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Using postcolonial literature in the EFL class to promote ethnic diversity and develop critical thinking skills: A case study

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Abstract

This paper explores the introduction of Postcolonial literature to a class of twenty students at the Argentona high school as a means of developing critical thinking skills and enhancing their perspective on cultural and ethnical diversity. With the intention of approximating students to postcolonial criticism, they were presented with vignettes from the novel 'The House on Mango Street' by the Chicana author Sandra Cisneros and worked on activities that stem from a Critical Pedagogy approach. By means of two surveys, given at the beginning and the end of the eight one-hour sessions, two forms of students' production samples, and a group discussion, results show that the reading of this novel proved successful in expanding students' knowledge of the Chicano community and the development of critical thinking skills. The activities also managed to unveil power relations and discriminatory practices with regards to race and ethnicity, class, and gender, both in students' own community and in the US.

Keywords: postcolonial literature, EFL, critical thinking skills, The House on Mango Street, secondary education

Resum

El següent article explora la introducció de la literatura postcolonial en anglès a una classe de vint alumnes de l'Institut d'Argentona com a mitjà per desenvolupar habilitats de pensament crític i enriquir coneixements sobre diversitat cultural i ètnica. Amb la intenció d'aproximar els alumnes a la crítica postcolonial, han llegit vinyetes de la novel·la 'The House on Mango Street' (La casa de Mango Street) de l'autora xicana Sandra Cisneros i han treballat activitats que parteixen des de l'enfocament de la pedagogia crítica. Mitjançant dues enquestes, realitzades a l'inici i al final de les vuit sessions, mostres d'alumnes de dues activitats i una discussió en grup, els resultats apunten que la lectura d'aquesta novel·la ha servit per ampliar els coneixements dels estudiants sobre la comunitat xicana, així com per a desenvolupar habilitats de pensament crític desemmascarant relacions de poder i pràctiques discriminatòries pel que fa qüestions racials, de classe i de gènere, tant en les seves pròpies realitats com als EUA.

Paraules clau: literatura postcolonial, EFL, habilitats de pensament crític, The House on Mango Street, educació secundària

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1. Introduction

Several authors point to the advent of the communicative approach as the end of the presence of literature in the foreign language classroom. Sanz González (1995) formulates some recurrent questions amongst academics and teachers: “What is the point in teaching literature to a student who wants to use the language for work and travel? Why should future foreign language teachers study literature if it will be of no use to them in their career?” (p. 119).¹

Regrettably, Lasagabaster (2014) confirms that the use of literary texts in EFL in the Spanish educational system is marginal, with an even lower presence of original texts. My own experience as an EFL student – and I believe it is a shared one – confirms this. The approach to literature across my secondary education was through graded readers in the EFL classroom and Catalan and Spanish classics, often evaluated using summative assessment methods.

Defying the odds, Sanz (1995) points out that contrary to creating more discouragement, the absence of literature in foreign language classrooms has in fact aroused further interest in studying how it can be employed as a tool.

In this vein, the present study aims to give answer to those initial questions but most importantly to show that literary materials can be included in the classroom to teach a diversity of skills – not only linguistic – and to encourage fellow teachers to venture into this thrilling experience. Furthermore, in the Catalan framework of competency-based learning, literature results advantageous not only for those skills related to the foreign languages field (oral communication, reading comprehension, written expression and literary dimension) but also for the core competencies in the personal and social field such as (C1) becoming self-aware and getting involved in the process of personal growth and (C3) developing skills and attitudes that allow to face the challenges of lifelong learning (Direcció General d’Educació Secundària Obligatòria i Batxillerat, 2018).

To this end, the current study explores the introduction of Postcolonial literature to a class of students at the Argentona high school with the aim of developing critical thinking skills and enhancing their perspective on cultural and ethnical diversity. With

¹ All translations are mine.

the intention of approximating students to postcolonial criticism, they were presented with vignettes from the novel 'The House on Mango Street' by the Chicana author Sandra Cisneros and worked on activities that stem from a Critical Pedagogy approach.

2. Literature review

English Language Teaching (ELT) has never only been about teaching English. In recent years, it has become notorious that it may be an excellent field to develop multiple literacies due to its nature. For Bland (2018), ELT comprises teaching writing and reading skills (functional literacy), developing Information Technology skills (information literacy), working on literary aesthetics (literary literacy), fostering critical thinking skills (critical literacy) and reading visual prompts consciously (visual literacy).

Nevertheless, many teachers nowadays still understand ELT only in terms of functional literacy and incorporate mostly text-related activities that develop the four skills, yet do not dare to include literary texts even though the benefits of including literature in second language acquisition have been debated by scholars and professionals for years. Carroli (2008) presents the three paradigms of literature in L2 environments that have developed over time: Teaching the canon, teaching language, and teaching culture. The first one received its inspiration from the classical period and was popular mid-20th century. The second option, which understands literary texts as samples of language, emerged in the 1970's and 1980's with the advent of the Communicative Approach, and the third approach, came as a response to the necessity that had emerged to incorporate intercultural awareness in L2.

Despite the different perspectives on how literature can be included in language classes, there are still those who argue against its integration in the L2 curriculum alleging language level difficulty and lack of applicability for everyday use (Carroli, 2008). With regards to difficulty, it is true that long texts can be problematic for lower levels. Notwithstanding, Carroli (2008) defends that using shorter texts by the same author as well as sufficient preparation of intertextual references from the L2 instructor can be useful solutions. To this same problem, some scholars and L2 professionals may be in favour of using graded readers, yet according to Bland (2018) this tendency of presenting adult literature to younger students instead of letting them interact with texts aimed at their level "is counterproductive to the rich cognitive development

literature can support” (p. 5). Besides, these simplified accounts diminish the literary and cultural value of the text by presenting it simply as an instrument to learn a language (Carroli, 2008).

Another answer that has been presented to surpass the problem of language level in secondary education settings, is choosing works that fall within Young Adult Literature (YAL), which based on Sun (2021), results advantageous in several aspects by: (1) providing role models that can influence children’s and teenager’s behaviour and morality, (2) incorporating appropriate linguistic and lexical elements suitable for this age, and (3) presenting books as a single discursive and contextual unit as opposed to what textbooks are normally like.

As far as its lack of relevance in learning useful everyday language, some scholars defend that this attitude – which stems from defenders of the Communicative Approach – is closer to seeing language as a necessary part of market transactions where there is a need to “use this language in a variety of pre-established contexts, prioritizing some of them to the detriment of others” (Caetano, 2020, p. 283).

In the same vein, Stefanova et al., (2017) believe that within ELT, teachers should not be restricted to teaching language skills, but rather should promote critical thinking skills amongst students by making them reflect on matters of social concern. In accordance with this, many scholars see literature as an opportunity to do so, and this discipline has been integrated in the curriculum in recent years in order to develop critical awareness. In line with this understanding of literature, Bland (2018) defends that literary texts are beneficial both linguistically and educationally, as they increase “intercultural understanding, empathy, multiple literacies, an understanding of the connectedness of the world and global issues, tolerance, cognitive and affective gains and self-reliance” (p. 1).

As a matter of fact, the development of critical thinking skills is at the core of a pedagogic tradition which originated thanks to the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Critical pedagogy, or “*pedagogies*” (CP), which stems from Freire’s theories, is the term ideated by critical language educators who have come to connect critical pedagogy with the teaching and learning of language (López-Gopar, 2019). As such, CP comes to define the numerous practices of those who understand education as a way to work against discrimination and inequality by way of discussing such issues as

well as identity and power relations (López-Gopar, 2019) of under-represented groups (Bland, 2018).

Its application to ELT began in the 1990s and was introduced in classrooms which taught English at L1 and L2 (Stefanova et al., 2017). However, according to López-Gopar (2019), examples of such practice both in classrooms and teacher training programmes are difficult to find. Many scholars agree that one of the main reasons for this is that there are no single CP practices, as each context precises different techniques. Anyhow, there is some consensus on the activities that should be incorporated by teachers in L2 classrooms when looking to implement CP, as Yulianto (2016) summarises the findings of several authors: “(1) conducting classroom and group discussion; (2) experiencing democratic classroom; (3) presenting students’ real life problems; (4) using various, authentic and problematic reading materials; and (5) challenging students to think and act critically” (p. 28).

When dealing specifically with texts, critical pedagogy moves to *critical literacy pedagogy*, which is understood as a way to teach students to read actively and reflectively in order to better understand social injustice and inequalities (Stefanova et al., 2017). In order for that to happen, educators must include activities that involve the reading and discussion of texts with the aim of giving students the opportunity to critically reflect on their world views and transform how they interact with it (Caetano, 2020).

At this point, some ELT professionals may believe that they are already currently teaching students to read actively and reflectively, as in school environments, L2 English seems to be in charge of teaching intercultural skills due to the fact that English is understood as a global phenomenon (Bland, 2018). Nonetheless, based on Caetano (2020), the inclusion of topics such as globalisation and multiculturalism are not transforming elements in itself and may continue to reproduce the establishment’s interests. For once, the content included within the materials is not a real representation of the social reality where English is spoken around the world, and secondly, the majority of materials are produced within the UK or the US and fail to take into account the different realities that exist amongst schools.

It is common knowledge that the materials we use for teaching language can influence students ideologically. Hence, it is important to look at the stories told in classrooms,

in order to see who is narrating and who is being misrepresented, or not represented at all (Bland, 2018). In accordance with this, this author insists that those narratives which represent the *Other*, as well as those that hold concealed ideologies must be brought to light. Consequently, the inclusion of a wide selection of literary texts comes as one of the solutions to avoid reductionism and stereotyping in ELT (2018). From this, it follows that if one intends to incorporate critical literacy, the choice of materials becomes of vital importance, as it should stimulate students to think about their (mis)conceptions and the relations of power that exist in society regarding different racial/ethnic groups (Calvete et al., 2012).

Broadly speaking, postcolonial theory examines literature from the perspective of colonialism, oppression, and power structures by looking at postcolonial cultures and nations, as well as postcolonial identities, and the relationship between the *Otherer/Othered* and the hybrid spaces this creates (Moore, 2019). As such, it seems to adequately meet the conditions of critical literacy. In addition, as Stefanova et al., (2017) indicate, postcolonial criticism focuses on the exposure of practices that are discriminatory or oppressive with regards to race, ethnicity, class, and/or gender, and has been of utmost importance in our recognition of the different voices present within literature. It also aims to help students to develop critical thinking skills that may result in meaningful social transformation.

For the purpose of this study, I have selected the bildungsroman 'The House on Mango Street' by Sandra Cisneros (1984), as it tells the coming of age of a Chicana girl who navigates between the hybrid space of her identity as both American and Mexican in an attempt to find her place in the world. The text, which can be englobed within YAL, has been used to present issues of race/ethnicity, class, and gender.

All in all, the present study aims to answer the following questions:

- Is teaching Postcolonial literature an effective way to promote ethnical diversity amongst EFL students?
- In what ways can teaching Postcolonial literature help students develop critical thinking skills?

3. Method

In terms of methodology a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research was conducted. On the one hand, I was interested in knowing about the students' perceptions of literature and culture in the EFL class as well as their conceptions of the US, and knowledge of ethnicity and race relations in this country. On the other hand, I wanted to know if the exposure to materials – particularly literary – that dealt with issues of race and ethnicity, class, identity, and gender in the US could have an impact on their knowledge and conceptions. For this part, qualitative tools were employed.

This was a classroom intervention project, and as such it intended to be an in-depth study of a group of students who have a particular English level and certain socioeconomic conditions, meaning it is not nor does it intend to be representative of all the 4th of ESO students in Catalan high schools.

Research was conducted with a group of 20 4th of ESO students from Institut Argentona who take English as a second foreign language as their optional course. They are sixteen females and four males, with ages ranging from 15 to 16. Out of all the students, only two were born in a place other than Catalonia – one in Ethiopia and the other one in France. This low diversity rate is representative of the entire high school.

Institut Argentona is the only high school in Argentona, a middle-sized town located next to Mataró, in the Maresme region. This town has a middle socio-economic level, precisely the same as the Catalan average. The majority of students (95%) were born in Catalonia and as such it is a centre with a very low percentage of foreign students (Institut d'Argentona, 2019). Due to COVID-19, each ESO year is divided into 7 classes. This high school has a special programme (PIM in Catalan) for students who experience learning difficulties, with some students in first and second of ESO attending adapted lessons for languages and maths and later being grouped all together in the third and fourth years (Aula Oberta, in Catalan). Moreover, in the second cycle of ESO, students are placed in different classes depending on their future path. Thus, those groups intended for Baccalaureate are divided into specific branches (Social, Humanistic, Scientific, etc.), and there are also two groups called 'practical' which are aimed at Vocational Skills courses.

The 20 students who make up the sample for this study are not part of the same class – they belong to 4th ESO C and D – but they all take French as their first foreign language and English as their optional course. As such, this group’s language level ranged from B1+ to C1, meaning students possessed the necessary skills to follow and engage in literary and cultural discussions aimed at this level. For this reason, only one of the research tools – the survey – was conducted in Catalan.

3.1. Tools

The initial survey served as a starting point for the project. It is a mixed survey, which comprises both qualitative and quantitative questions. In order to design it, Hernández-Sampieri's (2014) guidelines on how to write questionnaires and present questions in order to collect data effectively were used. Following from that, short clear questions in simple, direct, familiar vocabulary which did not include answers or induced to one were included. Questions 8, and 11 to 15 were adapted from the questionnaire carried out in the study by the Consejo para la Eliminación de la Discriminación racial o étnica (2020).

As previously stated, this initial survey looks to gain insight into the students’ initial perceptions of literature and culture in the EFL class as well as their conceptions of the US, and knowledge of ethnicity and race relations in this country. The survey was answered anonymously, and only two questions which asked about age and country of birth were included in the initial section. The questions which were incorporated in the second part focused on literature. With these questions, the main interest was knowing the participants’ opinion of literature and whether it could have a place in EFL. For that, Likert Scale questions and an open-ended question were included. The third section contained questions about the learning of culture in the EFL class, and it also comprised Likert Scale questions and an open-ended question. The final part included a mix of open-ended, multiple choice, numerical scale, Likert Scale, and yes-no questions. In this last section of the survey, the interest was in knowing about the students’ conceptions of race relations and ethnicity in the US as well as their knowledge of a particular ethnic group, the Chicanos.

This same survey was conducted in the last session in order to compare the initial results with those after the 8 sessions of exposure. This served to measure the impact it had on the students and to evaluate the initial objectives.

Another tool for collecting data was samples of students' production. These were obtained from two different activities. The first activity is an individual reading comprehension with questions taken from the chapter 'Those who don't' of the novel 'The House on Mango Street' (Cisneros, 1991). These comprised three literal questions and two inferences from direct quotes (see Appendix 2. Tool 2: 'Those who don't' activities – students' samples).

The second activity is a written expression exercise in which students had to write a 'single story'² (Adichie, 2009) they had told or had been told about themselves (see Appendix 3. Tool 3: 'My single story' writing exercise). This task was part of the scaffolding activities that were used to contextualise matters of identity, belonging and stereotyping.

The last tool were group discussions. They were part of a reading for detail exercises' worksheet where students in groups had to focus on one vignette from the aforementioned book and discuss their ideas. The five chosen chapters were 'No Speak English', 'Bums in the Attic', 'Geraldo No Last Name', 'My Name' and 'Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark'. These deal with matters of race/ethnicity, gender, class, and the immigrant experience. Each worksheet contained between seven to ten questions, depending on the chapter. In the final session, four questions were presented to the students – one literal, two inferences, and a self-reflection – and their answers were recorded. The transcription (see Appendix 4. Tool 4: Transcription of the group discussion – Speaking practice: 'Presenting the chapters) is the evidence for this tool.

3.2. Data collection

The study was developed within a project-based learning framework which lasted 8 one-hour sessions during my placement at the Institut Argentona. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the 8-hour teaching intervention extended to a period of five weeks, as opposed to the two and a half it would normally last, with some weeks having only one session.

The initial survey was carried out in the session prior to starting my teaching intervention, with the 20 students using their own laptops or mobile phones to answer

² This concept formulated by Adichie comes to define the idea of recognizing one side of the story as the only truth, often based on stereotypes.

the questions individually. Something worth mentioning is that some students expressed their discomfort at answering generalising statements – mostly related to issues of racism. The final survey was conducted at the end of the project once students had been exposed to 8 hours of learning. The procedure was the same. However, one of the respondents failed to submit the answers and the total number of responses for this survey was 19.

With regards to the students' work, samples for the writing task were collected at the end of session number four and those for the reading comprehension task at the end of session six. For both activities, students used their own laptops. Both were done individually and submitted at the end of the allocated time.

Finally, group discussions took place during session number seven. Students worked in five groups of four – with one laptop per student – using a shared online document to discuss their answers. They were given one hour to complete the worksheet. Students' answers were collected at the end of this session. The feedback stage was done in the last session (number eight) with students sitting in the same groups. They were given 5 minutes to discuss them together, and then proceeded to answer these orally. Answers were recorded, and a transcript was later produced.

3.3. Data analysis

Since a mixed survey had been employed, its analysis also comprised different methods. For those questions that allowed numerical analysis, whole numbers or percentages were used, as it was a reduced sample. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, were analysed through codification and categorisation. Both the samples of students' work and group discussions were also analysed using codification and categorisation.

4. Findings

Survey results show that students changed their perception of literature after the eight-hour teaching sessions. In terms of its suitability to learn English, the intervention process allowed for 4 students with unformed opinions on the matter and one in disagreement to agree that literature is a useful tool, making it a total of 18 out of 19 as opposed to the initial 15. Results also show a change in the responses provided to

the question ‘How is literature useful?’ (**Error! Reference source not found.**) with more answers including categories such as culture, critical thinking, and storytelling, and less including language learning or history. Another noticeable difference between both surveys is that in the second, students’ answers included more categories within the same answer (27 and 36 respectively), meaning that they moved from a single conception of literature to a multifaceted one.

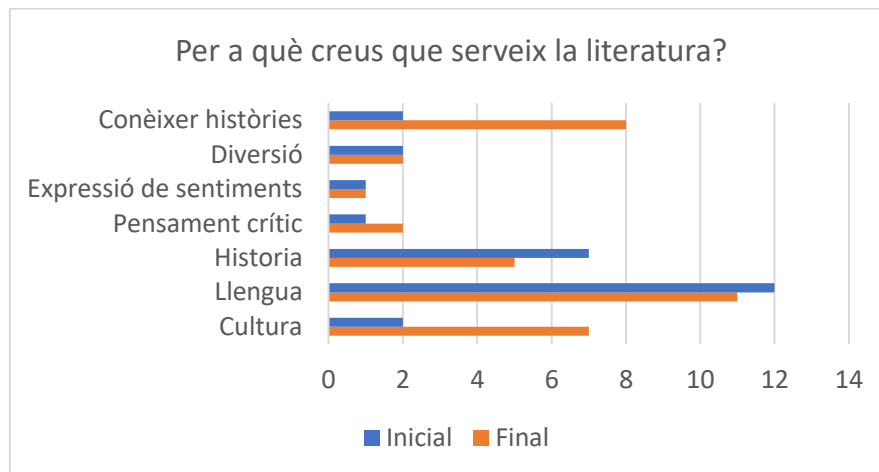


Figure 1: Per a què serveix la literatura?

In relation to the discussion of issues of ethnical and/or racial diversity in the classroom, survey results show that more students agreed that they had been included in the lessons. While in the initial survey 3 students disagreed and 5 did not show an opinion in this matter, after the intervention only 2 remained neutral while the rest showed their agreement (17). As for the knowledge of ethnic groups that reside in the US (**Error! Reference source not found.**), results show that students do not have a clear understanding of what they are. This was an open-ended question, and as such, answers were varied. These have been grouped in six different categories: religious groups, ethnic groups, peoples or nationalities, continents, language speakers, and socioeconomic groups. Most answers in the first survey indicated a religious group/identity (Jewish, Christians, Buddhists, Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, Pagans and Secular). However, the results of the final survey included less answers in this field in favour of more responses in all the other categories. As far as the answers in the ethnic group category are concerned, students identified five: Black or African American, Latino, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, and White. From these, the last two

were included as answers only in the final survey. Also in this one, there was an increase of responses in the Latino group.

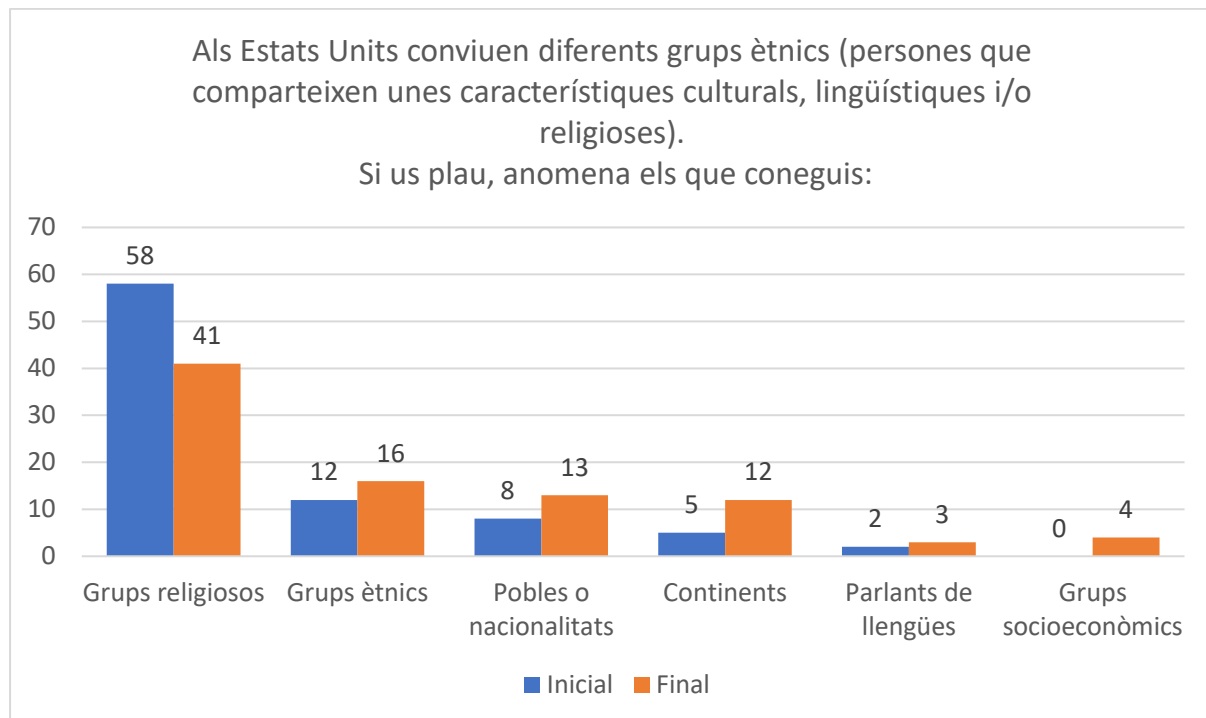


Figure 2: Anomena els grups ètnics que conviuen als EUA

Concerning race relations in the US, figures show that the number of students who think that 'US citizens are welcoming with people of other ethnical origins' decreased. While in the initial survey, 7 students selected numbers 6 or higher in a 1 to 10 scale where 1 was completely disagree and 10 completely agree, in the final one only 5 did. Results also show that students felt more strongly towards disagreement, as in the initial survey answers were distributed more equally between numbers 1 to 4 (1, 2, 3 and 3, respectively) while in the second, numbers 2 and 3 scored the highest (with 4 and 6 students in each case). The number of students who think that 'US citizens are racist with people from a different ethnic origin' increased by 2, making it almost 75% of the class as opposed to the former 60%. In addition, the second survey shows that many students had formed an opinion on the matter, as answers for number 5 (equal to neither agree nor disagree) on the scale decreased from 6 to 1. Responses to the question 'US citizens do not like having immigrant neighbours' also scored higher, moving from 8 to 13 the number of students who agreed or strongly agreed. Again,

more students had formed an opinion in the final survey, falling from 8 to 3 those to respond: 'Neither agree nor disagree'.

As for identity, results show slight differences in response to the question 'How do you think immigrant students who have been born outside of the US feel?'. Both in the initial and final surveys, the majority of students (11) indicated that they feel from both places – the US and their country of origin. Fewer students chose the option 'from their country of origin' in the second questionnaire, yet it was still the second highest choice. None of the students opted for the 'from the US' option in either surveys. Regarding the second part of the question 'And those of immigrant parents?', both surveys show that most students picked 'of their country of origin' (12 and 11 respectively). The second most popular choice was 'from the US' which showed no variation (3 students each time), followed by 'from both places' in the third place with no changes either. From the two students who had answered 'I don't know' initially, only one maintained this opinion.

Finally, results show that the teaching intervention made an impact on the students' knowledge of the Chicano identity. While initially only 2 out of 20 students confirmed that they knew who they were, this number increased to 14 in the final survey.

In relation to the second tool (see Appendix 2. Tool 2: 'Those who don't' activities – students' samples), the sample of students' work from the comprehension activities of the chapter 'Those who don't' (Cisneros, 1991), results have been divided into two categories – (1) conceptions of race relations and (2) ethnical or racial diversity.

Regarding the first item (1), many answers show that students interpreted the literal meaning of the chapter and used words from the text. However, others used more elaborated responses:

<i>(1.1) Conceptions of race relations</i>	How others view the protagonist's neighbourhood	How the protagonist's neighbours feel
Literal answers	"scary", "afraid", "dangerous"	"safe", "know each other/the people/their neighbours"
Other answers	"criminal/s"	"they are like a family"
		"protected by their people"
	"threatening"	"comfortable around their neighbours"
		"people who they can confide in and understand each other"
	"a bad place"	"a normal neighborhood"
		"They had passed the same problems, and they lived he same racism, then they protect each other"

Table 1: Conceptions of race relations (1.1)

From these answers, it is possible to ascertain that these students have acknowledged, on the one hand, the dynamics of harmful race relations, and the sense of community, belonging, and identity, on the other.

As for the effect that stereotyping has on the protagonist's feelings, some of the students said:

<i>(1.2) Conceptions of race relations</i>	Samples of students' answers to the protagonist's feelings
	"She feel bad and upset because she knows that people there isn't as other neighborhood' people think they are."
	"She feels bad and angry"
	"She feels that these people feel this way because they don't know the community and that they don't belong there"
	"She feels like their point of view is incomplete and not even close to reality"
	"She feels sad and disappointed with people whose thoughts are like this"
	"She feels like she's being judged"
	"See feels uncomfortable because she thinks that other people see her as a bad person".

Table 2: Conceptions of race relations (1.2)

These answers demonstrate that students have sympathised with the main character and have been able to identify the impact that stereotyping can have on the people who suffer it.

With reference to ethnical or racial diversity (2), results show that students have used different terms to describe the protagonist’s identity when asked to infer meaning from the quote ‘All brown all around, we are safe.’ (p. 28). The following are:

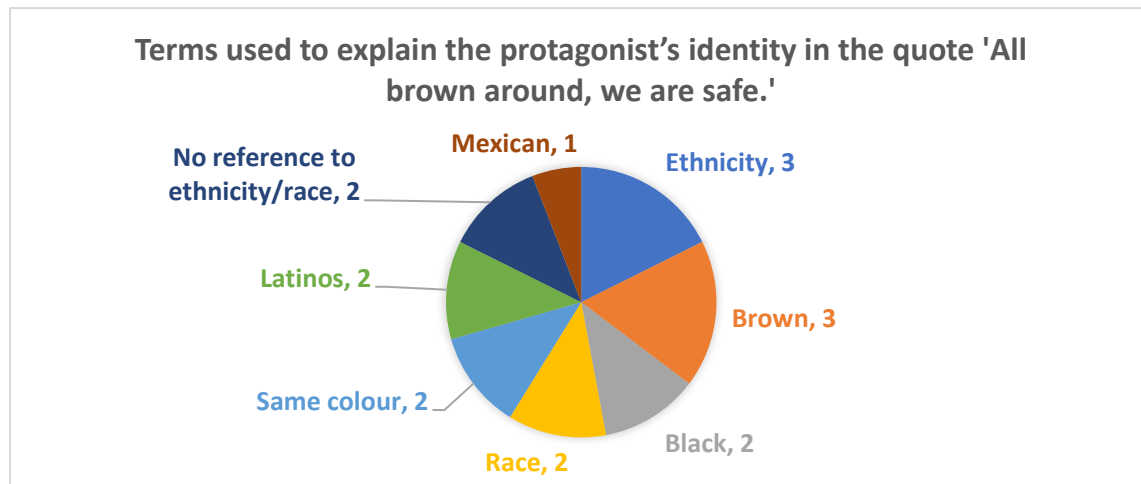


Table 3: Terms used to explain the protagonist's identity

From this, it is possible to say that while ‘ethnicity’, ‘race’, ‘colour’, and ‘Latino’ might be considered hyponyms or hypernyms of ‘brown’; ‘black’, ‘brown’ or ‘Mexican’ (if used to refer to all Latinos as opposed to Mexican Americans) are not. On a different note, it is worth mentioning that two of the students opted to exclude ethnical or racial references and described the protagonist’s community simply as “known neighbours” and “together”. On balance, results suggest some students needed further clarification of the concepts ethnicity and race.

For the third tool – the writing practice titled ‘My single story’ – students wrote about a variety of insightful topics: bullying (4), body issues (4), feminism (3), race or ethnicity (2), adult power (2), special needs (2), family (2) and LGBTQ+ (1). Despite the different themes, the experiences they relate are closely linked to their identity. As the following samples show, students successfully unveiled power relations in which they stood on one side or the other of discrimination. As such, they recognised these situations as an injustice and as errors in reasoning either in themselves or others. Besides, they were able to extrapolate their own forms of discrimination to other forms in which they

may have the opposite role. Consequently, results show that this activity was successful in developing students' critical thinking.

As we can see, Student 1 (S1) uncovers a power relation inherent to a racist act that s/he suffered when accused by a white woman to having tried to steal her wallet. As S1 identifies, this woman had stereotyped her/him on the basis of race/ethnicity.

I think she judged me before I could even talk, she stereotyped me thinking all black people steal and they are all criminals. If she hadn't stereotyped me everything would have been easier. In my view, we shouldn't stereotype people just because of his color skin.

On the other hand, Student 2 (S2) recognises a harmful dynamic inherent in a discourse she had assimilated also based on race/ethnicity and feels regretful of having done so.

At Christmas of 2020 with my family we went to Morocco, and at first I was a little scared to go because everyone always told me that Moroccan people were poor and thieves. However, my mum, who went there years ago, told me that this wasn't true at all, that the big cities had bad neighborhood, but this happens also in Spain and a lot of other countries.

[...] And at the end of the trip I wasn't feeling good. Because they had this vision of us, the vision of a Catalan family who were independents and liked football. But also I realize that I created a single story about them too, the story of a poor country. I felt shame of my self because I did something that I also didn't like.

Student 3 (S3) identifies the dynamics of power inherent in gender relations as he suffered harassment from a group of cis males and females because of his/her sexual orientation. In addition, S3 also expands this form of discrimination to others based on race or beauty standards.

This years were so hard for me, people just thought that i was the closeted gay on the school and my old friends started to slowly get away from me. I was just a teen who's life was turning around on his sexual orientation. [...] These labels are so stressful for people who are so fragile, like me when I was thirteen. I hate this single stories about a personal characteristic, your body shape, your skin color, your gender and also your sexual orientation. The stories are always from the "worst" part of someone consequently these stereotypes are hurtful for everyone who feels identified.

In the same vein, Student 4 (S4) acknowledges the power in gender relations, where girls and women are exposed to harassment by cis males. Furthermore, S4 expresses her anger and desire to change this situation.

I think that we have to stop these bad situations which most of the girls have to stick to. I am sure that if we were boys, this strange man wouldn't have said anything. And this

angers me, that this only happens to women. I don't know how but we have to stop this. It's horrible for us.

As for the last tool (see Appendix 4. Tool 4: Transcription of the group discussion – Speaking practice: 'Presenting the chapters – the group discussion – the evidence collected from the transcription also points to the unveiling of power relations regarding race/ethnicity; gender; and class; particularly in connection with the immigrant experience.

In relation to migration and gender, students reflected on the emotions that migrating to the US causes to the female protagonist of one of the vignettes and the impact this has on her own identity and her son's.

Speaker 2: The husband does this because he thinks that, the moving, yeah, moving to the US will let them to a better life. But she doesn't want to because as X said, like she feels like home in Mexico, nothing there. And she doesn't want to accept her new lifestyle.

Speaker 3: And when she sees that, that her... her baby is talking, is singing a song from a commercial that he saw on that TV. He starts, ay, she starts crying. Because she realises that like her, her baby is learning the new language, that they are here, and she realises that, how much she misses her country.

Speaker 2: And that, suddenly, they are becoming less Mexican and more American.

Speaker 3: They are losing their roots.

Furthermore, they put themselves in the immigrants' shoes and dismantle one of the most common stereotypes regarding immigration:

Speaker 2: That for immigrants, it's very hard to leave their countries most of the times, is what we could see in this story.

With regards to the immigrant experience and social class, students refer to the difficulties and the disenchantment they experience when arriving in the US (or a new country) particularly because of the socioeconomic differences that exist:

Speaker 1: Oh, that most of them think what the Y said, that, they, if they live in some country and go to the US, they can become rich or billionaires there, So this opportunity, like, make them open-minded and no, *com es diu?* encourages them to go to the US.

Speaker 2: But a lot of the time it doesn't work this way. And they are just as poor.

They also reflect on the discrimination undocumented immigrants suffer based on their status in the country:

Speaker 10: The message that we found is like, if you have an illegal situation, you don't get the attention that you need, and...

Speaker 11: Yeah, and the single story is well, of Geraldo, because of his situation, he... He, the doctors have a prejudice with him. And don't save him because he's, illegal, he's immigrant.

Another student considers the feelings that class inequality cause to the protagonist, and how this impacts on her own identity as 'an outsider':

Speaker 5: The message that this story gives us is that Esperanza is tired of the inequality between the two classes. And like the big difference that there is between the rich and the poor, or the immigrants. And she, she feels like she is an outsider. And that she is not open to it.

After these considerations, students conclude that by reading these chapters, they learnt about relationships that are based on solidarity:

Speaker 7: We learned that you can't forget where you come from. You should help anyone in need, regardless of your social status.

Speaker 8: And we learn that we have to help people even, doesn't matter where they came from, or how many money they have. And we have to try to help them so for example, in this story, Geraldo dies and nobody can contact with the family and then it's someone that leave home and never come back.

Finally, students also identified issues of gender, both to female and male protagonists regarding the expectations that society has from both roles.

Speaker 12: The chapter is about a girl and her name is Esperanza. And she does a story that why she has this name and she don't like because she feels like, is not the perfect name for her because she associate the name Esperanza with sadness thing, and with a woman who isn't strong and she wants to be a strong woman who can be whatever she wants.

Speaker 15: Yes, there is one thing. That she was a house woman, she stayed at home, and she didn't, Esperanza didn't want this. She wanted to go out and to discover the world because she's a wild person. She considers herself a wild woman.

Speaker 16: And we are also shown, the most sentimental and vulnerable, vulnerable part of him. And it's like, he takes off his mask, because otherwise people precise him, just as a brave and hardworking person who is never afraid. And we are able to see him crying about the loss.

Speaker 17: The message is that the men can cry.

The students' concluding remark is that it is necessary to break with the established roles imposed by society, regardless of your gender:

Speaker 15: The message. The message of the story is that you no matter what, which are your conditions, you have to follow your dreams and what you want, [...].

Speaker 17: And we learn that everyone must be able to express and show their feelings.

5. Discussion

The current case study confirms Carroli's (2008) theory that YAL novels are more beneficial than graded readers when it comes to presenting texts as something more than language instruments. As survey results point out, students have moved from a single definition of literature as a tool to learn a language or its history, to a multifaced one by including other uses such as learning about culture, critical thinking, or storytelling. Consequently, when opting to introduce literature in the EFL class, the use of YAL novels – particularly those that deal with diversity – are more advisable in that they will bring more benefits other than purely linguistic.

With reference to the first research question, the effectiveness of using postcolonial literature to promote ethnical and/or racial diversity amongst EFL students, results show that the majority of students came to know about the existence of Chicanos after the reading of the novel. However, survey results also demonstrate that students did not have a clear understanding of the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' or the presence of the different groups in the US neither before nor after the teaching intervention. Despite having briefly introduced students to these terms in class and having included an activity where students had to look up the three largest groups in the city of Chicago – where the novel is set – evidence shows that at least one or more sessions would have been needed on this topic exclusively. Another reason, which can be attributed to this, is the confusion generated by the difference between both terms, and what constitutes each. In the United States, Hispanic or Latino is not considered a race but an ethnic group, as Hispanic or Latinos can be of any race (Office of Management and Budget, 1997).

As such, it can be said that the classroom activities that involved 'The House on Mango Street' were a useful tool to expand the students' knowledge of the specific identity dealt with in the novel – Chicanos – but not of other ethnicities or racial groups, mostly due to time constraints.

Concerning the second objective – the development of critical thinking skills – results are satisfactory. First of all, data suggests that incorporating activities that meet the consensus on what critical pedagogies (CP) practices' (Yulianto, 2016) constitute was key in achieving so. The activities presented as evidence used problematic materials

that allowed for group discussions and the presentation of students' real-life problems with the aim of challenging students to think and act critically.

More precisely, López-Gopar (2019) and Bland (2018), pointed to the discussion of identity and power relations as a way to identify and dismantle discriminatory practices within CP. As results for the students' samples have indicated, participants successfully accomplished that through all three activities, but particularly through the writing of 'My single story'. In this activity, which was employed as a scaffolding task, results demonstrate that students unveiled situations of injustice they had endured or committed with reference to under-represented groups: racism in the case of S1 and S2, homophobia for S3 and male violence against women for S4. In this sense, this is also testimony that using intertextual references such as this pre-reading activity offers tangible results to dealing with level difficulty, as Carroli (2008) suggests.

Caetano (2020) also indicated that texts needed to give the opportunity to students to critically think about the way they see the world and change how they interact with it. With regards to this, 'The House on Mango Street' allowed students to reflect upon race relations, identity, and gender.

As for race relations in the US, survey results show that the opinion of students regarding this issue changed after the eight teaching sessions: US citizens were perceived as less welcoming, and more racist with people of other ethnical origins. In addition, more students thought that US citizens do not like having immigrant neighbours. Furthermore, data also demonstrates that the intervention helped students form an opinion on this matter.

It is possible to connect these results with the qualitative data obtained from tool 2. After the reading of the chapter 'Those Who don't', students appeared to have acknowledged the dynamics of harmful race relations, the impact it has on the people who suffer it, and the sense of community it creates, as the following quotes demonstrate: "She feel bad and upset because she knows that people there isn't as other neighborhood' people think they are" or "They [the neighbours] had passed the same problems, and they lived he same racism, then they protect each other".

The change in students' conceptions of race relations is also connected with the data obtained from tool 4 (group discussions). As pointed out in the results, students reflected on the disenchantment, difficulties, and discrimination that both documented

and undocumented immigrants suffer in this country, and the impact this has on their identity as 'outsiders' due to the socio-economic differences that exist in the US. After having read these chapters, students concluded that they had learnt about relationships based on solidarity: "We learned that you can't forget where you come from. You should help anyone in need, regardless of your social status" (Speaker 7) or "And we learn that we have to help people even, doesn't matter where they came from, or how *many money* they have. And we have to try to help them so for example, in this story, Geraldo dies and nobody can contact with the family and then it's someone that leave home and never come back".

Concerning identity, survey results point to students identifying first-generation immigrant students as feeling both from the US and their country of origin, and second-generation immigrant students as feeling more of their country of origin. On this account, the students' opinion indicates that the sense of belonging to the US is inverse.

In any case, the students' perception of immigrant identities in the US is far from being of full integration. In relation to this, qualitative data from tools 2 and 4 gives some insight. As previously mentioned, students identified the sense of shared identity and belonging to the protagonist's own community and the differences that exist amongst different groups, which reinforces the idea of alienation from an only-US identity. Furthermore, from tool 4 students also reflected on the emotional process that involves migrating to the US and losing their roots, and the impact this has on their hybrid identity. On this matter, students were able to highlight a fact that many people fail to consider when talking about immigration: "That for immigrants, it's very hard to leave their countries most of the times" (Speaker 2).

The last item in consideration is gender. For this topic, no questions were included in the survey, hence all the evidence is qualitative. In tool 4, students identified issues of gender and the expectations that society imposes on both roles. In the case of females, students acknowledged how the protagonist fought against inheriting the place of the stay-at-home wife; for men, students recognised how male sensibility is seen as a weakness. On this matter, students concluded that it was necessary to fight against the imposition of gender roles.

As Calvete et al., (2012) pointed out, choosing the right materials is key if educators want to stimulate students to think about the relations of power that exist within different ethnic/racial groups. On this matter, it is possible to conclude that the reading of 'The House on Mango Street' was successful in doing so, and, ergo, developing students' critical thinking skills.

5.1 Limitations of the study

The main limitation of this research was time. As previously indicated, the study was developed within a project-based framework that lasted 8 one-hour sessions during my placement at Institut Argenton. In this period, compulsory class-supervised assessments had to be integrated, which conditioned the design of the teaching unit as well as its intervention. Ideally, literature-based projects should last longer (up to one term). Another setback was the number of participants in the second survey, which was lower due to one student failing to submit the answers.

Last but not least, the total number of participants was only 20. Due to the high school's homogeneous grouping structure and my mentor's assigned groups, it was not possible to include other classes in the sample. For that, I believe there is space for expanding this research with a wider sample of students, as well as with lower-level groups.

6. Conclusions

This study aimed to contribute to the research of how literature can be used as a tool in the foreign language classroom. However, it was designed to steer away from the conceptions of using literature for teaching the canon or strictly language learning. It specifically intended to investigate if a particular form of literature – postcolonial – could be used in EFL environments to teach critical thinking skills and promote ethnical/racial diversity amongst students.

Results have shown that this particular genre of literature is most advantageous when combined with practices that derive from critical pedagogies. Data has demonstrated that students have been able to expand their knowledge of the Chicano community, albeit not of other ethnicities or racial groups, mostly due to time constraints. On the other hand, evidence has also shown that students have developed critical thinking

skills by unveiling power relations and discriminatory practices with regards to race, ethnicity, class, and gender, both in their own realities and in the US.

In response to those who still oppose the integration of literature in the L2 curriculum on the basis of level difficulty, this study agrees with Carroli (2008) that presenting original texts – preferably YAL novels – is more beneficial than using graded readers. With the necessary scaffolding activities, students were able to face the text's language as well as its themes. What is more, using an authentic novel allowed students to see literature in English as somewhat more than a mere instrument to learn the language.

In terms of applicability, this study can afford to answer the original question formulated by Sanz González (1995) at the introduction of this paper and say that teaching (postcolonial) literature to a student who wants to use English for work and travel will increase his/her understanding of their own and other cultures, the dynamics of world power relations, and contribute to making more empathic, tolerant human beings (Bland, 2018) – all of which are much needed qualities for today's interconnected world.

Resultantly, I encourage teachers to venture into the undiscovered world of postcolonial, feminist or queer literatures, or any form of literature that steers clear of the literary canon, as this continues to reproduce a Eurocentric vision of the world.

6.1 Useful tips for including critical-thinking texts in EFL classrooms

- Look for texts that deal with issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, or sexual orientation from the perspective of the *Othered*.
- Choose a text that is appropriate for the student's level (both linguistically and cognitively). If whole books are difficult to find, try using shorter texts by the same author (Carroli, 2008).
- Include pre-reading activities that prepare students for the text. Use PTV (pre teach vocabulary) techniques as well as chunks of language from the text to teach new grammatical structures.
- Incorporate pre-reading activities to prepare students for the themes. This may be in the form of shorter texts by other authors, videos, or episodes from TV

series. What is more, these tasks will also help students develop receptive and productive skills.

- Use activities that appeal to students' real-life situations. This will increase their motivation as well as the ability to connect with the story.
- During the reading stage, introduce different techniques. A combination of aloud and individual reading will prove the most successful for students.
- Include literal questions as well as inferences. The latter will prove best to check students' real understanding of the text.
- Make use of post-reading activities that foster students' critical thinking skills by connecting the themes in the book with the students' closer reality.
- Incorporate the use of ICT tools when possible. This may be in the form of online quizzes after reading a chapter or an extract, to share students' writing tasks with the rest of the class through blog posts, or for students to prepare speaking presentations, to mention some.
- Use pair and group work to foster cooperation amongst students as well as practices that allow for respectful turn-taking and sharing of opinions.
- For group discussions, avoid using individual electronic devices. Pen and paper will ensure that students do not divide the questions amongst themselves.
- Distribute sessions evenly to allow for pre-reading, reading, and post-reading activities. The ultimate aim is not for students to finish the book, but to challenge them to reflect critically on the topics it presents.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Tool 1: Survey

Dades personals

Em dic Meritxell Bonastre i estic cursant el Màster en Formació de Professorat a la UVic-UCC. Aquesta enquesta forma part de la recollida de dades per a l'elaboració del meu TFM, que estudia l'impacte de la introducció de la literatura postcolonial en l'assignatura de llengua anglesa.

Els resultats de l'enquesta seran completament anònims, aquests camps s'inclouen per tal de poder comprovar quins estudiants han format part de la mostra i permetre'n la traçabilitat de cares a la producció de resultats i conclusions. Les dades es guardaran d'acord amb la normativa de la UVic-UCC per garantir-ne la confidencialitat.

* Obligatori

1. Quina edat tens? *

2. Quin és el teu país de naixement? *

Literatura

3. Indica el teu grau d'acord amb la següent afirmació.

Marqueu només un oval per fila.

	Totalment en desacord	En desacord	Ni d'acord ni en desacord	D'acord	Totalment d'acord
La literatura és una eina útil per aprendre anglès.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Per a què creus que serveix la literatura? *

5. Indica el teu grau d'acord amb la següent afirmació. *

Marqueu només un oval per fila.

	Totalment desacord	En desacord	Ni d'acord ni en desacord	D'acord	Totalment d'acord
M'agradaria estudiar literatura a l'assignatura de llengua anglesa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Cultura

6. Indica el teu grau d'acord amb la següent afirmació. *

Marqueu només un oval per fila.

	Totalment desacord	En desacord	Ni d'acord ni en desacord	D'acord	Totalment d'acord
M'agrada aprendre sobre la cultura dels països de parla anglesa (on és primera o segona llengua oficial).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Indica el teu grau d'acord amb la següent afirmació. *

Marqueu només un oval per fila.

	Totalment desacord	En desacord	Ni d'acord ni en desacord	D'acord	Totalment d'acord
A l'assignatura de llengua anglesa aprenem sobre la cultura dels països de parla anglesa (on és primera o segona llengua oficial).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. De quin país o països acostumeu a parlar més en l'assignatura de llengua anglesa? *

9. Indica el teu grau d'acord amb la següent afirmació. *

Marqueu només un oval per fila.

	Totalment en desacord	En desacord	Ni d'acord ni en desacord	D'acord	Totalment d'acord
A l'assignatura de llengua anglesa tractem la diversitat ètnica i/o racial dels països de parla anglesa (on és primera o segona llengua oficial).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Els Estats Units

10. Defineix els Estats Units d'Amèrica en tres paraules: *

11. El que se sobre els Estats Units d'Amèrica ho he après... (pots marcar més d'una opció). *

Seleccioneu totes les opcions que corresponguin.

- A l'assignatura d'anglès
- En una altra assignatura.
- En llibres i novel·les
- A través dels mitjans de comunicació
- Cercant a través d'Internet
- En sèries o pel·lícules
- Altres: _____

12. Als Estats Units conviuen diferents grups ètnics (persones que comparteixen unes característiques culturals, lingüístiques i/o religioses). Si us plau, anomena els que coneguis: *

13. Les persones estatunidenques són acollidores amb les persones immigrants. *

Marqueu només un oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Gens d'acord	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Molt d'acord

14. Les persones estatunidenques són racistes amb les persones d'un altre origen ètnic. *

Marqueu només un oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Gens d'acord	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Molt d'acord

15. Completa-ho amb tres paraules: Les persones estatunidenques creuen que les *
persones immigrants són...

16. Indica el teu grau d'acord amb les següents afirmacions:

	Totalment en desacord	En desacord	Ni d'acord ni en desacord	D'acord	Totalment d'acord
Als estatunidencs/ques els molesta tenir companys/es immigrants a l'escola	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Als estatunidencs/ques no els agrada tenir veïns/es immigrants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
En general els estatunidencs/ques s'esforcen per comprendre les persones immigrants que no parlen anglès	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Com creus que se senten els alumnes immigrants que han nascut fora dels *
Estats Units?

Marqueu només un oval.

- Estatunidenc/a
- "Del seu país d'origen"
- D'ambdós llocs
- No ho sé
- Altres: _____

18. I els de pares o mares immigrants? *

Marqueu només un oval.

- Estatinidenc/a
- "Del seu país d'origen"
- D'ambdós llocs
- No ho sé
- Altres: _____

19. Com t'imagines la vida d'un adolescent estatinidenc/a de la teva edat? *

20. I la vida d'un adolescent estatinidenc/a immigrant o fill/a d'immigrants? *

21. Saps què són els xicanos/xicanes? *

Marqueu només un oval.

- Sí
- No

22. Si has respost afirmativament en la pregunta anterior, si us plau explica en les teves paraules què són:

Google no ha creat ni aprovat aquest contingut.

Google Formularis

Appendix 2. Tool 2: ‘Those who don’t’ activities – students’ samples

The House on Mango Street
Journal Guide

Chapter: ‘Those who don’t’ Reading comprehension

3. How do outsiders view Esperanza’s neighborhood? How does she feel about it?

They think it is a dangerous place, and people from there are criminals who will attack them with shiny knives. She feels sad and disappointed with people whose thoughts are like this.

4. How do the people who live in Esperanza’s neighborhood view it?

They see that people who get there by accident are stupid for being afraid just because of their appearance or their stereotypes.

5. How does Esperanza feel when she drives “into a neighborhood of another color?”

I think she feels worried or uncomfortable when she drives into a neighborhood of another color, she looks straight and doesn’t look at other people, but i don’t think it is because of her thoughts on her, I think it is because their thoughts on her.

6. Explain the meaning of these quotes:

- a. “All brown all around, we are safe.”

I think it means that they are safe when they are together.

- b. “But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight. Yeah. That is how it goes and goes.”

I think it means that they know white people hate them or are afraid of them.

Chapter: 'Those who don't' Reading comprehension

3. **How do outsiders view Esperanza's neighborhood? How does she feel about it?**

Outsiders think Esperanza's neighborhood is dangerous and full of scary criminals. She believes people who think this are stupid, ignorant, and have ended up in their neighborhood by mistake.

4. **How do the people who live in Esperanza's neighborhood view it?**

People in the neighborhood see each other as people who they can confide in and understand each other.

5. **How does Esperanza feel when she drives "into a neighborhood of another color?"**

She feels like she's being judged and tries not to maintain any kind of contact with other people since she expects them to disrespect her.

6. **Explain the meaning of these quotes:**

- a. **"All brown all around, we are safe."**

What she means when saying this is that as long as she's with her people, brown people, she will feel, and be safe.

- b. **"But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight. Yeah. That is how it goes and goes."**

This is her explaining what they do every time they go into a neighborhood of another color, how they try to pass as less noticeable as possible.

Chapter: 'Those who don't' Reading comprehension

3. How do outsiders view Esperanza's neighborhood? How does she feel about it?

They see it as a dangerous place, they are afraid to go there because they think that people will attack them. She feel bad and upset because she knows that people there isn't as other neighborhood people think they are.

4. How do the people who live in Esperanza's neighborhood view it?

It's a neighborhood where everyone knows each other and protects themselves. They are like a family.

5. How does Esperanza feel when she drives "into a neighborhood of another color?"

She feels afraid when she enters a neighborhood that isn't of her ethnic group. She starts shaking and looks forward.

6. Explain the meaning of these quotes:

- a. "All brown all around, we are safe."

That black people between them in their neighborhood feel safe.

- b. "But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight. Yeah. That is how it goes and goes."

That they feel afraid among other ethnic groups.

Chapter: 'Those who don't Reading comprehension

3. **How do outsiders view Esperanza's neighborhood? How does she feel about it?**
 - They see that it is a bad neighbourhood, and that it is dangerous to walk by. She feels that these people feel this way because they don't know the community and that they don't belong there, so then they don't feel safe, but when she goes to other neighbourhoods she feels the same.

4. **How do the people who live in Esperanza's neighborhood view it?**
 - They feel safe because they know each other, they know their mothers, their children... They had passed the same problems, and they lived he same racism, then they protect each other.

5. **How does Esperanza feel when she drives "into a neighborhood of another color?"**
 - She feels the same people feel in her neighbourhood, she doesn't feel safe and thinks something bad is about to happen to her.


6. **Explain the meaning of these quotes:**
 - a. **"All brown all around, we are safe."**
 - They are all Latinos, they know each other, someone is going to protect her if something happens, she is safe.

 - b. **"But watch us drive into a neighborhood of another color and our knees go shakity-shake and our car windows get rolled up tight and our eyes look straight. Yeah. That is how it goes and goes."**
 - Nobody knows her in there, nobody will help her, they know each other and if something happens they will help each other but not she.

Appendix 3. Tool 3: 'My single story' writing exercise and students' samples

Meritxell Bonastre 3mo

#storiesmatter



The sticky notes on the corkboard contain the following text:

- Orange:** I am *young* but I am not *powerless*.
- Blue:** I am a *female*, but I am not *dependent*.
- Purple:** I am *Bengali* but I do not eat *curry* everyday.
- Pink:** I am *chewing skin*, but I am not *"looking for it"*.
- Pink:** I am a *feminist* but I do not *hate men*.
- Pink:** I am *SKINNY*, but I do not *"NEED TO EAT MORE"*.
- Yellow:** I am *bisexual* but I am not *Confused*.
- Orange:** I am A *WOMAN* but I do not *NEED A MAN TO BE COMPLETE*.
- Pink:** I am *black* but I am not a *criminal*.

Think of a single story that **you told** or **was told about you**. Then, write a blog post in 140-190 words. Follow the structure below and use the questions as guidance.

Paragraph 1: Presentation of the single story (it can be about you or somebody else)

ABOUT SOMEBODY ELSE
Have you ever told a single story?

ABOUT YOU
Has a single story ever been told about you?

Paragraph 2: Feelings and realisation of the problem

ABOUT SOMEBODY ELSE
What did you do? How did you come to realize it was a single story?

ABOUT YOU
How did you know? How did it make you feel?

Paragraph 3: Opinion and advice

Why are single stories dangerous? What can you do to stop them?

0

Add comment

Student 1 (S1):

My single story: The wallet

I was once thought to be a criminal or a thief just because of the color of my skin. This happened to me last summer when I was in Mataró with my friends. We were having a great time together, we went for a walk, everything was normal. I saw an old woman that dropped her wallet, she didn't notice and she kept walkin straight. I ran to take the wallet and give it back to the woman but she thought I had stolen it.

I felt really confused, I was giving it back to her, I thought she would say thanks or be grateful, but she started screaming and accusing me instead. I tried to explain to her what happened but she screamed louder and louder. Although I was trying to stay calmed and manage the situation, the women threatened me by calling the police. I couldn't believe what was happening, my head was about to collapse, I just wanted to help her. I was lucky that there was a man who saw what happened and he explained to the woman that I was just helping her.

I think she judged me before I could even talk, she stereotyped me thinking all black people steal and they are all criminals. If she hadn't stereotyped me everything would have been easier. In my view, we shouldn't stereotype people just because of his color skin.

Student 2 (S2):

MY SINGLE STORY

At Christmas of 2020 with my family we went to Morocco, and at first I was a little scared to go because everyone always told me that Moroccan people were poor and thieves. However, my mum, who went there years ago, told me that this wasn't true at all, that the big cities had bad neighborhood, but this happens also in Spain and a lot of other countries.

When we arrive, I immediately loved the city, and the people were so nice.

We stayed a couple of days in the capital, Marrakesh. We visited the markets, where everyone was trying to sell us something, but the most choking part was the way that they had to attract us in to their shop. In there, everybody is shouting. When they hear us speaking in Spanish or even Catalan, they said to us things like: Barça, Barça! Or Independentistas! And also they always offered us more food than the one that we ordered

|

At first, I laugh, but after you receive that type of comments so often, you get tired of it. And at the end of the trip I wasn't feeling good. Because they had this vision of us, the vision of a Catalan family who were independents and liked football.

But also I realize that I created a single story about them too, the story of a poor country. I felt shame of my self because I did something that I also didn't like.

My opinion about this is that we are not aware of our prejudices about a person or a collective or even a country. I think that they are very dangerous because we can not control what we think or believe. In my case, if my mum didn't tell me the truth I wouldn't take the trip and that would've been sad.

Student 3 (S3):

The gay one who doesn't accept it

I have always known that i'm not attracted to women, even though I tried to hide my sexual orientation my whole life just because I was scared to be bullied or be left out of my family and friend relations. Actually the firsts years of ESO people were asking me always if i was gay and also they had laughed at me just because I wanted to stay on my own and say I was straight. I was frightened that someone would find out the truth so then society wouldn't accept me.

This years were so hard for me, people just thought that i was the closeted gay on the school and my old friends started to slowly get away from me. I was just a teen who's life was turning around on his sexual orientation.

When students from my grade (that i even didn't know them) started to ask me: "You are gay?", "Do you like girls?", "Why do you lie?",... This questions made me so sad, i was really scared to become hated because I was gay. The other ones in school totally started to see this part of me so I was really upset. After this questions came up I received some comments that were so offensive: "Maric0n, Gay, Marica,...". At this point I was struggling on myself so I started to hate my way of loving people.

Always I thought that I won't never accept it at all. Now I can afford myself and I feel so proud of who I am. Although these hate comments appear sometimes, I don't let them affect me. Just a word doesn't mean my whole life and who I am.

These labels are so stressful for people who are so fragile, like me when I was thirteen. I hate this single stories about a personal characteristic, your body shape, your skin color, your gender and also your sexual orientation. The stories are always from the "worst" part of someone consequently these stereotypes are hurtful for everyone who feels identified.

Student 4 (S4):

I AM A WOMAN, NOT A PET

Nowadays most of the people think that if you are a feminist, you hate men. I would like them to understand that they are wrong. They don't know what they are saying and are confused.

We are in the twentieth century and it's a pity that men continue thinking and acting like this. I already don't know how, but we have to change their way of thinking.

This last summer, specifically in July, I was taking a walk on the beach of Vilassar de Mar with my friends, it was already 9 p.m. Suddenly we saw a strange man who was walking behind us, but we didn't care and we continued walking. Few minutes later we heard a strange noise which came from this man. We didn't understand what he said. Later, he returned speaking, and this time we heard what he said. We were shocked because he said he had comments which weren't good. He was talking as if we were a pet. We didn't know what to do or what to say because it was the first time that someone said these inappropriate comments to us.

I think that we have to stop these bad situations which most of the girls have to stick to. I am sure that if we were boys, this strange man wouldn't have said anything. And this angers me, that this only happens to women. I don't know how but we have to stop this. It's horrible for us.

Appendix 4. Tool 4: Transcription of the group discussion – Speaking practice: ‘Presenting the chapters’

Speaker 1 0:00

"No speak English"

Meritxell Bonastre 0:04

Okay.

Speaker 1 0:05

This chapter talks about, well, tells the story about a woman, who is Esperanza's neighbour. So this story tells that she's an immigrant who was forced by his husband to leave her country, Mexico. And she doesn't agree this, this disaster. Like, she didn't want to leave Mexico and his pink salmon house and his family, his roots, his or *her* everything, I'm sorry. And this also tells about...

Speaker 2 0:53

The husband does this because he thinks that, the moving, yeah, moving to the US will let them to a better life. But she doesn't want to because as X said, like she feels like home in Mexico, nothing there. And she doesn't want to accept her new lifestyle.

Speaker 1 1:14

Uhm... did you?

Speaker 2 1:30

That for immigrants, it's very hard to leave their countries most of the times, is what we could see in this story.

Speaker 1 1:38

And most of people from this neighbourhood think that Mamacita, as they call her. And she's fat, so they think she doesn't leave home because it's a little bit tricky for her to pass through the doors and go up and downstairs. So they think that she just stays home with the child.

Speaker 2 2:04

Yeah, with her child.

Speaker 3 2:08

And when she sees that, that her... her baby is talking, is singing a song from a commercial that he saw on that TV. He starts, ay, she starts crying. Because she realises that like her, her baby is learning the new language, that they are here, and she realises that, how much she misses her country.

Speaker 2 2:38

And that, suddenly, they are becoming less Mexican and more American.

Speaker 3 2:46

They are losing their roots.

Speaker 2 2:46

Yeah.

Meritxell Bonastre 2:50

Yes, that's very good. Okay. So what did you learn? About the immigrant experience? What do you think?

Speaker 1 3:00

Oh, that most of them think what the Y said, that, they, if they live in some country and go to the US, they can become rich or billionaires there, So this opportunity, like, make them open-minded and no, com es diu? encourages them to go to the US.

Speaker 2 3:31

But a lot of the time it doesn't work this way. And they are just as poor.

Speaker 1 3:37

Yeah, and they are just illegal, like right there. So that's, not...

Meritxell Bonastre 3:48

not as easy. I think another message that is important is that maybe when we look at immigrants, we think that you know that, or people have these single stories that they just come here and take the work and whatever. And some of them don't even want to be here. No, like, she doesn't even want to be here, but it's just looking for a better life. So that was really good. Okay, um, so who wants to go next? Are you guys ready? Yes. Do you want to or next? Okay, okay, there, okay. Just the voice and it's for me. Okay.

Speaker 4 4:40

So the chapter is about this young girl called Esperanza, that, well, she doesn't want to go with her family to the house on the hills anymore, which is where her dad works, because she's tired of looking at people who live the life she wants to live. And well, lastly, she goes on about how she, if she gets rich or gets her house, she would want to let bums, which are stray people live in there.

Speaker 5 5:16

The message that this story gives us is that Esperanza is tired of the inequality between the two classes. And like the big difference that there is between the rich and the poor, or the immigrants. And she, she feels like she is an outsider. And that she is not open to it.

Speaker 6 5:43

The single story that we can see in this story is that rich people never help lower class people. So they could do it.

Speaker 7 5:53

We learned that you can't forget where you come from. You should help anyone in need, regardless of your social status.

Meritxell Bonastre 6:08

That's great. I think also she's, she's very proud. No, she says that she wants, that she won't let that happen again, she won't reproduce the same system and she will let homeless people Yes.

Speaker 4 6:20

Like she won't be ashamed of telling people that yeah, and have stray people living in there.

Meritxell Bonastre 6:27

And there is a line where it says when they hear noises, it won't be...

Speaker 4 6:31

The rats.

Meritxell Bonastre 6:31

Exactly, it won't be rats now it will be people living. So I think that's very okay. Well done. Thank you. Who's coming next?

Speaker 8 6:50

Well, our team's story is "Geraldo no last name."

Speaker 9 6:54

It talks about Marin, who is a girl who met Gerardo in a dance. Geraldo is an illegal immigrant, and after that party, he gets he gets hit by a car. So he's badly injured. And she even though she doesn't know him, she needs to take him to the hospital and then at the hospital because his illegal situation they let him with an intern that it's like a not qualified doctor - *una persona en pràctiques*. So they don't attend him right. And he finally dies

Speaker 10 7:43

The message that we found is like, if you have an illegal situation, you don't get the attention that you need, and...

Speaker 11 7:55

Yeah, and the single story is well, of Geraldo, because of his situation, he... He, the doctors have a prejudice with him. And don't save him because he's, illegal, he's immigrant

Speaker 8 8:15

They have no money. And we learn that we have to help people even, doesn't matter where they came from, or how many money they have. And we have to try to help them so for example, in this story, Geraldo dies and nobody can contact with the family and then it's someone that leave home and never come back.

Meritxell Bonastre 8:43

Alright, good. That's that's all the what's the chapter is about. Very good. Very good summary. Great. Well done.

Speaker 8 8:49

Thank you.

Meritxell Bonastre 8:50

Okay. There. Not here. Yeah?

Speaker 12 8:59

The chapter is about a girl and her name is Esperanza. And she does a story that why she has this name and she don't like because she feels like, is not the perfect name for her because she associate the name Esperanza with sadness thing, and with a woman who isn't strong and she wants to be a strong woman who can be whatever she wants.

Speaker 13 9:32

That message is that having the same name as the other person's, it doesn't mean that you are the same person as the others. And they don't have to judge you because of your name.

Meritxell Bonastre 9:44

She has the name of... From whom does she take the name?

Speaker 13 9:47

From her grandmother.

Meritxell Bonastre 9:49

Her grandmother.

Speaker 14 9:51

And the story has a single story, and for example the girl. People laugh at her because for, no sé,...

Speaker 12 10:09

Because of her name.

Meritxell Bonastre 10:10

Because of her name? Her name, how does it sound in English? How do you think she it says at the beginning that hurts. So when they pronounce it no? Esperanza is not the same as Esperanza. It has a different sound. There's this duality.

Speaker 15 10:29

The message of the story...

Meritxell Bonastre 10:31

Sorry. Can you speak a bit louder, Sacha?

Speaker 15 10:34

The message. The message of the story is that you no matter what, which are your conditions, you have to follow your dreams and what you want, *and ja està, és que no sé què dir.*

Meritxell Bonastre 11:00

Right so, in this chapter, what happens is she gets the name of her grandma.

Speaker 15 11:07

Yes, there is one thing. That she was a house woman, she stayed at home, and she didn't, Esperanza didn't want this. She wanted to go out and to discover the world because she's a wild person. She considers herself a wild woman.

Meritxell Bonastre 11:29

Or just a woman. No? Maybe that doesn't have to be at home. She wants to break with the traditional family roles of the staying-at-home wife. And she wants to live her own life.

Speaker 15 11:41

Yes.

Meritxell Bonastre 11:42

Okay, right. We're here.

Speaker 16 11:50

Our chapter is "Papa who wakes up tired in the dark". And the main topic of the chapter is death. And we are shown how Esperanza's father has just lost his, his

father, and how he deals with the whole situation. And we are also shown, the most sentimental and vulnerable, vulnerable part of him. And it's like, he takes off his mask, because otherwise people perceive him, just as a brave and hardworking person who is never afraid. And we are able to see him crying about the loss.

Speaker 17 12:40

The message is that the men can cry. Even the (****) person.

Speaker 18 12:47

There's a similar story because his father is a strong person and brave, but finally, he's very sentimental.

Speaker 17 12:56

And we learn that everyone must be able to express and show their feelings.

Meritxell Bonastre 13:04

Can you talk a little bit about the funeral traditions? And does she feel related to that Mexican tradition? Or does she feel like it's a different...?

Speaker 19 13:16

No, she. I think she says that she doesn't understand how the death is treated on there. In Mexico. It's like just in the whole family reminds and celebrates, like the funeral. That's when they take a picture. And that's all.

Meritxell Bonastre 13:43

I think we have different perspectives. So Esperanza, who was born in the in the US she feels like Mexico, it's something that totally doesn't belong. She doesn't belong there. No, but on the other hand, um, Mamacita has just arrived in the country. She is very Mexican, and she doesn't want to have anything to do with the Americans. So we've been... I think that's interesting within the book.