did not know him, and because she did not want to marry.

That night Dulce contacted me through Facebook to let me know their ideas.

“Teacher Diego, we want to change the clothes, the attitudes, the ways of looking at, and the physical appearance. But we decided to draw the ‘prince’ and the ‘servant’ as the original versions” (Facebook communication, 19/10/2020) When I asked why, Dulce said that they thought it was important to represent the negative people in their neighborhood, and how the new characteristics of Cinderella and her family could overcome this reality.

This gave me insights of how these girls were describing the characters from their own needs to change their community, so I proposed to use these images to write our new version of the tale. I shared the computer screen to show what I was writing in English, while they used the chat or the microphone to start and follow the story. Lawer, who spoke in English all the time, supported the writing, while the rest of the class included words to complete the text, and ideas to write a more equitable version.

As I could not interview all the participants, especially those who were shy or quiet in class, I documented their participations and analyzed their artifacts to objectively attempt to find out their reactions to CL. Kelvin was a student who did not participate too much, in fact he had missed some classes. When we were deciding about including a stepmother, he said: “a stepfather, someone who abuses the mother”. The class did not agree, because as Dulce said, “that generates the same problems” and Caroline complemented “yes, and we want to give a different message”. But Kelvin persisted “that’s what happen in my family” (Class observation, 21/08/2020).

I understood why he had asked to include his real family conditions, as a way of representing what his mother lives, and although the partners rejected, he felt the need to express the injustices he lives at home.

In our version of Cinderella, it is interesting to notice that the feelings that the drawings transmit match the story. In this sense, the stepmother was given positive characteristics, while the servant and the princes' acts represent their original facial gestures (See Figure 8)

Figure 8.

New characters' features of Cinderella's family



Another important analysis was Lawer's production. He gave Cinderella opposite characteristics than the ones given in the original text. In fact, he used "Conderella"⁶ instead of "Cinderella". His fears during the bullying experience were transformed into active views to promote the justice he lacked. When I interviewed him, he expressed that "I think Cinderella is a representation of where do you live...rich people on the top, black

⁶ Conderella: <https://en.calameo.com/read/004272735b03b419bdfb2>

people in the bottom, it's literal, [mmm] you have to analyze. I can live a lot of situations happening in this story” (Personal interview, 26/10/20).

The final version of the story shows a ‘normal’ person, without physical attributes as those promoted in musical videos and the media, and without economic resources to succeed, as it is socially assumed. “Learners actually comprehended that society does not determine people’s fates according to their social class, physical appearance or family context” (Teacher’s journal, 24/08/2020). Additionally, learners showed their emotion when I shared some samples of versions designed by professor Sunny Lau’s kids in her doctoral thesis file (PDF). Andrés said “Whoa, yes, ¡we can do something that good! (feeling anxious and nodding his head)” (Class observation, 24/08/2020). Some students who had missed the class, agreed to create an audio tale, to catch up. To this, I helped them create their version, but they recorded their voice with their cell phones. Then, I helped them design their digital version. Their voices, although lacking intonation in some moments, represent their emotions as they were narrating a tale that related their lives and contexts. See final version ⁷

Bullying was also a text designed by learners, who inspired by Lau (2010) decided to create a similar campaign. However, they included some contributions based on the class discussions. Kelvin decided to write some recommendations to avoid the bullying practices he usually fosters in class. Lawer created a rhythm to accompany an audio message, since he had found that rhythm affects emotions. Dulce created an image that represented one of

⁷ Final version of the tale: <https://view.genial.ly/5f33007b20c4eb0d81b18eaf/presentation-cinderella-version-2020>

her friends' experiences about marginalization (See Appendix F). She attempted to raise awareness on people who could be facing the same issue. She used words in Spanish to facilitate a comprehension by the specific audience: the school community, because the campaign was published in the institutional web page and on the institutional Facebook account.

Melanie and Maria also designed a comic, representing how the media 'hits' users when they are not aware of the dangers. Additionally, Melanie practiced her pronunciation to send a lovely message designed in class by the whole group. She insisted that the voice tone includes or excludes. The campaign represented learners' voices through words, images, and audios, but especially, their lived experiences which they did not want others to repeat or live.

The last text, YouTubers, was the biggest challenge. Those learners who questioned the negative influence of some Youtubers decided to become influencers based on current social needs. Caroline had recognized that doctors and nurses were being silenced and ignored, despite their important role during the pandemic. Thus, she stepped on doctors' shoes to have users recognize their importance.

In the same vein, Maria used her skills to exercise (cheerleading) and to foster healthy daily habits during the mandatory lockdown. After the video ⁸was edited, she said "Teacher, look, I am a good influencer, at last!" (Class observation, 16/09/2020). "At last" was a positive reaction to an experience shared by her in class, in which she had bullied a

⁸ Sports influencer: <https://youtu.be/H41Uau-htPs>

friend some years ago. Similarly, Lawer decided to promote arts through music. He acted as an influencer to teach how to engage in music but considering the impact of rhythms and beats as promoters of emotions and specific behaviors (watch video, 6:01). In his 14-minute video, he highlights the importance of the family environment in kids' life decisions, such as the exposure to music. However, as he shared during the interview, he demonstrates how CL is related to psychology (that is his passion) so as to read others' words and behaviors.

On the other hand, Andrew had been questioning people's roles within the society and how he could reach his goal, as mentioned previously, of "I can be an influencer, too". So, that week he contacted me through WhatsApp. He told me about the effects of the Critical Literacy approach in his personality and ways of thinking. "teacher, the project changed my perspective" and "Look, I live near a stream, and sometimes [wavering] I throw garbage there, I mean, I am like part of the problem, but I can do something positive for my [mmm] my family and community" (WhatsApp communication, 14/09/2020).

I encouraged and congratulated him for such decision, and that night he sent me a 15-minute video of him cleaning the stream. "I can't believe how much Andrew got to change his way of reading his world. His contributions in class are materialized in significant products, but this one seems to corroborate his previous concern "I don't like when a Youtuber gives poor people some help, to later take photos and post them on social networks". (Class observation, 04/09/2020). His intention was not to be recognized, he just wanted to help improve the life conditions in his neighborhood, as he noticed in Nubia y sus hijos and Julio Profe. He argued that these Youtubers show themselves as they are, without any concern to be affected by social stereotypes. During a 16-minute friendly

interview, Andrew thanked the project for approaching him to more “mature forms of thinking” (Personal interview, 07/11/2020).

In the same interview, and while we recalled class events, and how the project had transcended from the virtual room to external settings, he complemented “and teacher, even my mom has learned in these classes”; he explained that his mother sometimes attended the meetings, since she could notice how much he enjoyed participating. But what reaffirmed the impact of CL are the spaces to family talks in which “I dialog with my mom and explain to her how some things are not as we think”, what do you mean? – I asked – “look, when we covered Cinderella, she impressed to know how wrong she was, because as she was told the tale in her childhood, she told me that story when I was a little boy” (Personal interview, 07/11/2020). His sense of pride and empowerment was captured when he narrated the way in which he supported his family (mother) to raise awareness about mainstream beliefs, and also to resist sociocultural ideologies that had been affecting previous thoughts, attitudes and behaviors in his family environment.

Once the videos were designed, I felt learners were afraid of being criticized on social networks such as Facebook. I think they wanted to promote a social change, but at the same time they did not want to be bullied again, since they had recognized how ‘dangerous’ some users are, and how photos and videos are sometimes used to attack others. For this reason, we created a social network (interactive presentation) called ‘Reallivers’, where our productions, especially videos, would be posted. “Although my students agreed to share the videos in classes, and the institutional web page, I will keep

these videos “hidden’ as a way of protecting their integrity” (Teacher’s journal, 14/10/2020)

Another tool they used was drawings. Diana had shown interest in changing the characteristics of influencers. So, she drew four members of the community who are socially excluded given their lack of money, health problems, devalued occupations, or physical appearance. In view of this, she told me “I want to draw the persons that are not included in the media as role models” (class observation, 06/09/2020), and she did. She gave voice to the new influencers to allow them to show their talents and knowledge, regardless of the social rejection. She also added short descriptions (See Figure 8).

Figure 9.

Marginalized people included in media content



Concerning the challenges that they had criticized in Tik Tok, ideas came up to create new ones, but which could foster values, equity, and justice in social networks. They gave interesting opinions to support new hashtags and challenges:

“#genderequitychallenge”, “#lessfaceboobmorebookschallenge”,

#thinkingbeforeactingchallenge” and “#noracismchallenge”, among others.

Dulce challenged the social ideologies of girls and boys classified into females or males according to the toys they play with, the color they like, or the occupations people perform (See Figure 9). “teacher, the girl is playing with a car toy because it’s not so common, and the boy has pink color because the boys are not accepted in society when they have a different hair color, or with female colors” (Facebook communication, 19/10/2020)

Figure 10.

Challenging social stereotypes



In this dimension, taking action implied recognizing how beliefs and culturally gained behaviors promote stereotypes, which are then challenged after seeing their reality from different perspectives. With this, we learned that critiquing a text does not mean promoting a social change, because CL works when changes are the result of redesigning texts which include more just and equitable versions.

LEARNERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE

“Teacher, and what about creating a virtual campaign that impact the school community?” (Class observation, 12/08/2020). This was a proposal by Melanie after our class discussion about the need to take action, rather than just raising awareness. Her intention aimed to mitigate the lack of physical spaces to post infographics, comics, and similar products, as we had once done in a physical class activity. “yes, you’re right, because Internet is a good resource, as long as we use it properly” I said. I took advantage of her proposal to allow learners to view Facebook and other social networks as possibilities to promote significant changes in audiences’ minds. “I think learners have experienced how tough some social networks users are, reason why we need to experience as well how positive these networks are when properly used” (Teacher’s journal, 12/08/2020).

The multimodal compositions, therefore, were uploaded to institutional webpages (school websites, Facebook) and through website links on teachers’ and students’ WhatsApp accounts. Given the fact that these products would be used as English learning material for the entire school, and the limited access to social networks by a great number of families, we used WhatsApp to share these productions.

In the interview with Dulce, she mentioned her mother’s reaction when she noticed that our audiovisual resources (except the videos) were being shared with the school community: “she does not know English, but she likes that we use Internet for positive things” (Personal interview, 15/10/2020). Dulce’s mother means that a) she comprehends

how Internet is commonly used to post irrelevant content, and thus she values our responsible use of online tools; and b) she recognizes the importance of this class strategy to promote a more meaningful learning.

As some learners recognized in class, they used to be passive users or consumers of information, but their critical perspectives have led them to think twice before posting, ‘liking’ or reacting to irrelevant content. However, what corroborates their view of Internet as a space to promote justice is their concern about the quality of products to be shared. While designing the anti-bullying campaign, Dulce asked me to check her drawings in order to correct before posting it. “It was a hard work because I have been very busy, but please, tell me what you think” (Facebook communication, 30/08/2020). The following images evidence her wish to share a flashy bullying case, to catch the audience’s attention, and also her interest in posting a free-error text.

Figure 11.

Design process



Note. Dulce’s concern about the quality of her contribution on social media

When we agreed to create multimodal campaigns to resist the traditional texts that reproduce social inequities, learners agreed to use different online tools to design voices,

create avatars, and produce animations. I expected similar digital drawings as the ones created by Dulce and Caroline for Cinderella tale. However, as I received their drafts to be checked and intervened (especially in texts written in English), I noticed their effort to create handmade products and include their voices and scenarios. This caught my attention because in class conversations learners shared digital tools to make more easily activities to catch up in other subjects. “Although my students are used to creating easy and nice digital products, their choice to represent their own skills and voices, despite it is time-consuming, reveals how relevant it is for them to produce their own counter texts. This reflects respect for the audience, as well as a rejection to users who do not make informed decisions regarding what to share, post and ‘follow’ on social networks” (Teacher’s journal, 07/10/2020).

But their concern was not only to offer significant content to nonspecific audience on the web. Products such as ‘hashtags’ and ‘viral challenges’ that included campaigns to interpret and intervene negative social practices were designed to share with the school student population as role models in English classes. Therefore, as can be seen, the small-scale audience (280 students in secondary school) did not prevent them from redesigning popular texts with such quality.

This study revealed, therefore, that learners can become texts producers through similar or even better designed multimodal tools, when they accept the challenge to use social media with social change purposes (See Appendix E). Additionally, the research showed that learners raised their voices to resist inequities, but they also understood that their voices do not mean unique versions at expenses of differences; reason why

understanding multiple viewpoints was also a key factor towards respect for different perspectives.

***LEARNERS' IDENTITIES REFLECTED IN THEIR SOCIAL
CONTRIBUTION THROUGH THE MEDIA***

“Just imagine what does it feel to be bullied not only by students, by teachers [as] well” (Class observation, 27/08/2020). This excerpt from a whole description of a real bullying case introduces the last finding concerning social identities. Lawer empowered himself to both share this experience in class and propose alternatives to avoid similar situations to happen. In his text⁹, Lawer detailed how he was socially recognized in a specific moment of his life. But the most disturbing is the setting where such exclusion occurred.

As Gee (1999) affirms in his Discourses, in social practices carried out in schools (as well as churches, social groups, etc.) the power of dominant groups is exerted over marginalized populations. Therefore, Lawer experienced the position he was placed in due to social stereotypes that prevented him from being socially accepted. In the personal interview, Lawer corroborated the social exclusion that had him drop the previous school. “Why didn’t you find a solution as the ones you propose in this project? – I asked – “teacher, I was very young and say that a teacher bully me is like, oh, this boy is crazy”

⁹ A real bullying case: <https://en.calameo.com/read/004272735223fba902e39>

(Personal interview, 26/10/20). This decision of dropping school reinforced the dominant discourses that are reproduced in social groups.

Similar experiences were lived by Andrew, whose identity was also distorted as his skin color was socially contrasted with the concept of slavery. In his statement “All the bad works or bad things are for black people” (Class observation, 07/11/2020), Andrew reaffirmed what the sociocultural interactions as texts had positioned him as a passive reader. However, both experiences detailed along this chapter demonstrated the impact of critical literacy to encourage more critical reading of learners’ world. This world I refer to is that narrowed space where Lawer and Andrew were (or have been) positioned so as to take for granted their lack of merit to the rights and a more equitable social position.

Lawer and Andrew’s counter texts (Influencers, especially) suggest their step from acceptance, and refusal to negotiation of their identities (Golden, 2017). Their previous consented marginalizing role through the taken-for-granted ‘normalcy’ was challenged by means of a progressive process to deconstruct dominant ideologies. Then, their active role within their communities while promoting meaningful changes was the step to seek out new and better social positions.

As well as these boys who got aware of their direct marginalization, the girls also engaged in processes of social inclusion. Diana expressed in the bullying campaign that “our differences enrich us, and respect join us”. Then, in her characteristics of Colombian new influencers she asserted that “most of the influencers only center on show business, and few are given the option to do something more relevant, that is why I propose to include people who are socially excluded” (WhatsApp communication, 06/09/2020). These

contributions go beyond the act of participating in a group project. On the contrary, Diana took the voice of those socially silenced and gave them back their identities and social positions as role models in the fields of literacy, sports, health, etc. Diana took a critical agency to see the society from an external perspective, far away from the social position that had made her see herself as a passive spectator.

One of my explorations of learners' artifacts ended up in the analysis of drawings as forms of communication. I found out a WhatsApp communication with Daniel and Melanie. In this process (See Figure 12), they represented their own neighborhood and people around them. “teacher, and this mmm, boy, mmm, disable boy, can be here in the cover?” – “I think so” replied Melanie” (WhatsApp communication, 16/09/2020). They had internalized the power of language, that is why they thought before using a word that could exclude the person in the wheelchair. Quite the opposite, they explored manners to remake identities of people in their context.

Melanie suggested to draw herself wearing common clothing and dealing with a love disappointment, by means of social interaction rather than sex, drugs, revenge, and bad decisions (connecting with Tusa song). She affirmed that her clothing did not match Simon's saying, “get dressed properly so that you can improve your life and ours”. Although she had recognized that her way of dressing, talking, and even acting were somehow influenced by music (reggaeton genre), she resisted the subjective views of society and thus challenged it to accept her as she is.

Figure 12.

Images restoring identities and resisting stereotypes



Even though not the whole group felt directly excluded or marginalized in any moment of their lives (or maybe some learners did not recognize this), all of them helped to redesign texts through their English linguistic skills. Their main aim was to put their voices and lived experiences in favor of their community to avoid living the injustices that some of them suffered from.

Finally, after recognizing the longstanding personal and family effects of dominant ideologies on ways of being positioned in the world, learners' multimodal productions were used to show their knowledge built to reposition themselves within more equitable frames. In addition to this, and as part of the taking action stage, they used the media to allow spectators and general audiences to recognize similar impacts on beliefs and behaviors, and, if so, how to take agency to remake their identities. Therefore, the school worked as a social space where more informed discourses could also mitigate the effects of unconscious marginalizing practices as the one lived by Lawer.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSING TEENS' DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF
SOCIAL INEQUITIES AND RELATIONS OF POWER

In this chapter I discuss how learners respond to, deconstruct and redesign social injustices and relations of power through a critical literacy approach. My purpose was to engage learners in more critical views of reading and rewriting their own social practices. The connection between their sociocultural interactions and the texts was a key element to disclose relations of power portrayed in language. This, in turn, led to interpret how socialization through language influences personal beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. For this purpose, I created spaces for bringing critical literacies to online classes; we built collaborative and strong arguments that allowed to impact and transform teens' lives and communities in a public-school context.

I used popular culture interactions to promote explorations, discussions, and designs of artifacts to represent better versions of reality. Besides, I enacted participatory classroom practices where my role would cease "... to be an instrument by which teachers can manipulate students, but rather expresses the consciousness of the students themselves" (Freire, 1970, p.51). In this sense, the Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy by Lewison et al. (2002) informed my gradual steps to reach a questioning and transformation of dominant ideologies. The data analysis showed a strong correlation with the literature review and with critical pedagogy tenets towards a "mutual humanization" (Freire, 1970, p. 156)

My findings suggest that bringing critical literacy theories and practices to class promote a more equitable, collaborative, and significant learning environment. Furthermore, by giving learners active roles to read in a more critical way they found out their own social issues as starting points to start up a social change in their personal and social dimensions. Hence, the present study sought to corroborate how schools can become a place where the struggles for more equitable societies through critical literacy can reach a social transformation.

More details on this will be given below, where I discuss and respond my research question: How do learners respond to, deconstruct and redesign social inequities and practices of power in physical and multimodal settings through a critical literacy approach?

LEARNERS READING TEXTS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The study followed theoretical concepts brought from sociocultural theory and revealed a close connection between theories and models described along the research.

Drawing on Vasquez' (2010) claim for allowing learners' voices to be heard, the texts were selected based on their interests, motivations, and expectations to use a virtual-mediated model, given the current pandemic. Meaningful bonds were made between texts and lived experiences, through personal, critical, and transformative dimensions as we moved along the process.

Emotional investment (motivation) in multimodal content was a factor that encouraged deeper analysis of common texts such as musical videos and childhood tales, as the most challenged, due to the power of language identified within them. This exploration

of musical genres such as pop and reggaeton demonstrated a strong appropriation of music to socialize and adapt social beliefs and behaviors. General comments such as “Teacher, the song [reggaeton] is very famous. I know it” (Class observation, 03/07/2020) meant that they did not consider it as portraying social injustice to be critically explored.

My first understanding and connection with some scholars’ definitions was the concept of text as non-neutral (Vásquez, 2010); moreover, I recalled Lau (2010) and her conclusion regarding texts as remaining there, just as texts. Indifferent attitudes of learners when asked to read beyond the words and images confirmed that texts do not portray any meaning per se, it is the reader’s interaction with them and the subsequent perspectives that give texts special value and sense.

Although notable efforts were made to unveil what reggaeton video attempted to ‘say’, participants gradually understood that visual language is another way to communicate other than written. As they paid special attention to colors, words, facial gestures, rhythm and characters, issues such as stereotypes, classism, power and gender inequity began to emerge. Emotions and feelings provoked by how they interpreted music, tales, bullying acts and YouTubers corroborated Freire’s ‘conscientização as learners recognized how language placed them in marginalized positions (i.e., females saw themselves rejected and less powerful in Cinderella tale, while males felt rejected and weaker in Tusa reggaeton). They also felt excluded from musical videos that stereotype people and classify them into beautiful and rich, and ugly and poor.

It is fundamental to note that the traditional literal reading had prevented students from questioning what they used to hear and how it would impact emotions and subsequent

acts, as represented on the video. They demonstrated that messages in written and visual language were considered as natural, and thus unquestionable. This also suggested that learners do not feel totally able to critique their worlds when they lack experience and training to do so, especially in traditional education settings. Hence, the findings of this research reinforced the way in which “the new literacies” (Freebody & Luke, 1999) through multimodal texts, allow students to “‘read’ film, clothing, gestures, pictures, photographs, bodies and so on” (Janks, 2010, p.18).

Concerning Jank’s (2010) concept of language as power, critical questions by the teacher and class discussions ended up in decoding single words and phrases through metaphors. Words such as “fit”, “declare”, “the baddest bitch”, “magic”, among others, revealed a close relationship with social behaviors. Learners interpreted how tales such as Cinderella describe the society’s rules: beauty, power, money, and thus how these concepts justify racism, exclusion, and inequities. Additionally, singers and authors were analyzed to comprehend their purposes through language. This confirmed that people are tagged in terms of skin color, physical appearance, and social class, which classify them in specific social groups characterized by sharing similar *language bits*: “words, acts, gestures, attitudes, beliefs, purposes, clothes, bodily movements and positions, and so on” (Lankshear & Knobel (2011, p. 19).

This first stage informed by Lewison et al.’s (2002) ‘disrupting the commonplace’ enabled more engagements in knowing the reasons behind acts of writing or producing texts. Role-play activities were actively used to step on others’ shoes to understand different perspectives. By interpreting real people from the close context (school, family,

community) learners questioned what they had found as unjust. The use of specific English structures as “If I were I would...” revealed an increasing ability to judge and propose the changes they wanted to see in their society. However, despite the use of this structure to state critical perspectives, the analysis did not show, with a few exceptions, a bigger impact in terms of language productions. I could have expanded their possibilities, rather than limiting their writing. No matter whether their writing production was properly fostered, learners expended their thoughts and approached to different perspectives to take their own stances.

Regarding learners’ voices, one of the choices made was the inclusion of bullying cases as a topic to explore. Andrew, Lawer and Maria used them to connect personal experiences in which they had been bullied. In this respect, Freire (1998) highlights “teaching that does not emerge from the experience of learning cannot be learned by anyone” (p. 30). This assertion made learners’ choice even more significant, as well as it uncovered their marginalization. Nevertheless, bullying was the only text that reflected a case in which a learner (Kelvin) had recognized to be the oppressor due to his disruptive behavior in class. I found it difficult to address critical questions as the ones I had been planning and developing in class towards oppressed. Fortunately, he took a critical agency to promote better and more acceptable behaviors in class while the text was being redesigned in group. This experience confirmed the importance of Bacon’s (2017) claim for a “Pedagogy of the Oppressor”.

Traditional roles of learners whose behaviors are accepted and valued in class were questioned from the previous experience. As well as texts are not neutral, we as human

beings cannot be either. We concluded that being neutral and aware of oppression with no spaces for action, supports those who bully others, and thus we inadvertently become promoters of injustices. From a Freirean view, schools are called to be the places where social justice emerges, which contradicts this passive attitude. Therefore, after analyzing unfair behaviors, actions must be taken, otherwise, analysis without action would keep us “in the same places as when we started” (Vasquez, 2010, p. 17).

LEARNERS’ LIVES CONNECTING WITH SOCIAL ISSUES

The study validated the usefulness of making meaning in texts from different forms of language to understand different perspectives. It also confirmed that learners are able to take these interpretations beyond the close context. Gee (1996, as cited in Lankshear & Knobel, 2011) asserts that “text-mediated social practices” are [and must be] tied to “non-print ‘bits’ like values and gestures, context and meaning, actions and objects, talk and interaction, tools and spaces” (p. 13). This connection and its influence on dominant cultures were explored through the four texts, as they all represent privileged societies over marginalized ones. Issues such as racism, stereotypes, social class, and gender inequity found in texts were reconstructed from daily life interactions through shared life experiences.

The findings proved that multimodal texts created by learners and shared in class represented their experiences, needs and expectations. This text production evidenced a critical literacy tenet highlighted by Vásquez et al (2019) “Students learn best when what they are learning has importance in their lives” (p. 306). From local experiences learners

brought personal lived experiences to class to show how unjust their society is. Learners, especially girls, recognized how they are attempted to be ‘bought’ by powerful men, as seen in Cinderella, but also how some families try to “fit” in different lifestyles at the expense of losing values and reputation.

I discovered that Gee’s (1999) Discourses are embedded in typical local families which conceive money as their ultimate goal to both a) belong to a more privileged social condition or b) be socially accepted, as they adapt new forms of “speaking and acting, moving, dressing, and so on” (Gee, 1999, as cited in Lankshear and Knobel, 2011, p. 20). These behaviors discovered in their community in which social ideologies promote money and power, somehow justify violence and illicit acts as means to gain money and prestige. This study based on learners’ issues suggested the appropriateness of engaging them in exploring and transforming their social inequities while acquiring skills in their target language.

However, local contexts are not the only settings where social interactions demand specific ‘language bits’. After Andrew’s skin color was targeted in the tale as prone to become a servant, he criticized national TV programs. He brought examples of black, poor, ugly, old, or different people being represented as bad, and whose terrible fates are consequence of unprivileged social conditions. Similarly, his partners questioned the fact that the media reproduce these ideologies through songs, films, commercials, and different multimodal texts.

At this point, learners felt more confident and critical to read different forms of reproducing inequities. Power found in narratives such as jokes, films, novels (Janks, 2010).

P,37), sayings, beliefs and traditions increased the number of means that condemn people to adapt certain attitudes since early ages. These narratives are used to legitimate the power of dominant groups over marginalized populations. Learners corroborated Jank's (2010) concerns about how people's acceptance of social ideologies are more easily consented in "institutions such as the family, the school, the media, and the church" (p. 36).

"Kids don't cry" was one of the sayings shared by Caroline; she explained how boys are socially excluded when they show any sign of weakness, but whose personal and social pressure to avoid crying and sharing their feelings end up in tragedies such as suicide.

These connections between learners' contexts and content found on digital texts, place a great deal of emphasis on the correlation with another critical literacy tenet: "critical literacy work needs to focus on social issues, including inequities of race, class, gender, or disability and the ways in which we use language and other semiotic resources to shape our understanding of these issues" (Vásquez et al. 2019, p. 307).

As the class environment turned into a place to express feelings, emotions, and critical awareness about society at a larger scale, Youtubers were compared with politicians. After deconstructing the roles of influencers, especially in pandemic times, learners felt ashamed of themselves and of those 'followers' thinking, doing, or repeating viral trends. They explained that politicians have the same role and influence on passive spectators who fight or even risk their lives to defend a party or maintain a belief. Moreover, students brought news to class to debate about the persecution to social leaders due to the raise of their voices against social injustices. These connections between political

issues and multimodal texts supported the assumption that “media and technology are not neutral tools. Rather, they are themselves embedded within sociopolitical contexts” (Stoddard, 2014, cited in Share, 2016, p.2).

I can conclude that learners interiorized the effect of one-sided version of any reality in violence acts. This is the reason why they rejected any partners who decided to redesign a text in which violence would be immerse: violent acts as reprisal to end bullying; power abuse by a likely stepfather in Cinderella, etc. However, the study also revealed how limited learners feel when they want or think they need to act against social injustices.

Emotions such as fear and helplessness were evident in bullying cases, leading to acts of marginalization or exclusion; however, they noted that multiple factors that militate against social equity in Colombia does not make it possible or advisable to take action. They explained that sometimes they are bystanders in class or in their community even when they face close people suffering from bullying or being socially rejected. They came to the conclusion that violence in the country is due to the lack of respect for differences; these conclusions emerged from comparisons between the texts (bullying and Cinderella) and current news about social leaders and ‘different’ people being not only rejected, but also physically attacked.

LEARNERS AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONAL ACTIONS WHEN USING CRITICAL LITERACY LENS

A strong change in learners’ ways of thinking revealed how they responded to social issues where injustices emerged from. The emotions experienced along the study

demonstrated that multimodal texts were not neutral. Rather, they positioned them in critical stances to question how the world operates.

This exploration of language and what it unveiled in texts and daily artifacts (Vásquez, 2010), filled them with arguments and wishes to challenge ideological social discourses. Learners who had been excluded from society understood that the media reproduce the same stereotypes they suffered from, hidden in ‘memes’, posts, images, songs and messages disseminated on social networks and instant messaging (WhatsApp, for instance). Therefore, they decided to create campaigns to be shared on the media as a manner to give social networks a more positive treatment.

Stemming from their own talents, interests and a strong confidence in themselves, learners agreed that the society can no longer determine their fates nor shape their identities. Recalling Andrew’s intervention “I can be an influencer, too” (Class observation, 02/09/2020), he felt the need to do something positive to improve a social issue. I found that being socially excluded due to his skin color motivated him to show that being black-skinned does not determine social positions, thus he became an environmental leader to help his community. In addition to Andrew, Lawer, Caroline and Maria decided to become influencers to teach their community how music, sports and health can produce a bigger impact on personal growth. They challenged irrelevant content promoted on social networks and raised their own voices and those of silenced sectors such as doctors and nurses during the current world emergency (Covid-19). Viral challenges and ‘hashtags’ were also redesigned through campaigns to promote social equities and a “more just and equitable world” (Baildom & Damico, 2011, p. 32).

The four texts were redesigned and shared in the school platform and on Facebook (except videos). These new versions of their world through multimodal counter texts included “informed decisions” (Vásquez, 2010). Women were given their right to decide; beauty was understood as an internal characteristic; differences were conceived as enriching culture and stereotypes were rejected and excluded from their design. These products reflected the last step in Lewison et al.’s (2002) models, which corroborated the distinction between critical thinking and critical literacy, as much as the appropriateness of the ladder to promote social transformation.

This substantiated previous findings in the literature that claimed for the media to enable that issues born in cultural action could be changed through ‘cultural action’ (Freire, 1970; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). These artifacts demonstrated that learners read and rewrote their world through their own learning styles and interests, such as drawings, recognized by Lau (2010) as another way to communicate. Thus, this final stage evidenced that engaging learners in their own literacies can challenge ideological discourses that inhibit ‘humanization’.

This process to reach humanization was finally achieved through the recognition of their own identities. Learners who shared their social oppression developed a gradual and cyclical process to find out how society distorts their identities as dominant discourses support their marginalization. In this sense, the texts portraying racism and stereotypes were transformed into campaigns that include their voices, knowledge, and values. In this way, learners negotiated their identities by engaging themselves in equitable social practices.

CURRICULAR DESIGN SUPPORTING FINDINGS

In the following paragraphs I detail how the curriculum was lived, negotiated and implemented, and to what extent it contributed to the emergence of findings.

Apart from drawing our attention to social transformation through critical literacy, Frank (2008) and Vásquez (2010) claim for the integration of learners' literacies in curriculum design. In this study, learners' issues, needs and contributions were considered in the curricular design, where the school requirement and the curricular guidelines from the MEN (Ministry of Education) met.

The design was based on multimodal texts that learners had shown to be interested in and on their own products designed the previous year. Thus, their voices and productions were taken into consideration in order to create a learning environment that would favorize their immersion in the study, given the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on their academic process. Therefore, the classes were carefully planned to cover the mandated topics, foster linguistic skills, and follow a similar process with the rest of the group who were not part of the study.

The class observations and data revealed that 'disrupting the commonplace' as the first model while including learners' needs such as vocabulary and grammatical structures, fostered their ability to move along the second model (understanding multiple perspectives). Then a gradual, linear, and even cyclical process was taken as learners engaged in critical reading and writing. I also attempted to follow Lau's (2010) study in which she crisscrossed the four models, but I found it difficult due to my learners'

inexperience to read in nonconventional manners. Nevertheless, I included different reading strategies and class activities (quizzes, reading/listening comprehension, summarizing, paraphrasing, predicting) to be integrated in the following stages as I observed difficulties to disrupt the commonplace or identify multiple perspectives.

I observed learners' focus on language or literal reading rather than on critical reading in the first model, which led me to follow a gradual order to ensure a deep comprehension of each stage to properly promote taking actions. Learners who missed classes and attended subsequent conversations related to sociopolitical aspects, lost track in their participations. This was observed when Kelvin attempted to include family issues such as power abuse to perpetuate male chauvinism in redesigning the tale. He demonstrated that disrupting the commonplace and understanding multiple perspectives was a requirement to reach high order thinking skills. However, those who attended and participated in all the classes explored an ease to incorporate in different models along the exploration of texts. I conclude that developing critical literacies entails time and practice, and an ongoing support by the teacher; otherwise, taking action could portray the social injustices that were not totally deconstructed.

The class observations suggested the inclusion of learners' contributions and artifacts to foster comprehension (listening and reading) and production (speaking and writing) through quizzes. This co-construction of phrases, and short and long texts indicated that knowledge is more easily acquired when the curriculum includes real life events to be socialized in class, and when learners become role models for their peers in collaborative groups. This was evident in class discussions and online meetings were

learners offered their help to assist their peers with grammar and vocabulary explanations to improve each other's personal multimodal texts. Then, the classes mediated by technology turned into "language ecologies" (Mora, 2014, p. 122), where learners used English to creatively redesign texts through English. Additionally, the products work as models for the entire school community, since they are used as learning material in different groups.

This strategy of adapting the curriculum and putting it in the hands of the students confirmed its impact on learners' wish to feel active agents within the class and community. They saw themselves reflected in the multimodal texts we explored. This, in turn, challenged the Banking System that Freire stemmed from to claim for a liberatory education. The curriculum adaptation, thus, corroborated another critical literacy tenet that conceives an inclusive curriculum as emerging from learners' questions and issues. Therefore, the texts produced in class along with the discussions revealed how students used them to reflect on how discourses have structured their lives, which led them to propose alternatives "to make things happen differently" (Pennycook, 1999, p. 337).

Accordingly, learners' experiences, contributions and final artifacts became a curricular material that also affirmed their identities in the real contexts they engage and interact in. Therefore, this curricular design demonstrated the important role of the school to empower learners to resist any dominant ideologies through their own daily interactions.

IMPLICATIONS

Due to the relevance of this study, and the positive impact on learners' lives, the implications of this research involves a great number of stakeholders. Students, families, teachers, school administrators, policy makers and researchers are called to join the new literacy practices where social equity finds its root in the education field. Below I detail the implications based on the findings and conclusions of my research.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

This study suggests that critical literacy practices can perfectly be tied to school language plans while fostering English linguistic competences. However, spaces for collaborative work based on opinions, debates, arguments, and discussions about topics of concerns and interests must be created to foster the acquisition of mutual knowledge.

Although in traditional school settings the previous practices are not commonly promoted, the study demonstrates that the target language can be considered as a bridge to connect learners' social issues with critical manners to solve them. To reach such transformative change, it is necessary to lead learners to interpret their worlds from sociopolitical views, which in turn entails questioning the taken for granted assumptions, both in physical as in virtual scenarios.

Therefore, a way to promote social justice in learners is provoking their wish and skill to comprehend the sociopolitical issues involved in texts and how they affect or impact their lives. Otherwise, literal meanings found in texts would only lead to reproduce the

passive role that critical literacy aims at combating, and a lack of awareness about their possibilities to transform the reality. On the other hand, the concept of raising their voice means that learners' realities are valued, rather than being stereotyped and prejudiced. This becomes a starting point to conceive schools as the places where, "students can learn to transform society" (Gagner, 2010, p. 372).

Having based some literacy practices on studies carried out in different scenarios and with different realities, thanks to scholars such as Sunny Lau (2010), demonstrated that although contexts are different, learners are able to perform significant critical literacies. These findings, thus, may open the paths for more research with populations whose realities, regardless of social conditions, lived experiences and ages, may be considered in curricular designs to reach real transformations in real scenarios. However, a strong belief in learners' skills to develop critical literacy practices involves changing traditional teaching practices and teachers' biases, as in my case, in terms of social prejudices and misconceptions of learners as banking systems.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH AND SUBJECT AREA TEACHERS

Since language is immersed in critical literacy processes, the act of reading and writing is not merely embedded in second language teaching. These power relations between language and sociocultural practices go beyond the linguistic field, which implies an engagement by teachers of different subjects. Given the fact that literacy is a social practice (Luke & Freebody, 1997), learning must be bound on those interactions that emerge in and out of the school. This is the reason why teachers, regardless of their subject

area, are called to negotiate the curriculum and frame their teaching in more contextualized practices. Or at least to explore practices in which traditional print texts can be changed and updated by the inclusion or connection of content with real life issues.

This integration of texts with learners' worlds also implies an approach to the media and a critical perspective to identify both advantages and dangers found on virtual scenarios. This is a skill that critical literacy demands on teachers, as the new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011) are taking more place in digital settings than in physical spaces.

However, as the present study revealed, a critical thinking approach is a requirement to assure an engagement in subsequent actions. Pennycook (1999) asserts that rather than critiquing social inequities found in texts, actions must be promoted to change these inequities. On the other hand, Vasquez (2010) argues that thinking must precede the action. What the authors claim for is a deeper exploration of personal biases and beliefs in teachers and learners that can be changed in order to guarantee a social transformation with no spaces for reproductions of inequities.

One of those biases that urges to be eliminated is the lack of confidence on learners, who are also recognized from standardized views. The traditional concept of discipline tied to proper class behaviors has also limited learners' spaces to feel and share their emotions. Teachers are called to provoke on learners' emotional investment as they [the ladder] connect their lives with multimodal texts. Being aware of their own issues gives them more confidence to engage in a reflective process to gradually transform these issues. To reach this goal, teachers' role must be that of being a careful listener and observer, where

preplanned agendas be open to changes as the class turns into a scenario where spontaneous conversations or questions arise. As Vásquez (2010) states, these are the types of interventions that lead to true discussions about learners' real needs and expectations.

My results share a number of similarities with Lau's (2012) findings regarding learners, who "are quite capable of complex language learning when they are given the adequate support" (p. 2). Besides, the role of English in the present study meets Kumaravadelus'(2003) definition of a second language that may 'tap the socio-political consciousness that participants bring with them to the classroom so that it can also function as a catalyst for a continual quest for identity formation and social transformation' (p. 37)

As consequence, and concerning language itself, being native or second language, it must be used not exclusively in terms of linguistic skills but in terms of social abilities to read and write the world in more personal, critical, and transformative dimensions (Lewison et al., p. 269).

This study demonstrated learners' capacity to transcend the traditional literacy practices focused on coding, decoding, repeating, filling the blanks...rather, they are able to unveil the social implications that texts and multimodal texts portray. However, this depends on the teachers' capacity and wish to promote such change. This said, teachers have not only the decision but also the social responsibility to include local cultural diversity in their texts based on a solid ethical dimension that helps them choose "practices that promote equitable learning" (Mora, 2014a, p. 18).

Finally, the integration of critical literacy approaches in teachers' practices, is expected to bring up connections with Freire's ideals of a humanizing education, where

learners raise their voices through productions, rather than reproductions, as a means to transform their own inequities. These productions disseminated specially in the media through multimodal formats, in turn, would impact in their “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) as they “produce texts that matter to them in different formats and for different audiences and purposes” (Janks, 2010, p. 156)

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LEARNING THROUGH CL

Although this study combined mother tongue and second language to elicit inquiry and discussions, some conditions must be considered to promote critical literacy while acquiring second language.

The appropriation of vocabulary and structures in English is a slow process, due to the little exposure to texts to be deconstructed (rather than reproduced). The media offer a wide variety of spaces to interact with the second language through social networks, music, tv series; however, this study corroborated that even the use of nonconventional learning material to approach English does not guarantee an acquisition of this language when teaching is based on traditional methods (repetition, memorization). Additionally, the low intensity of weekly hours does not allow ongoing interactions with the language, added to the disconnection between the curriculum and the learners’ environment. Finally, the concept of English as a bridge between societies and globalization ignore the realities of local contexts.

However, the present study demonstrated how linguistic skills can be strengthened from teamwork, the adaptation of structures and vocabulary to topics of general interest, the

connection between texts and realities, the interactions with the socio-cultural context, and the conception of English as a bridge between learners and their worlds. This ratifies the concept of critical literacy and its contribution to learning from a social construction (non-cognitive), and from real life experiences.

Accordingly, by recognizing and incorporating the characteristics of each individual and context, social inclusion is strengthened as basis for collaborative and contextualized learning. In this sense, English is gradually acquired as the resources offered by the school meet personal and collective interests, not only political (policymakers) and economic (globalization) expectations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

This research suggests a more considerable connection between the school and the society. While the curriculum was adapted to the texts that learners deconstructed and redesigned, the rest of the students and grades were offered a new curriculum adapted to the current conditions due to the Covid-19 emergency. However, in normal circumstances the mandated curriculum is divided into units to be covered along the school terms.

The findings of this study and the results of exploring school strategies to deal with the current pandemic, demonstrated the need to integrate a curriculum where each subject contributes to providing learners with tools to interpret their own issues from different perspectives. This need emerged from the understanding of real social problems that cannot be divided into units or seen from specific disciplines. In connection with Lewison et al.'s (2002) 'Focusing on sociopolitical issues', social injustices were interpreted from cultural,

social and political perspectives. Learners' background in subjects such as social sciences, politics, religion, natural sciences (environment) was crucial to recognize that issues involve more than a one-sided perspective. For this reason, the school administrators and community are called to consider a cross curricular integration as a possibility to cause a major impact in learners' context transformation.

Rather than tailoring the traditional print text to subjects content, the syllabus must be adapted to social demands that learners discover by themselves. This shift to a more flexible curriculum entails: a) a non dependence on preestablished class planning, which may incorporate changes as the school promotes learners' exploration of literacies in and out of the classroom; and b) an inclusion of more multimodal texts that can offer a variety of options to read the world through social networks, web pages, music, news, instant messaging, etc. These changes are based on the present Internet-mediated study, where the success in learners' reconstruction of realities depended on the ongoing reformulation of class strategies and dynamics. On the other hand, the research process revealed that as society changes and social inequities vary in time and place, so must learning resources do.

The media offers a variety of texts produced by expert and novice users (even learners), who are permanently representing how they see the world through texts, memes, comics, posters, infographics, etc. these texts might be used as texts to raise learners' awareness about the power of language in them, or the social ideologies they portray. This multimodal production contrasts with the common school print textbooks that remain static and 'indifferent' as time passes by. Therefore, including multimedia resources in class will stir learners up to put their digital knowledge into practice to reconstruct these versions as

they redesign the reality through a critical literacy approach. Hence, by offering learners interdisciplinary tools to read their worlds, they will learn how to rewrite a more just and socially equitable world (Janks, 2010) through creative, accurate and responsible manners.

Revisiting the ideal of Freire (1970) of a liberator pedagogy, the school, then, cannot ignore the learners' concerns, rather, their popular culture must become a source of learning. In so doing, a community of inquiry supported by each teacher and discipline will assume a school adaptation of critical literacy as a "way of being, living, learning, and teaching across the curriculum" (Vásquez et al., 2019, p. 302).

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

When it comes to resist social inequities through school, as the aim of this research, a paradox arises from the policies that rule the educational system. As researchers cited in chapter 1 felt concerned about inequalities, stratification and social exclusion generated by the adoption of CEFR, standardization is also a means to exclude and marginalize.

Learner-learner and teacher-learner interaction demonstrated that a "mutual humanization" (Freire, 1970, p. 156) is achieved as differences are accepted, respected, and valued. However, policies push the schools to show institutional scores at expense of ignoring these individualities. In other words, students are invisible as human beings, as they are represented in terms of numbers.

The national results in internal and external texts that determine the quality of educational processes do not correspond to their impact in real life situations. For this reason, policymakers must reconsider the goal of education not in numerical results but in

social transformations. This reflection is based on the participants' performance representing informed decisions through English to challenge and transform personal, family and community issues. As a work team, my learners and I agreed that their success consisted of showing themselves (even myself) how a critical literacy approach could change social phenomena unnoticed so far. Thus, the quality of education must be built on forms to perceive social changes, rather than on forms to standardize written texts scores.

In this regard, schools must be given (or assume by themselves) their role of producing knowledge along with the community, rather than being places to distribute it through mandated textbooks. Apple (1995) criticizes policy makers and teaching material creators as they see schools from external and marketing perspectives. For this reason, offering schools their possibilities to create original-contextualized learning material as we did, would give learners and teachers a more active role. Additionally, educators would resist their minimizing position that policy makers and text publishers have posed on them, what Apple calls "deskilling" to represent the effects of being trained and 'controlled' by external people. Concerning students, the same author uses the term 'reskilling' referring to these effects on learners, when being conceived as passive receptors of information.

Given the previous concerns, and based on evidence in this research on the impact of school as knowledge producer, teacher-student interactions must focus on resisting external forces that do not consider the needs of contexts and the power of education.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

In my role of researcher in such an interesting and challenging world of literacies, I drew on ideas from Lau (2010) to somehow address texts such as Cinderella. In her Doctoral thesis final contributions, she claims that:

there needs to be more collaborative action research between CL researchers and literacy teachers, which will allow more teachers to experience what CL looks like in the classroom, what impact it has on their students' critical/literacy development, and the fun and possibilities it can create for both teachers and students (p. 298).

These teachers' networks proposed give the media a more significant usage as they showed in my study to be a bridge to connect us with the world. In this way, Internet not only allows to share critical literacy outcomes by learners, but also intercultural exchange and CL classroom processes by scholars and researchers.

Despite my condition of novice researcher, I experienced the sensation and pride to directly (email account) and indirectly (Thesis director's WhatsApp communication) share with important scholars like Sunny Lau and Vivian Vásquez. I shared some CL processes, findings, and learners' productions, following these and many other scholars' advocacies. This experience that I did not consider and nor imagine in my research process confirmed how pertinent and useful it is to use the media to create "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). These virtual sites allow to expand the literature around critical literacy: its roots, practices, and implications towards a more humanized society.

Luke (2000) reinforces the need for teachers engaged in social transformative processes through CL to take an active role in leading, sharing and becoming authority in this field. He alerts us that “unless educators take a lead in developing appropriate pedagogies for these new electronic media and forms of communication, corporate experts will be the ones to determine how people will learn, what they learn, and what constitutes literacy” (p. 71). Therefore, this personal experience confirmed that if we as teachers and researchers implement, document, and publish while learning with and from each other, we could build a CL contextualized research-based community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

As CL is a social practice, so must teacher’s pedagogical training be. This means that despite efforts to prepare teachers to become active agents in the educational field, these programs tend to fail to offer practical support. Mora (2014a) recalls his advocacies and Luke’s (2012) concerns about the need to carefully avoid “marginalization and disenfranchisement in our classrooms and curricula” (p. 17). I rely on these concerns by bringing up interesting and contemporary theories, approaches and strategies taught in these programs concerning English teaching. Nevertheless, the real scenarios where teaching practices are developed show a reality that is commonly ignored in teachers training processes: learners’ external issues and the impact in their personal and academic growth.

Sociocultural and virtual interactions and their influence in the reproduction of abuse, stereotypes, racism, exclusion, among others, are taken to the classrooms given the impact in learners’ mood, attitudes, and behaviors. At this point novice teachers or even

experienced ones but with low exposure to or interest in countering such situations face a challenging that goes beyond the mastering of linguistic competences. In fact, in the present study I felt unable to lead some tough discussions that could have risen students' awareness about personal experiences and needs. This was due to my lack of expertise to read their language (body, facial, oral, written language) in computer-mediated classes.

The previous experience advocates critical literacy practices in teachers' programs where the ability to read texts transcends to reading learners' needs, expectations, and fears resulting from their exposure to daily social exchanges. In other words, it is even more relevant to draw on learners' daily lives to promote meaningful changes. As Kuby (2013) cites, "hearing the voices of those oppressed is only one piece of social justice work" (p. 19). In this way, teachers will be prepared enough to recognize that the role of the language (in all its forms and scenarios) is to be questioned itself, from which relations of power and then marginalization can be discussed, unveiled, and transformed. Otherwise, if traditional education continues to exclude learners' worlds, the school may become another social place where the true issues to intervene be taken for granted as 'normal' and acceptable.

LIMITATIONS

Through this research I witnessed the favorable impact of being forced to use virtual settings to develop the study. Otherwise, as previously planned, my study would have focused on narrow contexts where multimodal texts would not have been included. However, as I did not find enough literature to draw on, in this section I describe the limitations that affected my study and how they could be managed in future research.

LEARNERS' FAMILIES FACING TECHNOLOGICAL GAPS

The study could have had a major impact on learners interested in the research, but their low possibilities to access Internet, computers or mobile phones deprived them of even attending some classes. This was the first limitation that corroborated the social gaps and how society is classified into privileged and marginalized groups.

When developing the sessions, the lack of a stable Internet connection did not allow me to observe learners' body language and reactions in specific moments of the class. Therefore, the restricted use of videocalls could account for a misinterpretation of these narratives. Their opinions were sometimes limited to written messages on chats. Hence, I propose for future research more flexible schedules and means to communicate, using synchronous and asynchronous means such as WhatsApp messages, voicemails, videocalls, social networks, etc. Since learners had to attend different school online sessions, the schedule was very limited, as well as their time to do extra activities. But as I opened spaces to share through the means mentioned, they felt they could count on the teacher even when the class was over, when they could not attend the class or when they just needed to be heard.

LEARNERS' CUSTOMS TO CREATE NON-CRITICAL TEXTS

Learners who participated in the study showed digital skills to produce content, consume and produce information in social networks and interact with peers and users

through the media; but it was not that easy to understand the need to be critical readers and writers.

It took a considerable amount of time to deconstruct and redesign the first text (songs), because of the daily exposure to digital worlds they interacted in with no limitations or restrictions in terms of content consumed and produced. Even though my students reached a high thinking level especially after some weeks, being exposed to critical literacies needs to become a habit, an attitude, “a way of being, of living” (Vásquez et al., 2019, p. 302).). This is the reason why the curriculum must be intervened, from which cross curricular projects emerge to daily engage learners in new forms of reading and writing their contexts and realities.

The final products that represent their voices, indicate how learners responded to critical literacies approaches to attempt a transformation of their issues, but more research is needed to determine what happens when they are not exposed to such literacies. This becomes the main concern in moments in which the school year is about to end, and thus they need to decide where and whether or not to study the following year, and what this or any other school may offer them. Therefore, it is advisable to study the impact of the present research even after it ends, which can also determine how CL can mitigate the marginalizing effects of increasing social interactions in their context and in the media.

LEARNERS' FEAR TO BE EXCLUDED WHILE PROMOTING INCLUSION

One of the major concerns that learners experienced was the effects of their products in the media (their videos in social networks). As they proposed alternatives to

bullying practices they had suffered from, they felt they could be bullied again when exposed to an unlimited audience; their concern corroborated their deconstruction of text in the media, and the analysis of how text producers position passive readers in specific manners. With their productions they agreed to be models to follow in the school setting, where they (we) could intervene if any sign of injustice would show up, but it would be impossible to take action in external and virtual settings.

This study, then, opens the path for more research projects where not only marginalized groups are pedagogically intervened, but also, and most importantly, where those, whether on purpose or inadvertently, promote social exclusion, especially through the media.

LEARNERS' ENGLISH PERFORMANCE

Students receive three-hour classes a week, but it falls short to cover the mandated curriculum or any other pedagogical strategy. For this reason, I value their effort and goodwill to reach such as high levels of criticism as professor Sunny Lau's kids did with similar deconstruction of texts (Cinderella). I can conclude that affect and emotions are fundamental to generate learning environments where no one feels stigmatized or prejudged due to academic performances, learning characteristics or personal attitudes.

Future research could foster English proficiency by focusing not only on critical questions to discuss in class through the native tongue. English could also be included in oral participations regardless of the participants' level. This requires more than a school term to potentiate speaking and written skills from single phrases to more sophisticated

statements that represent clear and critical opinions. In our case, Spanish was mostly used in discussions due to the interesting contributions that could be misunderstood if English had been used. Concerning written production, learners felt less pressed, as they took their time to improve their texts autonomously in their free time.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study attempted to determine how learners respond to, deconstruct and redesign relations of power and social injustices from a critical literacy approach. Through virtual rooms the teacher and students met to discuss the impact of their sociocultural interactions in beliefs, values, and identities.

This participatory action research concluded that learners are able to go beyond simple awareness about social injustices and resist socially established ideologies through a critical literacy approach. My interest in this study emerged as I understood how a first exploration of learners' contexts through critical thinking could transcend to virtual scenarios where they engage. To this end, I designed digital presentations that included multimodal texts such as songs, traditional tales, bullying cases and Youtubers. This strategy allowed learners and teacher to recognize the power of language hidden in written, audio, and visual formats, and how these texts position readers in specific manners. Then, this analysis of the messages behind the texts learners use and interact with led them to question relations of power and social injustices. From these critical perspectives, students challenged the stereotypes and other forms of exclusion that have excluded them as well as other social groups from equitable social practices.

Interviews, class observations and learners' artifacts revealed the pertinence of an approach to transform the curriculum and impact the learners' personal, familiar, or social dimensions, even in such historical adverse situations under which this study was carried out.

The feelings and emotions provoked by the relationship between texts and sociopolitical issues permitted learners to create new versions of tales that could represent a more just society. These multimodal new texts, in which English linguistic competences were put into practice, demonstrated that as well as learners are socially influenced by their society and the media, these settings can also be used to resist the oppression they live in and become sites to promote critical literacies.

Finally, if under such unexpected and though conditions this research could stay afloat, this study can as well be carried out in any sociocultural context and school level.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

During the literature review process, I found very few studies on critical literacy with teens, and no information on studies developed under a virtual methodology. Thus, future research on both fields would be significant to support the CL theory in the new literacies. This study, then, provides considerable insight into the field on critical literacy in digital contexts and additional support for understanding and considering some limitations.

The general findings in this paper demonstrated the urge and appropriateness to develop similar studies in different EL countries, with larger populations and in all levels of education system: kids, teens, and pre-service teachers, regardless of their English proficiency. Moreover, new studies would help build practices that reveal: (a) how the social gaps in terms of access to technology may affect a critical view of the world, and in consequence a sense of social marginalization. (b) how the shift from passive receptors of information to active producers of texts in digital settings and its fast and easy dissemination can favor or hinder critical agency to read and write their own and others' texts. (c) how the unlimited and unrestricted usage of these free online resources may foster oppression, moved from physical settings to digital worlds.

The last concern is in line with Bacon's (2017) claim for a Pedagogy of the Oppressor. This study corroborated how critical pedagogies are addressed to marginalized populations, but where oppressors, belonging to privileged backgrounds, are not given possibilities to "examination of their own role in oppressive systems" (Bacon, 2017b, p. 229) to impact their own biases. This, in turn, leads to reproducing and maintaining the

unjust social conditions. For this reason, I consider it of importance to think about the need to mitigate the increase of social phenomena such as marginalization, exclusion, racism, and bullying cases, even more on the Internet. As my learners showed, they felt courageous to become active and positive influencers in their community, but they were also afraid to be bullied in real social networks through their videos. This is the reason why we created a sample of our own social media (Reallivers) to show ourselves our new critical view of the world, perhaps difficult to be understood by external Internet users.

The previous concern demands an engagement of teachers in mutual conversations and dialogs with students, where both seek to be humanized through critical perspectives that have them be aware of their role within society. However, as I noted in the two phases of my study (critical literacy grounded on critical thinking exploration), raising awareness does not mean to produce any significant change. This change involves taking action and promoting social transformation. Koh (2002) insists in the inclusion of critical literacy, rather than critical thinking, as a strategy that “encourages students to challenge taken-for-granted meanings and ‘truth’ about a way of thinking, reading and writing the world (p. 259).

As could be observed in the study, the actions taken by learners envisaged a more just world through their critical actions; nonetheless, in terms of language use, future research could involve a group engagement in developing the four communicative skills. I noticed that I offered options to include pronunciation only to those who felt able to, which in turn excluded those who needed more practice and deserved also to be considered in the texts design through their voices.

Another important aspect to be improved is the options for learners to select their own texts to deconstruct. Although texts such as the song showed their improvement in terms of language and critical reading and writing, I observed they felt limited to analyze the same text I offered (reggaeton genre), and anyhow I prejudged their musical interests and influences.

Finally, measurable instruments to determine the increase on language skills are needed. This would be beneficial to the school community since national policies tend to continue to assess schools in terms of language proficiency.

To conclude, further research needs to be done, especially in such inequitable societies, to establish whether a critical literacy approach meets their needs and expectations, regardless of the school context. Meanwhile, I feel confident that my research will serve as a base for future studies.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Any experience in my academic and work life had been such inspiring as having corroborated that the world can be seen from more just perspectives.

Along this study, although face-to-face distant from my students, I recognized that theories, practices, approaches, are the representation of decades of an ongoing struggle for a more human social condition. Therefore, I felt the pride to be part of a movement that in my case produced small but significant changes.

Every time I go back to my learners' contributions, their fears, needs, disappointments, joys, motivations, and that incessant goodwill to show themselves how

capable they were, I recognize how powerful language is. Not only a written, visual, or oral language, but those words and gestures that portrayed respect for our differences, and a strong sense of commitment to grow as a group of novices but empowered human beings.

The same impact the participants produced in their internal and external worlds, I felt in my condition as teacher, father, husband, son, and citizen. I learned to read the world as I had never done, and from this study I strongly appreciate and value the simple but significant things that used to pass before my eyes as unnoticed.

Finally, I conceive this experience not as a requirement to reach a dream goal in my personal and family's life, but as a possibility to show myself and others that researching to improve is not a hard task, it is social imperative. Thus, I dare to complement Vásquez et al.'s (2019) words to define critical literacy as "a way of being and doing", but also, as found in this study, a way of transmitting courage and hope.

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Appendix A

I used two versions of informed consent letters, depending on the consent I was seeking to acquire.

Informed Consent Letter for the school director

Estimada Rectora:

Cordial saludo,

Yo, Diego Alberto Piedrahíta Marín, soy estudiante de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Uno de los requerimientos para aspirar al título de magíster es el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación como parte de mi trabajo de grado (tesis). Para dicho trabajo, he propuesto la investigación “Deconstructing and redesign of learners’ social issues and practices of power under a critical literacy approach” cuyo objetivo es describir cómo se interpretan diferentes textos/eventos con los que se interactúa en espacios físicos y virtuales y en qué medida estos pueden ser reconstruidos llevando a que las injusticias sociales halladas se transformen en situaciones más equitativas y justas a través del inglés. Este trabajo de investigación está dirigido por el Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, Profesor de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.

Como parte de la investigación se hará la recolección de datos dentro de mi grupo, específicamente en las clases de Literacy. Dicha recolección de datos consiste en la grabación de las clases, la toma de apuntes mediante la observación, entrevistas y el análisis de los productos elaborados por los estudiantes. En este proceso se incluyen sus voces, opiniones y presentaciones en video en momentos en que se requiera incluir recursos o productos audiovisuales. Esta recolección de datos se planea desde el 03 de abril hasta el 02 de octubre de 2020.

Espero que los resultados de este estudio me ayuden a promover en otros docentes el trabajo de la literacidad crítica con adolescentes mediante el uso de experiencias de vida y situaciones cotidianas que se dan en la comunidad y en los entornos virtuales. Los resultados de este proyecto de investigación se emplearán en principio para la escritura del trabajo de grado (tesis). Sin embargo, los datos que se recojan en el trabajo de campo también se podrían utilizar en futuras ponencias y publicaciones académicas. En todos los casos, se hará uso de pseudónimos para proteger la privacidad de los estudiantes. En el caso de la institución, solo si usted como líder de su institución lo permite, se hará referencia al nombre de la misma en el trabajo investigativo a realizar.

Esta carta, entonces, tiene por objeto solicitar su autorización para que yo, en el marco de este proyecto de investigación, pueda llevar a cabo el trabajo de campo para desarrollar esta investigación. A los padres de familia que vayan a apoyar esta tarea se les entregara una forma de consentimiento similar. En el caso de los estudiantes, se les enviará copia del consentimiento a sus padres o acudientes.

Los padres de familia y estudiantes que participen en esta tarea lo harán en completa libertad y se espera que no haya ninguna coerción para su colaboración. Ellos estarán en completa libertad de no participar, sin que ello pueda constituir motivo de represalias en la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Ellos estarán en derecho de ver el producto final y, de no estar de acuerdo con algo en el mismo, se harán los cambios del caso.

De antemano agradezco su colaboración en el desarrollo de esta investigación, la cual me ayudará en mi formación como investigadora. En caso de cualquier inquietud con respecto a este proyecto de investigación, puede contactarme directamente al correo diegopiedrahita@presbiterocamilotorres.edu.co. También puede contactar al Coordinador Académico del programa, Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, en el correo maestria.ml2@upb.edu.co.

Atentamente,

Diego Alberto Piedrahíta Marín

Candidato a Magíster en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas

Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo con la participación de los estudiantes y/o docentes de esta institución en esta investigación.

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

Fecha

Informed Consent Letter for parents

Estimados Padres de Familia,

Cordial saludo.

Yo, Diego Alberto Piedrahíta Marín, soy estudiante de la Maestría en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. Uno de los requerimientos para aspirar al título de magíster es el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación como parte de mi trabajo de grado (tesis). Para dicho trabajo, he propuesto la investigación “Deconstructing and redesign of learners’ social issues and practices of power under a critical literacy approach” cuyo objetivo es describir cómo se interpretan diferentes textos/eventos con los que se interactúa en espacios físicos y virtuales y en qué medida estos pueden ser reconstruidos llevando a que las injusticias e inequidades sociales halladas se transformen en situaciones más equitativas y justas a través del inglés. Este trabajo de investigación está dirigido por el Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, Profesor de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.

Como parte de la investigación se hará la recolección de datos dentro de las clases de Literacy. Dicha recolección de datos consiste en la grabación de las clases, la toma de apuntes mediante la observación, entrevistas y el análisis de los productos elaborados por los estudiantes. En este proceso se incluyen sus voces, opiniones y presentaciones en video en momentos en que se requiera incluir recursos o productos audiovisuales. Esta recolección de datos se planeó desde el 03 de julio hasta el 16 de octubre de 2020.

Espero que los resultados de este estudio me ayuden a promover en otros docentes el trabajo de la literacidad crítica con adolescentes mediante el uso de experiencias de vida y situaciones cotidianas que se dan en la comunidad y en los entornos virtuales. Los resultados de este proyecto de investigación se emplearán en principio para la escritura del trabajo de grado (tesis). Sin embargo, los datos que se recojan en el trabajo de campo también se podrían utilizar en futuras ponencias y publicaciones académicas. En todos los casos, se hará uso de pseudónimos para proteger la privacidad de los estudiantes.

Esta carta, entonces, tiene por objeto solicitar su autorización para que yo, en el marco de este proyecto de investigación, pueda trabajar con su hijo/a y pueda observar, grabar y usar sus trabajos para la recolección de datos de esta investigación.

Usted está en completa libertad de aceptar la participación de su hijo/a, sin ninguna forma de coerción para su colaboración y sin ninguna posibilidad de represalias en su institución educativa o en la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana en caso de no aceptar. Usted tiene derecho a ver las grabaciones, trabajos de clase y el producto final. De no estar de acuerdo con algo en el mismo, se harán los cambios del caso.

De antemano agradezco su colaboración en el desarrollo de esta investigación, la cual me ayudará en mi formación como investigador. En caso de cualquier inquietud con respecto a este proyecto de investigación, puede contactarme directamente al correo diegopiedrahita@presbiterocamilotorres.edu.co . También puede contactar al Coordinador Académico del programa, Dr. Raúl Alberto Mora Vélez, en el correo maestria.ml2@upb.edu.co.

Atentamente,

Diego Alberto Piedrahíta Marín

Candidato a Magíster en Procesos de Aprendizaje y Enseñanza de Segundas Lenguas

Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo con la participación de mi hijo/a en esta investigación.

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

Fecha

He leído la información en esta carta y estoy de acuerdo en que mi hijo/a aparezca en materiales de audio y video para el propósito de esta investigación.

Nombre, Cargo y Firma

Fecha

Appendix B

Lesson planning. The following chart presents a lesson plan for Bullying text.

Text type	Main activities	Language and skills focus	Learning outcomes/artifacts
<p>Reading: a bullying case (English Please, 10th. P.104)</p> <p>Audio: a bullying case</p> <p>Comic: Exclusion in the school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify literacy concepts such as plots, scenario, characters. • Reflect on social issues raised in the story. • Challenge texts by posing questions from different roles. • Share a personal incident of bullying • Analyze roles in bullying cases (bystander, aggressor, intervener, victim) • Propose alternatives to solve the issue 	<p>Grammar: Re-visit Present progressive tense and simple past tense Introduction to present perfect tense</p> <p>Vocabulary The school, physical appearance,</p> <p>Critical literacy: Basic comprehension activities: guessing meaning from context, prediction, responding and sharing opinions, formulate arguments, making connections.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design an anti-bullying campaign with an intended audience through multimodal tools. 2. Write a bullying incident and find alternative ways to design a more just ending. 3. Promote classroom practices that encourage the audience (school community) to take critical stances against bullying cases.

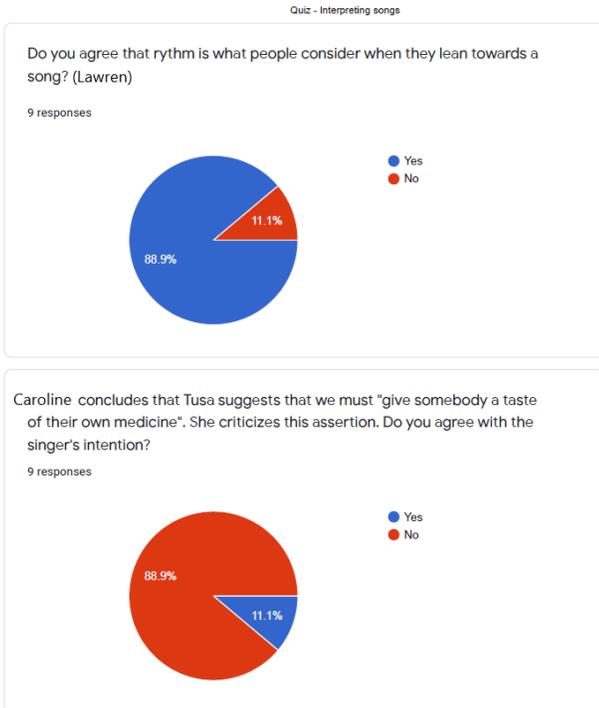
Appendix C

Visual representation of a bullying case:



Appendix D

Quizzes based on class interventions



Critical Literacy Project

Site created to show our progress and skills in both English language and critical literacy

DIEGO PIEDRAHITA 26 DE OCTUBRE DE 2016 10:26

Act 1. State your opinions (agreement or disagreement) and construct a more solid argument

DIEGO PIEDRAHITA 22 DE JULIO DE 2020 00:08

Agreement	Disagreement
I agree with ...	I disagree with ...
I really think	... says that... but I don't think so
I see it that way too	I don't share ...'s opinion.
As.... Said, I have no doubt about it	I see what ... means, but
... 's idea is ok.	... Says... I understand that, but
As ... Says, I consider that	That doesn't make much sense to me
In my opinion - my personal view is that - from my point of view -	

Dulce in the same topic, 'cause I do think music can influence a child.

ANÓNIMO 22 DE JULIO DE 2020 10:37

David

i disagree with brahian because there it is not being talked about that the man is always the culprit but in some specific cases, for example when a man does not value a good woman and she feels obligated or with the objective of revenge.

ANÓNIMO 22 DE JULIO DE 2020 10:31

The interface displays four discussion prompts in a grid:

- From: Pop songwriter ([redacted])**
Why was the woman the center of attention in your song?
To: Ed Sheeran ([redacted])
- From: Adult woman 80's ([redacted])**
You as a man: How did you feel when writing this song that puts the same man in an unfaithful position knowing that there are also women who are unfaithful?
To: Daniel Director of Tusa ([redacted])
- From: Adult woman 80's ([redacted])**
Do you think the clothes in the video makes the women be seen with sexual sense and not as ladies?
To: Karol G ([redacted])
- From: Adult woman 80's ([redacted])**
Why is your song so famous if it doesn't if it doesn't bring anything positive to society?
To: Karol G ([redacted])

On the right, a video feed shows a student named Diego Piedrahita.

Quiz example:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSepVsXIN0RHLGH0DSQDiGxVN4-U-fJjC3BhPiZYj7Jrk-SiA/viewform>

Appendix E

Final products

1. Song: <https://view.genial.ly/5f92325994f5810d1720ffee/presentation-were-human-after-all>
2. Tale: <https://view.genial.ly/5f33007b20c4eb0d81b18eaf/presentation-cinderella-version-2020>
3. Bullying campaign: <https://view.genial.ly/5f8b83ca8dc7320cf4ce8585/social-vertical-post-anti-bullying-campaign>
4. Influencers: <https://view.genial.ly/5f8dab275fe7e30d0ae9320e/presentation-reallivers-social-network>

Authors' Biography

Diego Alberto Piedrahíta Marín is currently working in a public school in Medellín. He has worked as an English teacher for the last 21 years, in rural, urban, and virtual scenarios. His past experiences include teaching-learning processes and pedagogical accompaniment to kids, teens, adults, disable populations, and marginalized social groups. These experiences have strengthened a more humanistic perspective towards the act of teaching, and how English can mediate sociocritical skills.

He holds a B.A in Foreign Languages: English and French from Universidad de Antioquia (2016). He is a candidate for the MA in Learning and Teaching Processes in Second Languages from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (2020). He also belongs to the Literacy in Second Languages Project as a teacher-researcher, in the same university.

He carried out a research study titled “Deconstruction and reconstruction of learners’ social issues and practices of power under a critical literacy approach” to fulfill the requirement for the Master program. He seeks to continue to explore critical literacy practices in physical and virtual settings, to combine his passions: teaching and new technologies, which leads to document and share insights to contribute to the body of research.