

CRITICAL LITERACY PRACTICES AS a SELF-LIBERATING PROCESS

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Critical Literacy Practices as a Self-Liberating Process

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Dedication

To my beloved son Geronimo, my supportive husband Miguel, my dear parents
Martha and Rafael, and my brave students.

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Abstract

The present qualitative action research study approaches a critical visual literacy EFL learning process in which life stories of tenth graders at a public school in Bogota were the principal source of knowledge. By examining visual literacy material e.g. musical videos, short movies and movies from their personal context, students had the opportunity to understand their difficult life conditions (family, socio economic and academic), to reflect on them and tackle personal problems from a different view- point and take action towards it.

By means of written life stories and round table discussions from a critical literacy perspective, the EFL class was organized around students' needs and their life issues as a relevant source in the teaching-learning language process. Lessons were planned based on Pailliotet's (1993) visual literacy model as a way to promote tenth graders' reflections in the EFL classroom thus creating possibilities to reflect and reconstruct students' personal context to encourage their future lives.

Data were collected through students' life stories and the researcher's field notes. Eventually, the findings which emerged from those instruments reported that through a critical literacy process, learners developed inquiry skills and visual, oral, and written literacies to reconstruct themselves and recognize the importance of overseeing their own lives showing a liberating process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems
from a new angle, require creative imagination and marks real advance in
science.*

Albert Einstein

Einstein's words in the epigraph above show that implementing innovative pedagogical practices in the classroom helps learners and teachers address problems that we face at a daily basis in our teaching context, and to tackle them from a social critical perspective. This qualitative action research study attempts to characterize the influence the practices of life stories on the developments of Critical Literacy practices in a public school in Bogota located in the 8th district. The stories dealt with personal and social issues. Critical literacy practices, for the study, are viewed as a way through which learners reflect critically on their own lives as well as on their "perspectives, contexts, cultures, genders, races, languages, powers, privileges, and credibility." (Lenski, 2008, pag. 229)

The former, in Lenski's words (2008) embraces reading and writing as abilities that have social and cultural implications. As a result of this, teachers invite learners to read and write texts and images critically in such a way that they find and discuss hidden messages and construct meaning by referring actively to issues of oppression, unjust life conditions,

and relations of power to transform and take an action to make a better world (Freire, 1970).

Understanding the literacy perspective assumed for this study, I think it is also necessary to provide the perspective of visual literacy for the purpose of this study, which is understood as the ability to interpret observable actions and objects in order to make meaning from them (Ladevich, 1974). Thus, visual materials support literacy practices with multiple ways to read our world in new critical ways (Behrman, 2006). In this case, the visual materials were vehicles which developed writing skills since students were engaged in writing about messages and conflicts that were revealed through such materials. The visual texts implemented and included for the current study were full-length movies, short movies and musical videos. The project not only worked on reading and writing words in the foreign language, but also became based on students' socio-cultural context.

Students had the opportunity to enrich their understandings about their own lives thus gaining self-knowledge and the relation between it and context, reflecting on what expectations they had. Linking their own experiences with the life experiences of the characters in movies and videos (visual literacy) and the life experiences of their classmates as well, they had the opportunity to reflect upon social aspects that frame their current situation in order to recognize or understand significant relations between who they are and their local context.

Using critical visual literacy practices as Quevedo (2003) claims, students had the opportunity to use language as a means to connect the self to the world. For that reason, in an EFL class, the literacy process should be more than giving a lesson about the topic in the

schedule. Learning English should be the way to read the world (Freire 1970).

Understanding literacy as a way to read our realities, I decided the core of this study was to encourage learners to use English as a medium to express who they were since through language they expressed their concerns, difficult life situations and, at the end, reflected on finding opportunities to face life as it is presented.

The content of this document is organized as follows: The first chapter contains the statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives and the rationale that supports this proposal. The second chapter provides the theoretical foundations that defined the main constructs of the study. The third chapter indicates the research design, which explains the type of study and describes the setting, participants, instruments and data procedures. Then, the fourth chapter displays the pedagogical intervention with a description of the sessions and the activities developed. Afterward, the fifth chapter explains in detail the data analysis and findings. Finally, the sixth chapter contains the conclusions, limitations and pedagogical implications.

Statement of the problem

Being a public-school teacher for almost ten years, I can affirm that learning English in contexts with vulnerable populations is not meaningful for our students. Learners spend 2, 3 or 4 hours per week during six long years without finding the links between learning English and their real needs. My position as a tenth graders homeroom teacher has allowed me, through observations and informal talks, to know deeply the problematic situations (family, socioeconomic and academic) my students have gone

through on a daily basis: gangs, drugs, early pregnancy, dysfunctional families, domestic violence and a difficult economic situation. Constantly, those complicated circumstances affect their academic life negatively and block the teaching- learning processes.

Thus, there was a mismatch between learning English and what students needed, considering that for them it was more important to support themselves and their families. This fact showed their level of conformity and pessimism with their life conditions. That is why an important goal of this research study was to incite these EFL learners to think critically about their own life conditions and consider possible social changes to transform them.

Hence, this research study was the result of a series of three complicated situations detected in a group of tenth-grade EFL learners, from what I already had observed in class and the process of collecting some texts of informal teacher- student talks. First, these learners had socio-economic, family, and academic problems that affected their learning process. Secondly, they did not see any connections between their school life and academic work and their personal life conditions. Also, they seemed reluctant to speak and to write in English, reading being the only skill that they have developed during the last years. Thus, under the above information I am going to describe these three main difficulties in detail:

In regard to learners' socio-economic problems, I had the opportunity not only to be their English teacher but also to know their problems e.g. knowing some aspects of their personal and school lives. This year, the school staff, some parents, and teachers have worked to overcome difficult situations that these young learners faced, including the consumption of illegal drugs, early pregnancy, a high rate of school desertion, students who belong to gangs, dysfunctional families, teen marriages and child workers. Thus, we find

ourselves reflecting on all the experiences that we have lived and taking into account Shi (2002), who claims that personal experience makes learners and teachers define the way in which they learn and teach. As regards the context of this study, students needed to bring to the classroom their personal experiences to redefine their previous conceptions about learning a language. All in all, learners are the sum of their experiences, and those experiences shape language learning acquisition. As a result, I realized the importance of including students' experiences in the EFL class.

Learners also affirmed that many of them were child workers, some of them are waitresses in small and rustic pubs or bakeries around their neighborhood, and some worked in Corabastos (largest food/farmer's market in Bogota) as truck loaders and driving bicitaxis. Consequently, when some of them arrived at school after doing many hours of work, they were too tired to do their best in the academic activities since they had to work hard to buy groceries and help their parents. They said that going to school and working was complicated, and some of them honestly said that they preferred to work than go to school because they could earn some money to satisfy their basic human needs.

Tenth grade learners' second serious problem was related to their family conflicts, which affected their personal development. First, most of them live with only their mothers because their fathers abandoned them. Most of their mothers have to work very hard and many hours during the day and this fact did not allow them to take care of their children.

Hence, they were alone during the day and some of them wasted their time during the afternoon to go around and consume illegal drugs with their neighbors. Most of the time, their parents ignored the problem. For instance, there was a case in which one of my students was missing for three days. Her mother came to the school and the other students

told her that she made the decision to escape to the Bronx (a dangerous place in Bogota) to get drugs. Her mother found her in la *Olla* (a house where people sell and consume drugs). She had been there for three days and had forgotten everything. Her mother told the psychologist that she ignored completely this situation. I mention this case to exemplify the problem of the consumption of illegal drugs.

The third problem of these learners was that they did not have a good academic performance in the English class and other subjects because they could not see any optimistic/realistic connection between school life and their personal life situations. They were very pessimistic with the idea of going to school and furthering their education. Since students had a lack of interest in furthering their education due to the socio-economic and family problems they already had, the English class was also affected because of this careless and demotivating attitude.

I also detected problems in how they viewed the English class: First, tenth graders at school saw learning English for their lives as a small importance matter because they thought that it was not only difficult, but knew that they were never going to use it in their future lives since they were already workers, car watchers, street vendors, informal guards, and domestic workers, and did not need the contents and subjects they were learning at school; much less English because it was useless for doing the present jobs they were doing or the jobs they were going to do after finishing school. They thought that after finishing school they would probably continue doing the same jobs they already had because their economic level neither gave them the opportunity to go to a university to pursue a professional career nor to travel abroad. Thus, they were convinced that English

and the English class were not important in any sense for improving their lives. Some of their comments about their perception of the English language were:

Student 1: “para trabajar en la rusa no necesito sino ser fuerte, mezclar cemento, el inglés para los de oficina”

7th June, 2015

The previous comment was evidence of the lack of meaning that some of my students saw in the process of learning English. Moreover, it was not the only thing that they found useless because they thought that what they were doing at school was a way to find friends or to spend time doing different things but not as an opportunity to improve their current situations.

Student 2: “Yo trabajo desde las 3am hasta las 6am de ahí salgo pal cole. Y eso de vender tintos a los taxistas es duro... llego al cole cansada sin ánimos de estudiar. Más bien de estar con mis amigos y cosas así”

7th June, 2015.

Additionally, students were reluctant to write in English despite having taken English courses for almost 6 years. They had just mastered basic language contents but had limitations speaking and writing in English. They preferred doing reading activities, but those were mainly about training for the national exams (Saber Pro and ICFES), which mainly evaluate reading comprehension and vocabulary.

In addition to learners’ literacy practices in the foreign language, one of the major problems was that they were uninterested in the English class because they could not see the importance of leaning English for their lives. They only thought that the English class was a requirement for graduation, and that it was useless and a waste of time to learn it.

Because of the learners’ complicated circumstances at school, home, and their social context, and mainly because of their scant interest in learning English, this research attempted to involve this group of learners in visual and critical literacy practices in the

EFL learning process as a means to help them use the English language to reflect more meaningfully about their problems and consider possible solutions to improve their personal situations. Also, this study sought to find more meaningful practices to learn the foreign language. Indeed, during this research experience, the English classroom was a space for self-reflection and a site for helping learners to become critical about ways to confront and solve the troubles that life brings in such a way that they were agents of change in their constant search for improving their own living conditions, instead of assuming a pessimistic and conformist attitude towards life. The EFL class was the space where they could express who they were since one of the main goals was to meet Tudor's (2001) insight that "language is a means of personal and affective expression, and learning goals are defined by what the learner wishes to express; moreover, through language students express their deeper personal feelings without fear of judgment or rejection" (p. 67). In consequence, through this research study, the English language was used as the means to express what students wanted to tell and to make the learning experience more significant as they enhanced visual and critical literacy through life stories.

Research question

- ▶ What do tenth graders' written life stories as a critical literacy practice reveal about learners' emancipatory dimension in an EFL class?

Research objective

- ▶ To unveil what tenth graders' life stories as a critical literacy practice reveal about learners' emancipatory dimension in an EFL classroom.

Rationale

The importance of the study relied on providing tenth graders with opportunities to know themselves and reconstruct their self-concept based on their realities and life stories. Valuing who they are, this research encourages learners to reflect on the possibilities that they have to transform their realities.

Connecting facts of students' life stories through an inquiry process they might recognize the English class as a comfortable environment for them to explore and find new ways to tackle their life situations. Thus, they transformed their perceptions about how they may improve their life conditions. Making those reflections through English students saw the language as a vehicle to express who they are. In addition, this connection made the foreign language play a role in students' aspirations; at least they could see English as a class where they had the time to dig inside them and to reshape their self-perception.

Relating students' personal dilemmas through life stories to visual critical literacy and practices in the EFL classroom were a meaningful experience to help them become more critical about their own lives and find new ways to change positively their negative and conformist attitudes to current life situations.

After all, as Freire claims (1970) "the literacy process must include the relationship that men had with their world" (p. 212). Hence, people should see the world in a critical way perceiving that their realities are in constant transformation. Certainly, when a visual critical literacy process was taking place in an EFL class students could make a meaningful connection between their lives and the English learning process and, thus, acquired a certain level of confidence to imagine possibilities for their future, because, "Through language, people build a medium to realize about their identities, via language choices and

construction of utterances. The languages that they speak also create reality for them by offering certain semantic and pragmatic elements for their use and self-expression” (Rezaei, 2012).

Thus, students’ making sense of their realities through their written life stories at the public school where the study was conducted was valuable, because it could be the key to take into account students’ voices. Undeniably, the students took the chance to go back in time and reconstruct their life experiences in an introspective manner while developing their language capacities. Thus, through written reflections this study looked to engage students in a meaningful literacy process to make them think critically about their lives using writing in English to express their insights.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework

The present chapter depicts the theoretical foundations that frame this study, considering both theory-based and research-based literature about life stories, visual literacy and critical literacy. It also elucidates how connections between literacy and students' personal life stories can be of use or applied in the EFL classroom.

LIFE STORIES FROM A CRITICAL LITERACY PERSPECTIVE

As has been said from the beginning of this study, visual literacy served as a bridge to enhance critical literacy through life stories, as students were requested to write personal life stories, experiences, and reflections once they were moved, motivated, and enlightened by the themes and topics developed in the visual materials (movies, musical videos, and images). Therefore, life stories become an essential theoretical framework in this study as well.

Theory on life stories in EFL instruction is scarce. Therefore, the explanation of life stories that gets developed here will be built by putting into dialogue different views from different disciplines and fields. I will try to articulate the notion of life stories considering my own definition, supported by theories provided by psychology, narrative inquiry, the field of qualitative research, and from literacy as a situated social practice. That is to say, I will address interesting notions of life stories that will be applicable to EFL instruction, such being an applied view to critical literacy practices.

From the psychological field, a life story is the reconstruction of the self, taking into account settings, characters, themes and plots. Through life stories people re-enact biographical facts to identify the present and plan or imagine the future. The life stories are the important and significant events that tellers select to make sense of their own life stories in order to construct self-identity (McAdams, 2001).

Then, there is a strong connection between life stories and the concept of identity. Hence, it is necessary to see the concept of identity as “a historical and sociocultural structure which makes the ever-changing co-formations of relationships possible between the self and the world and that, through discourse, allows us to identify, understand, conceive, construct, and accept or reject the different possibilities within a given time and space while seeking individual or collective interests” (Escobar, 2013 p35). In summary, identity is a subjective concept that is dynamic; it changes according to the context, the role of the person in a group and how individuals and groups view themselves (Val & Vinogradova, Heritage, Brief, 2010). Moreover, in keeping with McAdams (2001) life stories are in constant change and they are shaped by multiple experiences, giving the tellers opportunities to retell and rebuild their life stories as a dynamic concept of identity.

From the standpoint of qualitative research, the concept of life stories as Atkinson implies (1998, cited in Roberts, 2002) is a story that individuals choose to tell faithfully about their own lives. For this study this perspective is relevant since students chose the moments or events which they wanted to tell. As a result, they told those events as honestly as possible but always choosing what they (tellers) wanted others to know about their personal experiences. Then, using their judgment, my students narrated an entire experience, highlighting the most important aspects.

Irrevocably, for this qualitative research study “a life story always brings order and meaning to the life being told, for both the teller and the listener. It is a way to understand the past and the present more fully and a way to leave a personal legacy for the future” (Atkinson 1998, p. 126); hence, learners who told and wrote their life stories brought to the EFL class knowledge and meaning for themselves and their classmates. After all, as Fitzgibbon and Hughes (1998) claim, people have the necessity to use storytelling to tell their own stories in order to give meaning to their lives.

A life story is a way to express our ideas and show our personal experiences in our own words, to make sense of realities with the possibility of transforming life conditions. For this study, as Grbich (2004) states, lives and stories help students to go beyond the structures of the language because when they use the language to make sense of their life stories they frame their reflections into specific political and historical settings which have been impacting on the storytellers’ lives. In addition, Fitzgibbon and Hughes state, stories make up part of ourselves and by telling our own story we can obtain value for living and validate our existence.

Then, there is a perfect connection between critical literacy and the use of life stories in learning contexts. Hence, the aim is to be a critically literate student that is capable of reading with the purpose of understanding and go beyond to find why the text was produced to create different kinds of questions digging into different points of view and asking if everyone is included in the pedagogical practices. Thus, critical literacy is an attitude toward learning, which is necessary when the students need to be critical as concerns their own lives.

Moreover, critical literacy practices allow students to read their realities. When students have the opportunity of writing to express their feelings, memories and their

opinions, they are encouraged to reflect on their problematic situations. So, as Freire (1973) states, if the individual reflects on society he or she has more opportunities to change it.

Teaching EFL within a critical literacy process takes into account students' life experiences as tools for learning and these help students to build meaning while acquiring knowledge. This fact causes the learning process to be connected with real life context and the student uses language as a mediator to express her/his memories, dreams and needs (Roger, 2002). After all, a process which embraces students' voices promotes revolutionary teaching practices that transform situations of oppression. It is a private revolution that helps students to reflect on their own life stories to get a positive transformation in the way that students face their difficult life situations. (Freire, 1970)

Definitely, when students are learning a language they should have the opportunity to use it as a tool to analyze their realities because, after all, "language has the power to shape our consciousness; and it does so for each human child, by providing the theory that he or she uses to interpret and manipulate their environment" (Halliday 1993, p. 107). Hence, in this study, critical literacy is addressed by the means of writing about life experiences because through the reading of different kinds of texts students had the opportunity, as Freire states, to stop to compare their personal life stories with others' experiences in order to analyze their own life conditions in a critical way thus giving them some self-expectations about their futures.

Teaching English from traditional grammar pedagogies helps teachers teach language and students learn through language and also learn language (Clavijo, 2011) without recognizing that EFL learning is a literacy practice which should provide students with more than grammar and linguistic explanations. So, this study looks for an EFL learning process that makes students feel as the owners of what they are learning at school

in order to open new possibilities for their difficult life situations. Hence, critical literacy here is seen as a way to have students reflect on their positions in the world, understanding their own realities to empower themselves (Freire and Macedo, 1987) in order to find different possibilities to overcome their family, economic and social problems. As has been mentioned, learners reading the world and the word will reflect on their situation of oppression and then make decisions to transform it. (Freire, 1998)

This study focuses on involving students' life stories in the EFL process to foster critical literacy. Hence, this study embraces Literacy as social practice since this perspective takes into account students' context and experiences as a source of knowledge and the use of multi-literacies as a way to have students reflect on their own stories from a critical point of view.

Involving students' experiences in a literacy process is considered as an important element in learning literacy in order to offer learners a real opportunity to learn (Moje and Lewis, 2007). Hence, for the present work it is essential to connect students' life stories with EFL learning in order to give tenth graders the chance to see the language learning process as a way to read their realities. Additionally, this vision of literacy needs for the teacher to make a "shift from seeing the learners as individual language producers to seeing them as a member of social and historical collectivities [which] moves observers toward examining the conditions for learning, for appropriations of practices, in any particular community" (Norton & Toohey, *Identity and language Learning*, 2002). In the particular community of Hernando Duran Dussan School, tenth graders needed to see in their own stories opportunities to connect their EFL learning process with their real context and needs. Definitely, students see the learning language process different when they have the

opportunity to put into action and in context what they have learnt. The language comes alive and there are not any more rules written in the notebook.

Using visual literacy as a bridge to develop EFL learners' critical literacy through written life stories is a way to see literacy practice "as a means not only for literacy instruction but also for individual empowerment" (Edelsky, 1991). Then, this study was framed in critical literacy because, first of all, it used vivid experiences as an important source of information and second, a self-reflexive analysis of students' lives was done and a participatory action research, where students and teacher were involved to study new possibilities for teaching and learning EFL.

CRITICAL LITERACY

Critical literacy is a dynamic social practice through which the readers and writers understand their contexts and the relations of power and justice or injustice which shape their personal lives. Specifically, for this study critical literacy is the intellectual effect of not accepting without reflection (Cassany and Castellà 2011) because what actually was powerful for this study was "that [it] would bring people to understand that the conditions they lived in were not natural but were rather something against which they could take a cultural action" (Pennycook, 2001, p. 101). From a critical perspective, the Literacy process is a "critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation" (Freire, 1970, p. 66). Additionally, as Shor (1999) claims, critical literacy see language as a social tool that helps in the social construction of the self. Hence, it is crucial to understand how knowledge transforms our realities. In this case, how to see school as a means to transform students'

realities, because through critical literacy practices students can see their world through critical lenses and reflect on their personal conflicts and challenges in their present lives in order to improve their pessimistic perceptions about their own problematic situations (family, socio economic and academic).

According to Rogers (2014), “Critical Literacy holds the promise of meeting the needs of all students and, at the same time, engaging learners (at all levels) to use literacy practices in ways that matter in the world” (p. 242). Following those ideas, what matters in this study is to meet 10th graders’ concerns to make them analyze their current difficult situations to tackle them with a different point of view and action. Certainly, as Rogers (2014) claims, teachers are no longer the only ones who are the owners of knowledge and they should be concerned about what being a literate student means. And to be literate students, for critical literacy, is not only to know how to write and read but also to “learn to do things with words” as they produce multiple understandings and make meaning of their life conditions when reading, writing, and speaking about the vivid experiences of who they are, what they do, and what position they have in relation to their family, community, and the world. In this way, learning processes become meaningful for our students as literacy practices in the classroom constitute an open door to read and write based on their own human realities (Moll, 1999).

Critical Literacy is the backbone of this theoretical framework. As Freire (1983) states, reading and writing take into account learners’ actual language level, anxieties, dreams, fears, needs, and social, economic, and oppressive problems of people who are learning at schools in our contemporary world. Then, reading and writing could not be merely a poor act of filling students’ minds with sounds and words that learners repeat mechanically. Students should discover that reading and writing could be a political act

because as Freire (1970) claims, critical literacy practices could give students the opportunity to be aware of creating a self-liberating process, to take an action in other words. Then, students develop reading and writing in EFL not only for reading signs but also for realities. When students follow Freire's vision of teaching reading and writing, he or she understands the importance of seeing literacy as an instrument which allows students to "use language to serve their own needs," (Moll, 1994) face their low incomes, violence, young pregnancies, dysfunctional families, and drug addiction.

As I mentioned in the first chapter this study, as Lenski (2008) claims, embraces reading and writing as abilities that have social and cultural implications. The project not only worked on literacy as a way to read and to write words in the foreign language, but also as a way through which learners reflected critically on their own lives. Hence, the verbs "to read and to write" as Ferreiro (2003) claims are not static concepts that define homogeneous activities.

Then, "Literacy is a continuum and changeable process from childhood to adulthood and continuum of challenges. [Understanding challenges here as an] "opening up of a space for the marginalized to speak, write or read so that the voicing of their lives may transform both their lives and the social system that excludes them" (Pennycook, 2001).

Because to read and write are not immutable concepts anymore; rather, they are actions which are changing according to the times, circumstances and contexts. And they should be tools to face problems of social injustice. In summary, critical literacy should be capable of interpreting and reflecting on "societal issues and situations like family, poverty,

education, equity, and equality in order to critique the structures that serve as norms as well as to demonstrate how these norms are not experienced by all members of society.”

(Coffey, 2008)

Readers are always exposed to new kind of texts such living context, videos, movies, ads, media messages, daily experiences, policies, facts which happened around the world, new ways to live, others’ personal experiences and so on. We should interact with all of those taking into account our previous experiences and the new ones in order to construct new meaningful knowledge for us, knowledge which helps us to understand and face daily life. Certainly, the relation between literacy practices and social context is undeniable when language is used in different settings.

However, what is critical for this study goes beyond the relationship between social context and language context. As Pennycook (2001) claims, it represents political beliefs which have been shaped by students’ pain and this work was the result of looking for a possibility of change. It was a way to face life’s problematic situations inside the classroom through the EFL class, helping English language learners to reflect on their social issues but also giving them the opportunity to have access to multiple literacy skills.

In other words, the literacy process seen as the reading and writing of any kind of text depends on the epoch, context and people and it changes constantly over the time. Undeniably, the act of reading and writing are changeable processes since they mean more than just learning signs that go together. Reading and writing are ways to see and to understand the world around us, allowing students to read and write about their own stories. It is a way to give us a place in the world.

Unquestionably, as Clavijo (2007) argues, literacy processes (reading and writing) should be framed with personal experiences and contexts where the learning process is happening. In other words, teachers should see the classroom as a societal context in which learning is taking place bearing in mind that different scenarios like school, home and neighborhood are part of the learners' context. We should understand that reading and writing are political acts not only in terms of language policies but also as acts, roles and relationships that happen daily in the language learning practices, inside and outside the classroom (Pennycook, 2001).

This study advocates for a literacy process which allows the teacher to use life stories as a tool to develop EFL learning at Hernando Duran Dussan school where there was a necessity to incorporate students' life experiences into the classroom dynamics since students' personal problematic situations like gangs, drugs, early pregnancy, dysfunctional families, domestic violence and a difficult economic situation were affecting their learning process.

Critical literacy development is a significant aspect in the reading and writing processes of EFL learners in particular because it promotes language programs based on inquiry which "integrate knowledge systems and living systems that are regarded as perspectives from which learner can analyze the world" (Pineda, 2001, p.12). Using inquiry in the EFL process helps language learners to acquire more than linguistic structures and go beyond expressing a desire to share well-reasoned understandings about the world around them. Besides, the inquiry approach promotes an intellectual exchange since, as Short (2001) states, an inquiry is "more powerful when teachers, and their experiences, interests

and knowledge and students with their experiences, interests and knowledge come together.”

It is important to point out that critical literacy is an umbrella term that goes beyond reading and writing words since it is subdivided into other forms of literacy, namely global literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, and the one that is most pertinent to this study, visual literacy. Therefore, a person can become critically literate by analyzing and reflecting not only on written texts, but on movies, videos, images, advertisements, and the influence of mass media on world events and people’s lives. That is why this study is framed within critical literacy because it also embraces visual literacy learning processes, aimed at helping students understand that the visual materials they encounter every day, not only the printed words on paper, are also a resource to enhance critical literacy abilities. Thus, visual literacy is a provocative theory that can be put into practice in EFL education to enhance learners’ capacity to develop critical learning through visual language.

VISUAL LITERACY

Ladevich (1974) affirms that at “The first National Conference on Visual Literacy in 1969 visual literacy was defined as ‘a group of vision competencies a human being can develop by seeing, and at the same time, having and integrating other sensory experiences.’ The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret visible actions, objects and/or symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in the environment.” (p 114) It is understood as the human ability to interpret, analyze, and make

meaning of messages and information that are explicitly or implicitly contained in the form of images such as photographs, pictures, video clips, ads, and movies, among others. It entails the idea of reading “images.” Thus, visual literacy expands the concept of literacy which is commonly believed to make meaning of written or printed text.

When the users are visual literates they accomplish visual competences creatively and can use these competences for making meaning and communicating with others. Some of those visual competences, as Considine (1986, cited in Tyner, 2014) claims, are to appreciate, analyze, interpret, and understand critically the real intention or hidden messages that visual images may contain in different formats such as TV commercials, advertisement posters, video clips, and magazines ads. Thus, visual literacy consists of different abilities for getting knowledge from what we see. Additionally, we see that “visual and verbal materials when used together are in most cases stronger message carriers than when either is used alone.” (Braden, 1993, p.7)

Thus, in teaching contexts, the ability to read should include the reading of drawings, photographs, icons, cartoons, films, TV commercials, and body language, among other visual representations, that can help students develop later speaking and writing skills, since learners can be motivated to speak and write about the topics, themes, conflicts, and messages that are transferred through such visual means. Likewise, Wileman (1993) delineates visual literacy as “the ability to read, interpret and understand information presented in graphic images” (p.114); that is to say, to understand the image as a text which can be read, interpreted and understood. It is necessary to recognize that to become visually literate, learners “need to learn, analyze, evaluate, and produce proficiently meanings in visual, oral and alphabetic forms” (Goodman, 2005, p. 210). So, as Perry (2012) states this

vision of literacy has moved researchers and teachers to talk about visual literacy, recognizing that there are more resources like videos, images, body language, and media messages than just the printed text.

Consequently, everyday literacy processes are given via multiple ways of cultural and social transformations and mediated via new means of communication such as the Internet, movies, newspapers, advertisements, magazines, video games, networking websites and others. These kinds of texts provide information with the use of codes, conventions and diverse readings (printed and unprinted texts) for multimodality (different people, contexts and interpretations of the messages). (Norton, 2007, Giroux, 1999)

Visual literacy, like written literacy, has a communicative purpose or a message. Every item of visual material has the intention of producing meaning. However, Aiello (2006) argues that to identify the meaning of the image, it is necessary to put it in context. Every single image has multiple understandings depending on the background of the viewer and the context where the viewer is reading the image. In other words, as Hall (1997, cited in Aiello, 2006) states, it is “the whole discursive formation to which a text or a practice belongs” (p. 97). Furthermore, although a text or an image has an intention, this could be modified or interpreted differently according to the reader’s context.

So, it is necessary to say that for this study literacy was not only linked to reading and writing words, but also to “reading” images, movies, and life situations about, for instance in this case, difficult experiences that people have to face daily and diverse ways to overcome those situations. Instead of teaching to read exclusively printed texts, students had the opportunity to read and interpret movies, music videos and artifacts (worksheets with visual materials) in order to understand and analyze meaningful images related to

difficult life situations and different ways to overcome them that allowed students to link what problems they experienced in their own lives like drug addiction, dysfunctional families, poverty, teen pregnancy, deaths of beloved people and another aspects related to problematic situations.

Based on the literature, visual literacy has important advantages or characteristics suitable for EFL education. One main advantage is that visual literacy mediated by videos, movies, and photographs, can break with the monotony of learning English using only textbooks and other printed materials such as photocopies, grammar activities written on paper, or activities done on the board.

Moreover, visual literacy is useful in EFL classrooms because teachers can involve learners in different literacy practices such as debates, discussion, and dialogues about socioeconomic problems and life improvement, starting, for example, from multiple visual materials. Hence, teachers can move from literacy to a multi-literacy practice (Gee, 2003; Kress et al., 2001; Kress, 2000) in order to foster not only EFL linguistic knowledge, but also involve learners in reading the world critically, more objectively, and in a way more related to their own needs and expectations in life. They can transform the classroom into a “semiotic space in which [teenagers] have the opportunity to construct meaning with a wide variety of multimodal texts, including visual, written, spoken, auditory, and performative texts” (Norton, 2007 p. 10).

Although there are different types of visual literacy materials with different purposes, and some are made to entertain (TV series, talk shows, reality shows, movies, comics, video games), others to inform (TV news), others for commercial and advertising purposes (magazine ads about trips, fashion, and beauty), and others to educate and learn

from (picture books, picture dictionaries, maps, illustrated fairy tales, signs, diagrams), this research project mainly implemented movies, musical videos, and students' artistic artifacts dealing with issues to improve learners' lives and become critical about the necessity to create a better world through personal action and reflection to the best of their possibilities. These visual materials are tools that can encourage students reflect on their own context and reality (Gee, 2003). Additionally, teachers cannot deny that nowadays visual images and multimedia are taking a central leadership in the new tendencies of communication. Certainly, as Kress (2003) states, visual messages have changed the uses and effects of literacy. As a consequence, the use of movies and musical videos in EFL class could be another powerful method to foster students' EFL learning process because, when students watch films, they have the opportunity to learn grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Moreover, watching movies helps students to understand conversations with visual supports (facial expressions, body language) (Allan, 1985; Sheerin, 1982). Besides, motivational movies teach students to reflect on their current situations and help them think about how they can overcome problematic situations.

One interesting contribution that visual literacy offers students in all fields of education is that those visual materials from which they make meaning, in turn, motivate them to become producers of visual materials by themselves, as they can create and recreate their own posters such as friezes, home videos, and ads, or take photographs of their own life events to produce meaning and express their critical analysis as being inspired by the issues and the information they read and interpret from the visual materials provided by the teachers. In this sense, visual literacy encouraged them to be not only receivers but also producers of their own visual and written texts. One clear example was

with the friezes that my students made after watching the movie *Freedom Writers*. They represented the scenes which were meaningful for them with a drawing and then they connected each drawing with a personal experience. Another sample of this connection was when they designed their personal T-shirts because they tried to put onto them information to communicate to their classmates and me.

This fact leads us to observe that media literacies such as movies, TV shows, and musical videos, for instance, are not teachers' enemy and teachers cannot complain about them as if they were only a negative influence and waste of time in students' learning process and life development (Ferreiro, 2003). Basically, teachers have to find ways of how to take advantages of visual texts in order to help learners become active critical viewers, not only passive viewers, of the bombardment of images they receive daily through mass media and the entertainment industry. Teachers need to recognize that the strong visual influence of TV, video games, movie making, and musical videos (including both lyrics and images) have become part of young students' main leisure activities.

Although critical literacy is primarily promoted through conventional or canonical materials, including textbooks, books, and journals, they are not the only ones to make learners think critically on social issues. So, this traditional way to explore literacy should be supported by other kinds of visual texts easily available in students' daily lives which can provide multiple ways to critically read our world (Behrman, 2006). As Ferreiro, (2003) considers, the growth of these visual facilities offers readers fresh ways to see reading and writing as changeable concepts depending on individuals' circumstances in time and context. Then, learners "make meaning from the array of multimedia, complex

visual imagery, music and sound, even virtual worlds that confront us each day."

(Tasmanian Office for Curriculum 2003, p. 1, cited in Beck, 2005)

It is important to say at this point of this research study that theories on visual literacy have not been implemented in EFL instructions. Although English teachers use images, pictures, videos, flashcards, and movies as part of their methodologies in their regular classes, the truth is that they do not base their use on visual literacy theories or models that can strengthen critical literacy practices in EFL education. Therefore, this research study proposes to apply Paillotet's (1993) model of Deep Viewing in the EFL language classroom, aiming to help students understand visual information and make critical meaning out of visual materials.

The model Deep Viewing is defined by Paillotet (1993) as "a research and instructional method used to reach social understandings of visual texts through the use of communal talk, pictorial, and written means" (p. 102) which provide "a systematic process for analyzing, understanding, and interacting with visual information." (Paillotet, 1997, p. 35) Then, this study embraces the idea of understanding visual texts in order to create a relation that has students build significant connections between what they see and what they live daily, giving them the opportunity to express their understandings in oral and written ways. This method is based on a three-leveled process or strategies that can be adapted in English classes, emphasizing the analysis of visual materials:

First level: Giving voice and summarizing: This level is the literal reading. In this step, as Pailliotet (1997) states, students gathered the information about what they saw. Here students engaged in a mental and personal process while they were watching the stories. Basically, this level was mainly a mental, individual process in which students focused on certain information of the text.

Hence, students did a literal reading when they were paying attention to what the text said. In other words, they were grasping what actually happened in the stories; specific facts, the organization of events, characters and main idea. Nevertheless, as Gibson (1989) states, literal meaning not only depends on the text itself but also the context in which the text is read. Additionally, here it is possible to say that students internally carried out a process of making literal meaning but taking into account their backgrounds. In this level, as Pailliotet (1993) claims, students reported what they felt and perceived through talks, drawings and writings. Clearly, they showed their first perceptions of what they saw, demonstrating that there was enough understanding to go further.

Second level: Making observations: Interpretation is the core of this level because the purpose of this step “is to explore and construct a range of understandings about the text, the reader, and the situation” (Pailliotet, 1997, p. 36). At this level, as Pailliotet (1993) states, teacher should inspire students to reflect on their personal interpretations about what they saw, understanding that many readings could be possible. For this study, it was important to ask some questions in order to guide the students to reflect on the events that happened in different stories in order to have them respond critically and get an inferential level of understanding.

Specifying that for this study the inferential level is when the students started to connect what they saw with their personal experiences because inferences allow learners to connect the different parts of the life stories presented with some hard situations of poverty, drug addiction, early pregnancy and dysfunctional families; hence, one perceives the different visual texts as consisting of parts to be put together—the jigsaw of every single reflection. One must take into account, though, that the visual readings were not isolated

information. On the contrary, every single story is part of something bigger and mirrors their particular life experiences.

Third level: Inferences, assumptions, and evaluations: According to Pailliotet (1997), in this level students evaluate how they apply what they have long understood in the previous stages: the literal and inferential levels, in order to make explicit their ideas about the text and the relation between that they saw, their previous knowledge and their new understandings about their problematic situations and ways to face them.

At this level, students had enough tools which they got during the previous stages of the Deep Viewing process. They had watched movies, videos, and seen students' artifacts that had given them new sights of how to overcome different life problems. Here students made meaningful connections between what they were and what they saw. Here they realized that their previous experiences and backgrounds make up an important part in the process of understanding texts in a critical way.

Besides, in the practice of teaching EFL, the use of visual literacy is a good starting point if you want to engage your students in a language learning process because the use of images can be an introduction toward developing meaning that could be expressed different ways, and one of them is the foreign language. After all, literacy is not a process which takes place in isolation; it embraces technological, economic and social factors that affect writing and reading processes in any language and in any subject. Nowadays the readings of images have changed the way to perceive literacy, since there are different means to communicate and represent our ideas. (Kress, 2003)

State of the Art

Beyond theory, what follows is an important description of different international and national research studies applied in specific educational contexts which demonstrate and describe how visual literacy can be used for teaching and learning purposes (understanding the use of video as a literacy practice). The state of the art also shows studies that present literacy as a way to read our realities critically and the uses of life stories in the language learning process. In sum, it attempts to describe how visual literacy, critical literacy and life stories work together in the EFL class.

Ajayi (2012) adopted a qualitative interpretative ethnographic research study to examine how third grade Hispanic students in the USA used their life stories and social understandings to make their interpretations of Disney movies, in this case, the movie *Cinderella*. This study suggested that schools need to expand their view of ESL/literacy engaging visual tools and how they can use other channels to teach literacy.

The use of the *Cinderella* video is a familiar story for most students and the use of it demonstrated that this kind of tool is useful to get vocabulary like adjectives, names of the characters, and expressions to retell the story: plot, scenes in English as well as to make students share previous knowledge, negotiate meanings about happiness, injustices, gender, racial discrimination and stereotypes, thus reflecting on their own interpretations about social issues like roles of men and women in society or differences between rich and poor people. Basically, the aim was to analyze the students' interpretation of *Cinderella* and drawings and compare them with their social and cultural lives. The researcher asked them a series of questions: Those interpretations were gathered through the collection of

students' artifacts: drawings, written summaries of the meanings of their pictures, records of dialogues and biographical essays.

This study used the Cinderella video to analyze the multiple readings that Hispanic third graders did; the development of critical literacy by means of exploring multi-literacies: readings of videos and images. Learners developed their critical literacy by making connections with their cultural backgrounds. This is especially true of girls who talked about the role of women in their lives, seeing them strong and brave instead of seeing women weak as is Cinderella.

This study has a relationship with my research project because both aimed at strengthening critical capacity to read videos as well as being relevant enough to connect the images of the videos with students' personal experiences. Through using videos as a critical literacy practice in a classroom, both proposals help students to see images, expose their own interpretations, share their ideas with their classmates and negotiate their final interpretations in order to reflect on their own life stories. Unquestionably, it was an opportunity to develop students' EFL literacy because they had the chance to reflect on their life situations while they were watching movies. As a consequence, this study ensured that students' previous knowledge and personal experiences were an important part of their language learning process.

Ajayai (2012) recognized the importance of being conscious of both the context that is produced in the visual aid and the context of the reception. This takes place because what critical visual literacy did was to provide the reader with tools to make the process of reading images more conscientious. Reading movies in this study helped students become conscious of their realities linking characters' experiences in the stories with their daily

lives. So, it was significant that students recognized similar problematic situations in the movie, but at the same time it was important to be aware of the differences, given the context in which the movies were produced.

Expanding the use of movies in EFL, Brown (2010) conducted a quantitative research project using popular films in the EFL classroom. Her idea was to analyze how the use of video impacted 80 university first-year students who were studying to get a diploma of English knowledge. Despite her study being focused on how students learn the EFL literacy process through movies, it emphasized the acquisition of cultural expressions e.g. body language, slang and idiomatic expressions. Brown used the movies *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Mean Girls* as a way to expose students to listening to social practices presented in American movies, to foster native social expression and vocabulary—basically idiomatic expressions and body language. Unfortunately, Brown did not specifically mention the expressions that students learnt. However, she did a quantitative analysis about how many pieces of highlighted and discussed vocabulary and cultural expressions students were able to remember after seeing scenes from the movies in seven weeks.

The fact that this study took place in an Asian country can possibly explain why it was important to teach American culture through movies since the images helped learners/students find learning the language process more meaningful. They saw the language in use in the American context in which the film took place. The film was used as a means to teach and learn slang, facial expressions, body language and idiomatic expressions that Native American speakers use. Brown then analyzed how movies worked as a visual literacy tool in an EFL context. However, she focused her attention on how students could improve English proficiency in terms of vocabulary and the use of American social expressions. My proposal used movies to encourage students to reflect on their life

situations, exposing them not only to learn vocabulary and social expressions but also to do so using their own life experiences. However, there is an important connection between my study and the one by Brown because both sought to use multi-literacy, especially visual literacy tools to bring meaning to the EFL class.

After all, Brown's quantitative study explained clearly how teachers can use movies see the two movies mentioned above, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) and *Mean Girls* (2004), as a visual aid in EFL classrooms as literacy practices, reading different kinds of texts, going beyond the written text and the instructional methods to teach vocabulary and grammar.

Considering the importance of making students gain self-acceptance and become knowledgeable of whom they are in order to make decisions about what they want to change, one is reminded of the study by Mohammad and Hossein (2012). They conducted a study where they worked with critical literacy in reading literature within the principles of the humanistic education perspective. So, they take into account (according to Moskowitz) personal development, self-acceptance, and acceptance by others, to make learners "interact with one's real self that underlies surface behavior" [Rogers (1961) cited by Mohammad and Hossein (2012)]. That study illuminated mine to see ways of how to work topics like personal development and self-acceptance to make students reflect on their strengths and weaknesses to gain knowledge of self.

By using life stories, in the present study, students had a tool to recognize one's real self and how every aspect of their lives have made them the persons that they are now and how future experiences will help them to re-shape themselves in each role of their lives. Hence, for the present work, literacy is a way to write and to read ourselves and the world

around us. Besides, literacy practices depend on the individual process of the learners as well on the context where they are immersed and the personal experiences that they have lived.

Subsequently, for the present study, as Perez (2013) argues we have to see reading and writing as opportunities for students to express their concerns and go beyond the critical vision of the verbal and physical issues that they face in their lives. As a result, students saw the connection between the EFL process and their lives. In other words, they recognized that their experiences were part of the class.

Perez conducted a qualitative research study where the core of the research problem was verbal and physical aggression among tenth graders in a public school. In the pedagogical intervention, the participants worked collaboratively to reflect on social issues in the EFL classes. He used inquiry to make students explore, read, compare, and then reflect on issues that come from their own context and experiences.

Perez worked with aggressiveness and the present study is about life stories, both taking into account the literacy process to make links between the EFL process and students' experiences. Moreover, Perez' study presents a clear path to embrace current literacy concepts, since it makes students reflect on their social conditions and to apply the use of the English language in contextualized situations. His study allowed students to develop rationality and sensitivity towards violent acts and in the present work; life stories allow students to develop rationality and sensitivity toward others and themselves.

Following the idea that teachers should go beyond the basics when they are teaching reading and writing, Umbarilla (2011) carried out a qualitative research study to enroll

students in Colombia Viva School (a public institution) in Bogota in Critical Pedagogy through the critical reading of movies and documentaries. So, students read about a real historical event to connect it with their lives. The instructional method, which helped students read more critically, was the creative method by Ada (1988). The idea with this implementation was for students to build the sense of Other through social reflection and cultural recognition of historical facts in the classroom, a methodology that empowered students to refuse and denounce. At the same time, they constructed recognition, commitment and responsibility towards Others. To analyze data Umbarilla worked on Grounded Theory, and the main category that the findings generated was the Visage (it is a face to face meeting—the encounter with the Other). From the Visage category emerged two subcategories: I see myself through yourself and the commitment with the Other.

Principally, the way that Umbarilla embraced the concept of critical reading gave to my proposal a clear path to follow as through visual literacy and the connections with students' "life stories" learners can make connections between what they learn in class and their current situations. Additionally, as a result of these meaningful connections, they can build tolerance, commitment and acceptance for diversity inside the language classroom and beyond.

Basically, Umbarilla used critical pedagogy when students read historical facts to make students critical agents of transformation in their own lives and it directly connects with the main purpose of the present study. All in all, this study used films and short videos to make students inquire about their personal lives and how they can visualize themselves thus changing their perceptions.

Another study that used students' life experiences as a source of knowledge was a qualitative interpretative case study conducted by Quevedo G (2013). She worked with 19

fifth graders in order to provide them with the opportunity to explore their social views based on their realities and life stories. So, learners were encouraged to write their narratives to make them sensitive to social issues. This study was framed under the principles of critical pedagogy and one of the most important findings was that students explored their own world by giving meaning and value to their own experiences. Hence, when teachers transform teaching practices they create a meaningful learning environment that leads teachers and students to change their view of learning. With this proposal, Quevedo made her learners change their view of writing because this literacy was a process providing an opportunity to reflect and generate critical positions.

Following with life stories or the importance that learners' backgrounds play an important role in language learning process, there is another qualitative case study by Ubaque (2014) who studied the reflections concerning how important aspects in life stories can affect the EFL process. He claims that life stories have importance as a tool to understand when language teaching and language learning occur. This study offers a descriptive analysis of students' narratives to understand better what happens in EFL settings taking into account the importance of students' backgrounds.

Ubaque worked specifically with the perceptions of ten young-adult learners from the Colombo Americano in Bogota, about their language learning experiences to describe how they affected the EFL learning process. It reveals an important connection with my research proposal, since both highlight the importance that teachers provoke a transformation inside the classroom via restructuring and changing language teaching practices while considering the core of the learning process: the learners. For my proposal, learning EFL is more than acquiring a system of rules and codes. For this study, it is clear

that language is more than songs; language is all that involves allowing us to communicate. In this sense, the language learning process should be involved in literacy learning practices in order to give students opportunities to read and to understand the world and to make significant connections between themselves, their understandings and the reality around them, all the while using the language as a means to express who they are.

When life stories are involved in the learning process they become an effective tool which provides the possibility to understand students' social problems and face them in their daily lives and that, of course, is meaningful as a critical literacy process because it permits connections which students can make between their current situations and school practices. Additionally, this study applied a pedagogical intervention to describe the influence of visual literacy practices when students reflect on their personal stories through writings. However, Ubaque analyzed students' narratives collected by interviews in Spanish about remarkable negative or positive experiences in the EFL process, while my proposal used the life stories to develop critical literacy in an EFL class to overcome difficult life experiences.

Expanding the use of critical literacy practices in EFL, Lau (2010) carried out a qualitative year-long study in a class with newcomers in a school in Canada. The immigrant students were from 12 to 14 years old. Lau designed an action research taking into account that the EFL process was taking place while immigrant students were struggling for confirming their cultural backgrounds and developing their acculturation process. The themes handled during the pedagogical intervention were basically Canadian as cousins, symbols, and history.

So, Lau used critical literacy to demonstrate that it is possible to introduce critical inquiry in courses for beginner EFL learners. Despite that revelation, teachers hardly ever agree that through this kind of methodology students are successful not only in developing language skills but also in reinforcing their own cultural backgrounds and gaining the necessary understanding to integrate themselves in a new culture.

Using a phenomenological research method, Lau showed how via the negotiation inside the classroom and well-designed pedagogical implementation teachers can change the dynamics of the EFL learning process thus helping and guiding students towards the path to becoming themselves critical languages users.

Following with the idea to influence teaching-learning processes with critical literacy practices, Cooper and White (2010) carried out a qualitative research study in an urban Canadian elementary school, Sir Simon George. The main purpose was to describe how by implementing an action research methodology, the institution would overcome students' problems to develop the literacy process. Hence, the main purpose was to select a research team teacher to develop the action research project in order to impact a community of students which consisted of 650 students from K-5, divided as 312 girls and 338 boys, 78 of them born outside of Canada and 429 for whom English is not their mother tongue. The research team was composed of: a graduate research assistant, a school literacy coordinator, and a school district primary literacy consultant. They worked together with two third grade teachers to develop critical literacy capacity among the Sir Simon George community.

The multi-year action research project obtained a research team to develop cycles to change the way to address literacy in Sir Simon George Elementary School taking into account its educational context: teachers' voices, participants' backgrounds, institutional necessities, school context and low literacy level of students .

Using students' responses to questions like: Why do people read? What do you see readers doing? Where do you see people reading? and, Do people all over the world have the same chance to learn to read? The research team explored the purpose of reading with their students. Unfortunately, the article does not give a complete view of the kind of materials and workshops which were used during the implementation. However, it talks about the sources the data came from: reading assessment, running records, report cards, test results, and guided reading inventories.

The contributions of this action research project to the critical literacy field is one more example of the necessity that teachers address the literacy process in classrooms in order to continue improving teaching and learning critical literacy strategies. At the same time, the project highlighted the importance that the literacy process should be a long-term action research project to allow critical literacy practices to prevail. Only in this way will learners have the opportunity to be involved in a meaningful literacy process which will help them become critical thinkers.

To conclude, theory based and research based literature have shown me the way to interconnect the three constructs of my study ensuring that students used visual literacy as a bridge to develop critical literacy through written life stories. Then, the fourth chapter is the connection between the theoretical foundations of both theory-based and research-based

literature which frame this study and the research approach. It was the way that I put into action the theory inside the EFL class. The pedagogical implementation was based on research-based literature about visual literacy and critical literacy and how personal life stories can be implemented in EFL education.

Chapter 3

Research Design

This chapter describes the methodological tenets with which this research was framed in order to answer the following research question: What do tenth graders' written life stories as a critical literacy practice reveal about learners' emancipatory dimension in an EFL class?

The chapter is organized as follows: first, the type of study is presented; second, the context of the participants is described; third, the instruments for data collection are depicted and finally, the role of the researcher and ethical considerations are addressed.

Type of Study

Undeniably, this study was framed by qualitative research since it looked for establishing relations between critical literacy and students' life stories, and it considers students' life experiences as a social issue that deserves to be analyzed in the EFL teaching-learning context. Since this study was looking to unveil what tenth graders' life stories as a critical literacy practice reveal about learners' emancipatory dimension in an EFL classroom, the present study was framed within the qualitative research paradigm.

Qualitative research is understood as “descriptions, interpretations and clarifications of naturalistic social contexts” (Burns, 1999, 22). Those descriptions and interpretations make the researcher aware of “observing what people do and trying to understand and explain what is going on” (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, p.82). Hence, qualitative studies, as Corbin and Strauss (1998) state, help to interpret a problem without taking into account statistics or quantitative methods to interpret the findings. Thus, the qualitative methods

offer researchers ways to explain and understand findings within a social environment being respectful of the people and their life experiences (Merriam, 1998).

Additionally, the present study used qualitative methods such the analysis of students' personal life stories and field notes about 'oral interactions to catch students' perceptions about their family, social and academic situations. The idea was to unveil what tenth graders' life stories revealed about the development of critical literacy in an EFL classroom to build meaningful explanations through the identification of emergent categories rather than imposing researchers' ideas (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Furthermore, qualitative research "applies systematic process of investigating practical issues or concerns which arise within a particular social context" (Burns, 1999, 31). It requires, as Ritchie and Lewis (2003) claim, that the researcher be the primary instrument to conduct the study because the investigator is the first filter through which the data collected passes. Then, it is crucial that the researchers apply methods of gathering data which are suitable for the social context of the study, keeping a close relationship between the participants and the researcher.

This study was framed within the qualitative approach following Creswell's view (2007). First, I, as researcher during this work was the one who collected the information through analyzing students' written life stories, observing language learners' participation and inquiring about their life perceptions based on family, social and academic themes. Second, the data collection procedure took place in the setting where the issue occurred; resulting in the researcher and the participants having a face to face interaction during the exploration process. Third, I worked on the categories using Grounded Theory to make a qualitative analysis by going back and forth between the data and the codes reshaping them to find the categories which emerged from the data collected. Moreover, I developed a kind

of complex picture of the issues under study about what I had observed, heard and understood. Finally, I conducted a qualitative research study because it considers the factual events to explain the reality. Furthermore, with this kind of study, students could be empowered to share their stories and to hear their voices. Moreover, I as a teacher-researcher needed to understand the context in which I was working in order to put into action critical literacy.

Research approach:

Following Lewin (1946) who sees in the action research (AR) a self-reflexive form of questioning-- carried out by the participants to improve pedagogical practices and to better understand the social situations-- the nature of this research seeks to empower its participants to question their lives and living contexts and to focus on emancipatory acts leading to a constant reflection that will help/encourage them to think in a different way.

Additionally, “In the field of education, that would mean we do research that makes a difference in the practice of education as well as contributes to basic knowledge about, for example, human learning” (Edwards, & Willis, p. 8). This research approach focuses not only on the improvement of the teachers’ practices, attitudes, and personal theories, but also on the changes that can be made in the social or educational system (Leitch & Day, 2000).

The action research approach works on a self-critical action, making the participants of the study see deeply into their social context and reflecting on how they are part of a specific environment. Hence, participants have the opportunity of exploring their realities to get a better understanding of problematic situations and to find contextualized solutions. In short, by doing AR in the educational field, oppressed groups are empowered to change lives and unjust circumstances. Absolutely, through AR researchers see deeply into the

social and educational life of participants thus gaining enough understanding about what happens in the setting to find new ways to face problems (Stringer, 2007; Ping, 2007; & Burns, 1999). As I said in the statement of the problem, there were three main issues that I identified in my classroom: Firstly, these learners had socio-economic, family, and academic problems that affected their learning process. Secondly, they did not see connections between school life and academic work and their personal life conditions. Thirdly, they were reluctant to speak and write in English, being reading the only skill that they had developed during the last several years. Then, taking into account those socio-economic, family and academic problems, I tried to discover my real teaching conditions to find possible ways for improvement the English classroom in which learners' concerns were the focus of analysis.

Action Research involves a cyclical process because it gives the researchers the possibility to start and repeatedly to reflect on what is happening during the implementation. In other words, the researcher takes actions to improve the current teaching-learning situation through an action plan. Then, the researcher observes what happens during the implementation of the action plan to make decisions on the results. Afterward, the researcher decides if it is necessary to make changes to continue with the next cycle. Each cycle of AR consists of four main steps: planning, action, observation and reflection (Burns, 2000).

This research study was supported by a pedagogical intervention structured around three cycles which are fully described and explained later in chapter four, The Instructional Design. Therefore, for the purpose of understanding AR as the research method for this project, I want to point out that I gave names to each step. The first one was named *Recognizing my story, strengths and areas of improvement*; the second cycle was called

Overcoming a difficult experience in life; and the third one was named *Showing new perceptions about my life*. In other words, doing action research necessarily implies the support of a pedagogical intervention through which a problem is solved.

According to Burns (2010), the first phase of Action Research is planning. In this stage, the researchers “identify a problem or issue and develop a plan of action to bring about improvements in a specific area of the research context” (p. 8). Here, the researchers see the possibilities and the reality of the research context to plan alternative way of doing things. The second phase is the action plan. In other words, it is a well-organized pedagogical intervention which consists of placing action over a limited period of time and “the interventions are ‘critically informed’.” The third stage of AR is Observation. “The researchers start the data collection process through observing wisely people’s opinions, behaviors and actions.” (p. 8) It is a data collection phase where you use ‘open-eyed’ and ‘open-minded’ tools to collect information about what is happening (p. 8).

The last phase is the reflective phase where the researcher analyzes diverse experiences for modifying past knowledge and establishing connections between different settings and our lives. Thus, it permits one to evaluate and describe the effects of the action plan “in order to make sense of what has happened and to understand the issue explored” (p. 8). There are two possible options after finishing the observation: first, to have more cycles and second, to share the experience.

Setting

The current study was carried out at the IED Hernando Duran Dussan, a public school located in Dindalito, in the 8th district, Kennedy, in Bogotá, Colombia. It is very close to the Ciudad de Cali Avenue and Corabastos (the principal food market of the

country). Despite the area's having recreational places for one to enjoy free time, those places are dangerous because people who take drugs usually go to meet there and many of them are drugs dealers or belong to gangs. In fact, the area presents a high insecurity risk. Constantly the school has had to deal with the insecurity of the area and the problems that the neighborhood presents have affected the coexistence inside the school. The students have also carried knives and this fact has caused problems inside the institution.

Hernando Duran Dussan school used to be an institution administered by a fund granting (public companies which manage public resources) entity, FUNIR. This practice had been ongoing for fourteen years but in January 2016 the SED Bogota (Secretary of Education of Bogota) retook control of the institution. One of the principal reasons to return this school to SED Bogota was the bad results that the school obtained on external (state) exams. Then, the academic level of the population was low. However, students were very artistic and they were good at sports.

The PEI (Educational Institutional Project) of the school was under construction. Hence, all teachers were doing what they thought was the right thing to do implementing inside the classroom their academic backgrounds trying to follow some principles of the Cognitive Approach which contemplates, as Piaget recognizes, the influence of environment in the internal cognitive process. It takes into account the four stages which allow the process of learning in everyone to be developed: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational period. In this way, the context in which students develop their mental abilities follows a schema of the evolution of the brain but takes into consideration how external factors can affect the learning process. However, teachers were aware of the need to involve students' personal experiences to engage

learners in a meaningful learning process. In other words, while the classes were taking place, the school was in the process of building curriculum, and creating its own path as a public institution.

The institution has two shifts; the first one from 6:10 am to 12:10 pm and the second from 12:10 pm to 6:10 pm; however, some children were in a longer one because the school is participating in the program 40x40 curriculum (full school day) which was offered by the policies of the Education Secretary of Bogota. Then the 40x40 program offers courses in football (soccer), music, and English, among others after the regular classes.

Speaking about the language learning process, English as a foreign language classes were distributed among three fifty-five minute sessions per week. Students were not comfortable with the EFL because they had learnt English through a grammar-based approach for many years which consisted of teaching grammar rules/studying the tenses.

Additionally, they did not get any tools to communicate in English. There were neither texts nor a variety of resources like audios, videos, books or internet connection to work with. Each teacher designed, prepared and set up his own workshops to make copies. Thus, students saw English as another subject that was not linked with their daily and future lives.

Participants

The participants of this research study were tenth graders. At the beginning of the project, there were 42 but seven of them dropped out of the school. Then, the participants left were 35; 17 boys and 18 girls, whose ages ranged from 14 to 18 years old; the majority

of the students belonged to the 1, 2 and 3 social/economic strata and came from dysfunctional families. They had to face social problems like sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy, parents' abandonment and harsh economic situations. For that reason, they had a hopeless vision of their future lives. Additionally, to study was not their main ambition and they thought that learning English was a waste of time. Then they focused their attention on passing the subject no matter if they were interested in learning the target language.

However, they accomplished reading activities better than writing ones because they had been trained for that. To accomplish the purpose of the study it was necessary to involve all students of the group in the pedagogical intervention but for the process of the data analysis I selected a purposeful sampling which, according to Marshall (1996), "is the most common sampling technique. The researcher actively selects the most productive sample to answer the research question" (Marshall, 1993 p. 523).

The Data Collection Instruments and Techniques

The source of data in this study involved students' written life stories and the researcher's field notes, bearing in mind that these instruments allowed me to describe, analyze and understand how students developed critical literacy through written life stories. The following data collection instruments provided the researcher a way to collect relevant information for answering research questions and building the analysis of what students achieved or not during the process.

Then, after each cycle of the action research route, I collected students' written reflections and field notes that revealed what happened during the sessions, video recordings as a

complement of field notes and as a tool that allowed me to collect what learners discussed in class. To sum up, I organized and put all data together to triangulate relevant data which enriched my pedagogical practices to build learning environments where students' needs were the guideposts to continue the EFL teaching process. The characteristics and the implementation of each data collection instrument are described below:

First instrument: Student artifacts (written life stories):

Students' artifacts, as Goodnough (2011) claims, are students' products which are created in the classroom like: written texts, presentations, art work, passages, organizers, essays, and portfolios which are used by teacher action researchers as a key tool that reveals students' understanding about the problem they must overcome. Additionally, as Mills (2002 cited in Craig, 2013) suggests, these artifacts can be done inside the classroom or as school work. Through students' artifacts teacher researchers find personal information about "how people lived, what they valued and believed, their ideas and assumptions, and their knowledge and opinions" Norum (2008). Additionally, the artifacts in this study are basically students' life stories "told from the perspective of the individuals concerned" which were "built up over a period of time" Burns (1991, p. 117).

Students' artifacts enriched (see sample in Appendix # 1) my understanding of what kind of reflections students had about the problems and vicissitudes they had to face in daily life as part of their learning process, since they were encouraged to write their life stories in the foreign language. Students' artifacts in the current study were writings about their personal life stories. Students wrote insights of what they reflected upon after observing others' personal life stories of people who faced problematic situations similar what they had to live. They not only wrote about the similarities but at the same time they

reflected upon how to face their personal difficult situations in order to get ahead. They were critical about their own experiences because they had the chance to stop to reflect. Certainly, students' artifacts were representations of what they achieved in terms of developing critical literacy. Hubbard and Miller (1999) state that "students' artifacts are one of the richest sources of data for teachers-researchers as it is tangible evidence of what kids are able to do and of the range of responses kids make to different learning task" (p. 102). So, the written reflections were the means to analyze how students responded to the pedagogical intervention. Absolutely, written life stories and connecting them with visual literacy tools provided information regarding students' insights towards their life stories. Then the purpose of written life stories was twofold: instructional (literacy development) and research (data for analysis).

Those written life stories were collected in four moments. Each time that students had the opportunity to confront what they had lived with visual literacy tools, I asked them to write a paragraph connecting their reflections with the video and their real current situations. After the first stage of writing, we started an editing process. For that reason, the writing process took at least 155 minutes, inside the classroom and additional time and effort that each learner invested at home.

Speaking about the amount of writings, they wrote four paragraphs. Thus, each paragraph was elaborated in one week including the editing process. Students were writing after the watching *Freedom Writers*, *Butterfly Circus*, *Story of My Life* and *Life Stories*. Then, students wrote and they had the opportunity to ask for support to edit their writings. See timeline for data collection during the pedagogical intervention at the end of the present chapter.

Second instrument: Field notes

Field notes “are descriptions and accounts of events in the research context” (Burns, 1996, p. 87). Field notes refer to written notes by the researcher during the research process to help him or her record and store the information of a particular event. Subsequently, the information collected is read to describe and analyze the observed situation to produce meaning (Schwandt, 2015).

For this research, field notes were used as a way to describe what happened while students were sharing their perceptions about their life and comparing those with the stories that they watched in the videos and movies (*Freedom Writers*, *Butterfly Circus*, *Story of My Life* and *Life Stories*) to enrich their understanding about how to face their realities. Field notes were supported by video recordings because I wrote notes during the class to catch everything that happened during the session, since I as a participant observer had to oversee the class and guide my students while they were engaged in the activities proposed.

Then, I also recorded five sessions on October 13rd, 15th, 19th, 27th and the last one on November 3rd. I specifically recorded those sessions when my students discussed and shared their perceptions about their lives and connections that they had made with the visual literacy tools selected. Afterwards, I recorded significant information in the field notes gleaned from observing the supported videos and that helped me to answer my research questions; videos allowed me to come back to the class to see the videos clearer and make a rigorous analysis (see the format, Appendix # 2). “Field notes often provide clues to fundamental issues of importance and group dynamics of the actors involved” McKernan & James (2013, p. 93). Thus, field notes provided this study with information

about how students developed critical literacy while they were watching the chosen movies and discussing and writing their life stories, because before writing they had the opportunity to share their insights in class, build new perceptions about them and analyze how they could overcome difficult life moments and circumstances. It is necessary to clarify that the field notes by themselves were not enough to record all the data. Thus, the use of video-recordings provided helpful assistance to enrich the data that the field notes contained.

Role of the Researcher

I was part of the class and played the role of participant-observer during the activities of the pedagogical intervention; plus I was the one who described and analyzed the process to gather new understandings that enriched students' perceptions about their lives. Hence, considering what Cohen, Manion & Morrison claims (2000), this role helps the researcher "discern the ongoing behavior as it occurs [...] develop a more intimate and informal relationship with those who are being observed and provide a superior grade of naturalness to the data gathering" (p. 188).

As a participant-observer, I had to design the activities for the pedagogical intervention that encouraged students to think critically about their current life situations, through guiding questions which made them reflect, connect their experiences with selected movies and videos and write their life stories. Besides, I guided EFL writing and oral processes involved in critical literacy perspective.

Ethical Issues

For this study ethics was my being conscientious of my responsibility as a researcher, understanding that the research process, as Burns (1999) states, needs rules

which provide a sense of respect towards the agents involve in the study. For that reason, the needs analysis applied confirmed that the project was viable. Thus, the current study was proposed based on the findings that emerged from the needs analysis. Secondly, all participants were informed about the purpose and methods of the study. Additionally, the anonymity of the participants was kept, using fictional names for the participants. Besides, learners and their parents had the right to decide if they wanted to be involved or not.

Although, my students were children they were well-informed about the research study and how the stories would be used to inform the data analysis. They also knew the possible effects of participation and their right to say no at any time during the process and if they decided to participate, I as a researcher and their teacher had the responsibility to keep up with their stories and their names. It was a continuous negotiation which was framed under a mutually respectful relationship.

First, the institution: the principal, coordinators and teachers were informed in a school meeting which took place on July the fourteenth, 2015, where some teachers who wanted to apply projects had the opportunity to socialize the information, consent forms were given out as well to get the approval from the academic board (see Appendix # 5). Then, the parents were informed about the project in a meeting that took place on November, 2015 (see Appendix 5). All in all, every agent involved in the current study knew perfectly the condition of this research process. After establishing the characteristics of the type of study to be carried out, the following chapter presents the instructional design that was implemented with tenth graders.

Data collection procedures

Table: Timeline for data collection during the pedagogical intervention

Table 1 Timeline for data collection.

CYCLE	SESSION	ACTIVITY	COLLECTED DATA
Research cycle 1 Recognizing my story, strengths and areas of improvement	Session 1 25 th January , 2016 55 minutes -Watch the videos during the class. -Discussion about what they see in the videos.	1.Students will watch two song videos <i>Life Story</i> by Tracy Chapman https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIEGRYj0sXU and <i>Story of My Life</i> by One Direction. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-TE_Ys4iwM	Students' written reflections giving insights on how they perceive themselves. Student's participation
	Session 2 28 th January , 2016 110 minutes Develop the worksheet to draw their personal T-shirts	2. Students answer some personal questions, designing a T-shirt where they will write their answers.	
	Session 3 1 st February , 2016 55 minutes Write paragraph about their personal T-shirts.	3. Students write reflection using the information that they wrote inside the T-shirts.	
	Session 4 4 th February , 2016 110 minutes' writing a paragraph about their personal T-shirts. Edit paragraphs.	4. Teacher helps students to edit their written reflections. 5. Students share their reflections, presenting their personal T-shirts and reading aloud the written reflections.	
	Design their personal T-shirt at home Session 5 8 th February , 2016 (round table) 55 minutes Presentation personal T-shirt.	6. Homework: watch the movie <i>Freedom Writers</i> .	
Research cycle 2 Overcom	Session 6 11 th February , 2016 Watch	Students watched <i>Freedom Writers</i> . (at home) Students fill a	Students' written reflections will give me insights

<p>ing a difficult experience</p>	<p>the movie 2 hours 10 minutes</p> <p>Session 7 15th February , 2016 55 minutes Develop the worksheet of <i>Freedom Writers</i></p> <p>Session 8 18th February , 2016 110 minutes (Round table mtg) Discussion about students' insights of the movie.</p> <p>Session 9 22nd February, 2016.110minutes. process writing</p> <p>Session 10 25th February , 2016 55minutes editing paragraphs</p> <p>Session 11 29thFebruary , 2016 55 minutes Watch the short movie (19 minutes, 35 seconds) Round table 20 minutes. Discussion about students' insights of the movie</p> <p>Session 12 3rd March , 2016 110 minutes. Writing process. Edit paragraphs</p>	<p>workshop about the movie. (at home)</p> <p>6. Students discuss during the class about their insights of the movie.</p> <p>7. Students produce their written paragraph linking what they watched in the movie with what is happening in the class.</p> <p>8. Students will watch <i>The Butterfly Circus</i> in class.</p> <p>9. Students do the workshop about the short film. Students discuss about the short movie.</p> <p>10. Students write written reflections about the short film</p>	<p>on how they perceive themselves. Teacher's field notes about the discussion.</p>
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<p>Research cycle 3 Showing my new perceptions</p>	<p>Session 11 <i>10th, 14th, 17th March</i></p> <p>Thinking of what we have done in our English class. Writing process. (Writing a script) Editing process</p> <p>At home: Recording myself talking about me and my experience.</p> <p>Session 12 <i>28th, 31st March and 4th April, 2016</i> <i>165 minutes</i> Sharing videos</p>	<p>Write about the process carried out during this pedagogical intervention. Answering the following questions: What do you think of the different activities done during the process? How can these activities help you to reflect on your personal life story? Teacher helps students edit the written reflections. Students record a video talking about the experiences and understandings of what they have gained during the process. Students show their videos to their classmates and teacher.</p>	<p>Unstructured interview. Divided into two moments Written reflections (script) and a video, talking about the questions (developed in the written reflections).</p>
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CHAPTER FOUR

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

This chapter aims at explaining how the use of life stories in an EFL class is implemented to engage students in the second language learning process. Hence, to portray this study, it is necessary to know the visions of curriculum, language, learning and classroom which were embedded in it. Moreover, this chapter describes in detail the different stages or tasks which were essential to develop this proposal during the first term of the present school year.

Vision of Curriculum

This work advocated putting into action curriculum as an inquiry because this action- research was framed under the vision that the curriculum is a way to put into action a set of beliefs and values (Short & Burke, 1991), realizing that we need to make changes in order to build the curriculum from students' ways of knowing and living in the world: "The curriculum must be always connected to as well as go forward from student's life experience" (Short & Burke, 1991, p. 35). Only if teachers follow this path they will be capable of proposing activities which "engage the learner in the negotiation, interpretation, and expression of meaning, without any explicit focus on form and function" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Thus, teachers should work on curriculum considering what matters for students because after all, curriculum is like life—unpredictable and changeable. Then, teachers should be ready to make changes if students require those changes to get goals; moreover, as Pineda (2001) claims, the curriculum is not a final product but it is something that can be modified

depending on the program that is developed and implemented. As Wells (2002) states in an inquiry curriculum as regards the understanding of individual past experiences that participants bring to the problem situation; to this is then added new information that is either searched for or made available by the teacher, text or the situation and the activity in which they are engaged (p. 201).

For this proposal, it was essential to understand literacy practices as an inquiry instrument where reading and writing become meaningful tools as a means to communicate our realities in context and not just ways to write and read correctly. Thus, literacy works as an inquiry tool in lives of learners (Short & Burke, 1996).

Vision of learning as an experiential process

This action research worked under the vision of seeing learning as an experiential process, because students themselves learnt by inquiring. Using life stories in EFL class in a public school in Dindalito emerged from the need as Tudor (2001) claims to create warm, supportive and trusting relationships in the classroom with the idea that this feeling when respected will make the students feel valued and at ease, and thus better able (or freer in affective terms) to discover and develop their personal learning agendas in and via the TL (p. 81).

In addition, this vision of learning validates the importance of the social context. The learning process should relate to the affective dimension of the students. As such, as Tudor points out, the learning process should make learners feel that they are accepted and valued as they are.

Telling their life stories, students used language as a self-expression and used the language for communicative purposes. However, they did not have the chance to use the target language (TL) in different spaces in the classroom. So, the activities needed to be linked with students' context to involve meaningfulness. Certainly, to bring students' life stories to the EFL class helped to re-create the students' social context in class.

This vision of learning helped to build a sense of achievement in learners. While they told their personal life stories they were using English to tell their personal experiences. This process allowed students to use language in a creative way, building positive associations between the need to tell their stories to gain new understandings to face their difficult life situations and the language learning process.

Bearing in mind experiential learning, one can see that the activities proposed were created to make students use the language effectively. As such, they exchanged ideas which had relevance for them. So, they used the language to share insights and not to demonstrate the acquisition of certain language elements like grammar structures.

Vision of language as a self-expression

The role of the language for this proposal is what Tudor (2001) calls language as a self-expression where language is a means of personal and affective expression and learning goals are defined by what the learner wishes to express. Moreover, through language students express their deeper personal feelings without fear of judgment or rejection (p. 67). In addition, through language people build a medium to "realize their identities via language choices and construction of utterances, the languages that they speak also create reality for them by offering certain semantic and pragmatic elements for their use and self-expression" (Rezaei, 2012). As a result, students understood that "words,

language, have the power to define and shape the human experience. It is because of language that we can name our experiences” (Rovira, 2008) and others can make interpretations of us positively; language is the medium used by individuals to negotiate a sense of self in different contexts (Norton, 2002). And of course, for this current proposal, the English language was the vehicle to read oneself and each other in the classroom because students listened to others’ stories and told their own to enrich their understandings about themselves to tackle difficult situations with a different point of view and action.

Telling their life stories, Hernando Duran Dussan students used language as a “primary means for their own personal definition” (Lewis, 1993 cited in Tudor, 2001). Students used the TL to express their personal feelings as a part of the English class. Thus, students had the opportunity to “be themselves in the full term of the sense” (Tudor, 2001). Unquestionably, this proposal promoted the use of language as a means to express personal ideas, feelings and visions of the world.

Vision of classroom as socialization

This proposal pondered students’ backgrounds and contexts to engage them in a significant EFL literacy process, seeing the classroom as a scale model of society where students’ backgrounds count and the classroom is a site for socialization because, it is undeniable that Hernando Duran Dussan students reproduced in the classroom what they live daily, how they behave and interact in their neighborhoods and homes. Moreover, at the same time, the classroom is a pedagogical space in which the learning process is taking place. For those reasons, to support the vision of curriculum, this proposal embraced the vision of classroom as an emergent socialization.

It is undeniable that “Each classroom is situated within a broader speech community which has beliefs about what happens in school and about the role of teachers and students” (Maybin, 2005). In other words, what happens in the classroom is mediated for ways of socialization like the roles that students play at home, how they build relationships in view of what they have learnt from adults and how they face problems.

Additionally, for this proposal it was essential that the classroom was the space where participants not only reproduced what they had learnt from their contexts but also negotiated social rules about classroom interaction, class work, ways to solve conflicts, build relationships, to support each other’s individual and collaborative work to achieve academic and personal goals, depending, of course, on their backgrounds. We must keep in mind that those beliefs are dynamic and are constantly changing thus allowing the language acquisition process to permeate the social structure.

Using their personal life stories, students brought to the classroom their broader experiences to use them in some authentic material for the EFL class, making the classroom become a space where they not only reproduced rules of the outside community but also could negotiate ways of socialization which helped them to change the perception of life after school. After all, as Pennycook (2001) states, “the classroom should be understood as such a context without reducing them either to a mere reflection of the social order or to a place of entirely free-willed activity” (p. 118).

Hence, each classroom is not only a situated place where students imitate what they live daily in their homes and neighborhoods but it is the place where teachers and students build a group which has its own rules and dynamics in regard to different religious beliefs,

ways of interacting inside the classroom, roles of the different members, political beliefs, behaviors, habits, personal and collective goals. Certainly, the classroom is not just a reproduction of the outsider but also a place where new ways of socialization like right and wrong behavior, obligations, and roles to promote independence and self-expression are taking place. Hence, as Katz and Chard 2000 argue,

The classroom is a place where people can live a fulfilling life together as a community of learners if needs and concerns are appropriately expressed [...] where expectations for children's learning are high as it is important that the social interaction itself is designed to facilitate learning.

This vision of the classroom, as a place to socialize, was applied in the EFL class since students had the opportunity to use their personal experiences to enable language acquisition. The socialization that took place while learners were listening to their classmates and when they were listened to by others allowed them to use the knowledge and the English language with a meaningful purpose to express their ideas and feelings. To use language to express who they were, they had to develop a certain set of norms to demonstrate respect and interest for their classmates' stories. It was important to build a warm environment to express their personal opinions. For that reason, in our particular case, the classroom was seen as "emergent socialization, which relates to the way in which classroom participants develop their own set of norms and thus their form of self-organizing socialization" (Tudor 2001).

In addition, at Hernando Duran Dussan School students needed to have the opportunity to be enrolled in an EFL classroom where the "language capital" (Bourdieu, P.

& Passeron, J., 1990) was not just for “those who can afford pay or those who demonstrate high levels of academic abilities, thus conserving the notion of valuable linguistic resources as the privilege of certain powerful groups” (Mejía, 2002 p. 37). The tenth graders used English not as a privileged knowledge, but also as a valuable resource to express their insights, thus feeling that they were the owners of the words because those utterances were part of their life experiences.

IMPLEMENTATION

As I stated in chapter three, this study was based on action research, which requires the teacher-researcher to develop several cycles so that he/she can start and repeatedly reflect on what is happening while the implementation is taking place to take actions to improve the current teaching-learning situation through an action plan. Moreover, the participants can see deeply in their context gaining new ways to teach and to learn.

For this pedagogical intervention, I designed three cycles which attempted to guide students to develop visual literacy and reflect on their personal lives. The three cycles were framed under the principles of Pailliotet’s model of visual literacy (1997), as explained in chapter two. Then, I present its application in an EFL classroom and how it could help students understand visual information and make critical meaning from visual materials. However, before describing how each cycle was developed in light of Pailliotet’s model of visual literacy, the general and specific objectives of the pedagogical intervention are presented:

General pedagogical objectives:

1. Students recognize their personal strengths and weaknesses.
2. Students talk about personal problematic experiences.

3. Students reflect on their personal conflicts and what they learned from those experiences.

Having posted the general objectives, I found it was necessary to frame each cycle with specific objectives to develop the pedagogical intervention which appears in Appendix number 4.

The cycles:

Having described the general and the specific objectives for the three cycles I proposed for the pedagogical intervention, I considered it important to remember that Pailliotet (1997) suggests three steps to develop visual and critical literacy in the classroom as explained in chapter two: the first step involves *giving voice and summarizing* the visual material they watch. In other words, in this stage students did a literal reading and talked about what caught their attention taking into account what actually happened or was contained in the visual material e.g. specific facts, the organization of events, characters and main idea. The second step involves *making observations* of the visual material they have seen to build new understandings about the text, taking into account the context and the reader. At this level, students reflect, infer, and interpret the images and meanings contained in the visual materials they see. The third step involves *making inferences, assumptions, and evaluations* of the meanings and images they had inferred as they relate them to their own experiences and their personal stories. I explain in detail how these three steps of Pailliotet's visual literacy model were developed in the pedagogical intervention. See Appendix 1.

As table 3 shows, a central element of this pedagogical intervention was the use of visual material since this study attempted to enhance learners' visual and critical literacies. These materials were:

Music videos: On January 25th, 2016, in Session number 1 two song videos were showed to start the first cycle called *Recognizing my story, strengths and areas of improvement*. The first one was *Story of my life* by One Direction (figure 1). This video tells the story of the members of the group through pictures. It is full of pictures which were taken in different family moments and celebrations and other different times during childhood and adolescence showing physical appearance changes to represent that life is always changing.



Figure 1. *Story of my life* by One Direction

The other one was *Telling Stories* by Tracy Chapman (figure 2). This video was shown because it represents people who are in a permanent search to understand their past in order to live the present and to plan the future; looking for who they are. The video shows images of family moments which make up part of the band's members' life stories in order to show how each one is in charge of making their own decisions about their present and their future, to get ahead in other words.



Figure 2. *Telling Stories* by Tracy Chapman

This video shows images of the past demonstrating that people can overcome difficulties like death of family members.

These two songs helped to make students start to reflect on their particular life situations, recognizing that everyone has a story. It was a warm activity since learners had the time to remember what was important for them and who they were.

Movies: The first movie that my students watched during the pedagogical intervention was *Freedom Writers*. This wonderful story was shown because it is about a

group of students who were underestimated by their teachers. One example is a student who was an Afro-American and teachers ask her how a poor black woman knew how to read and write. The characters discovered through writing and reading the power to transform their realities of drugs, violence, poor academic level, and gang problems, among others. Somehow, the events that my students had faced in their lives were related to the film making them think about the possibilities of going to the university, to feel proud of themselves, to find a job to support their families, and to talk about their problems without making judgments. The other was a short film named *Butterfly Circus*. In this one, the principal character is a man without limbs, and he is a representation of a person who does not believe in himself because of his physical disability, engaging students to discover how to overcome difficult situations.

The two song videos *Telling Stories* and *Story of My Life*, the *Freedom Writers* movie and the short movie *The Butterfly Circus* were used to develop critical literacy via making learners inquire through written and oral reflections, which allowed them to face their personal situations with a different way of viewing life.

Students also created their own visual materials (See details in Table number 1) such as a personal T-shirts for the first cycle and a home video for the third cycle to reinforce their visual literacy practices since they used those materials to share their personal stories and their points of view with classmates. Through students' artifacts, learners showed what they wanted to let others see about them in order to interact and benefit one another and to enrich them to get understandings about their contexts.

Table 1 equally displays the cycles and the methodology implemented to develop critical visual literacy by following Paulette's model of visual literacy (model of Deep Viewing), which I describe in detail as follows:

Cycle 1. Recognizing my story, strengths, and areas of improvement:

The main purpose of this section was to engage students to read images of the videos that contained family pictures and characters who represented different life stories, making students remember different events that they had had to face. Also, *Telling Stories* and *Story of My Life* embraced the importance of the family history in life. The main topic was people who have to face different experiences in their daily lives and the important role that family members have in their life story.

First, students watched two song videos: *Telling Stories* by Tracy Chapman and *Story of my Life* by One Direction (See Appendixes 6 and 7). Those videos were filled of images like family pictures and people inside a bus who are the representations of different life stories and how each one must face conflict situations as previously explained. Those images made students think about their family life and themselves as unique people. In this step as Pailliotet (1993) claims students internally engaged in a process of making literal meaning but taking into consideration their backgrounds. To do so, they took personal notes about the images they saw in the videos; students then later reported what images had called their attention and why. For example, the image in the video where some relatives disappear because they died helped students to understand the importance of demonstrating love in their families.

Then, to go beyond the literal understanding (the main idea, stated facts, the sequence of events, the characters) sitting in a round table discussion, I posted some

questions about their strengths, dreams, important people in their lives and areas of improvement in order to encourage them to talk about the videos and at the same time find connections between their personal experiences and the images that they had watched. At this level I tried to inspire my students to make reflections on what they saw (Pailliotet, 1993). At that point I did not force them to speak in English. It was a kind of motivation to participate in the round table discussions and expressed their ideas speaking in English or in Spanish.

After students underwent reflections on the images about family, drug abuse, abandoned children, death, economic problems and other issues, they designed an artifact connecting those reflections on an old T-shirt and answered the questions (see Appendix # 1) writing some key words on the T-shirt. Here, it is important to say that at the end of this cycle, students wrote a paragraph (first life story reflection) using the information they had written on the T-shirts. As a participant observer, I did the activity with students to show them some directions as to writing their first life story reflection in English. I did my personal T-shirt and my own paragraph (first life story reflection), and finally I presented my personal T-shirt and read the first entry of my life story in front of the class. Then, I provided feedback to enrich the writing process so that students could start writing their first critical entry of their personal life stories in which they had to write about their personal strengths, weaknesses, important people for them, how they wanted others to see them and their dreams and ambitions in life (See figure 3). At the end of this cycle, students presented their personal T-shirts in front of their classmates and read the first reflection of their own life stories. This activity helped them to start the inquiry process, because it also implied students inquired from within to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This was

a difficult step, since it was not easy for my students to see inside themselves. The following are examples of their T-shirts and the first reflection entry of their life stories.



This is my personal T-shirt. My name is Alexandra Sanchez Arias. First of all, I want others see me as good person. I consider that I am good at dancing and my favorite past time is playing soccer. The person that I love most is "my family". On one hand, a bad thing that I want to change is angry. And on the other hand, my best quality is responsibility. finally, a dream that I have for my future is travel around the world.

8th February ,2016

Figure 3. Student artifact, 8th February, 2016

Cycle 2. Overcoming a difficult experience:

The cycle was basically used to expose students to visual literacy. They watched one movie *Freedom Writers* and a short film, *The Butterfly Circus* (see Appendix 1). After students were exposed to visual literacy they had to develop workshops (see Appendix #8) about the movies in the direction of expanding and clarifying what they saw, demonstrating that they had understood or expressed the literal meaning of the different stories that the movies presented. Later, in a roundtable meeting, students were discussing and presenting their opinions about the movies linking what they saw with their realities. Subsequently, they wrote to express their insights. Those reflections allowed them to follow an inquiry process where they were discovering who they were and what they needed to tackle their problems with in order to gain new understandings about how to face their difficult situations. They also wrote about what steps they had thought of to overcome their current problematic life situations. To write their paragraphs about the connections between their life stories and the movies chosen, students developed their writing using a guide question:

For the first paragraph, after watching *Freedom Writers*, the question posed was Do you feel an identity with what happens in the movie? Why or why not? / What are some of the difficulties of balancing your academic life with your personal life?

After watching *Butterfly Circus*, the question posed was: What difficulties do you have achieving your dreams? How can you overcome those difficulties? Who or what can help you? Then students wrote their paragraphs trying to respond to the questions, keeping in mind what they had done in the previous activities: organize the scenes of the movie, describe some characters using one adjective, draw what caught your attention and write a sentence from the movie for each drawing and the round table discussions about the movies.

This video teaches me that we are all different. We all have problems and we all have incredible potential to explore. Despite problems we must never give up. We must not stop fighting for our dreams. I have to achieve my dreams no matter what. Others may think or say whatever. We must show that the problem is not a problem; we have to find a solution for failing to reach our happiness. We just have faith and believe in ourselves.

Data source: students' artifacts, 3rd March, 2016

I identify my life with the film, because I lived in a neighborhood where you see the gangs. I am not because these things: substance abuse, gangs, continuing deaths, relatives in jail, absence of my parents, are not present in my life. But at school my classmates tell me about the problems they have, and they say I'm lucky to have a good life with a family that loves me. I'm a good student and I and my sister are the concept pride of my parents. I think I have no difficulty with academic life, I like to study but I do not like to go to school because it is difficult to find people like me with normal problems. in my personal life I am happy I love having good times with my family and I love every one of them, I feel happy-law go out with them I like to talk to them and share with them. In my concept my life has many difficulties. But I feel I have the best life that God can give me.

Data source: students' artifacts, life stories 22nd February and 25th February, 2016

Cycle 3. Showing my new perceptions:

As presented in Appendix 2, I connected what learners were doing in other subjects with this pedagogical intervention. So, in the Spanish class they were working on how to make videos, following the three stages of pre-production (planning), production (recording) and post production (editing). Then, students showed in a video their

understandings about their reflections on their life stories, taking into account the whole process of watching and reflecting on their personal experiences and ways to overcome difficult situations. It implied the organization of their artifacts, checking the events related to the conflicts of the characters such as violence, loneliness, dysfunctional families, and death of their parents. Sharing the videos, they had the opportunity to show their classmates the way they would be able to overcome their difficult life conditions and to see the process of reading movies critically to defend their opinions about their personal experiences or to tackle them with a new viewpoint and action that allowed having better life conditions.

Students wrote a paragraph as a kind of script telling of their new understandings about themselves and what they thought about the pedagogical intervention. After that, they tried to memorize the paragraph to record the presentation in a video.

I like the videos because they call to my mind memories of past experiences and making me proud of myself. To remember how I was and what I did before. I have grown and I have to achieve some of my dreams. This class shows us how to fight and achieve what we want without forgetting who we really are. I must never give up, I must not stop fighting; you have to achieve our dreams no matter what. I need to believe in myself.

Session 12, 3rd March, 2016. 110 minutes. Writing process.

To do that I had to explain to them the idea of presenting their last writing in a video; for me it was the proper ending since it joined the theory with the daily learning that teaching pedagogy practices. This time they not only watched and interpreted videos but also, they made one to make others understand them, connecting visual literacy with the language component and their life stories. Moreover, they asked me if they could draw their life stories and present these drawings in the video (Figure 4). Obviously, they were the owners of the way that they wanted to present their final work so it was a possibility to use the tools that they required and desired.

To conclude this chapter, I have to highlight the principal components of this innovative pedagogical intervention: reading images as a way to develop understandings about their reality, critical reading to reflect on their current situation and use personal experiences as tools to engage learners in the language learning process. The following chapter is a description of the findings that emerged from the collection of data through writing reflections and discussions in round table meetings that were analyzed to understand what the tenth graders' life stories reveal about the development of critical literacy in an EFL classroom.

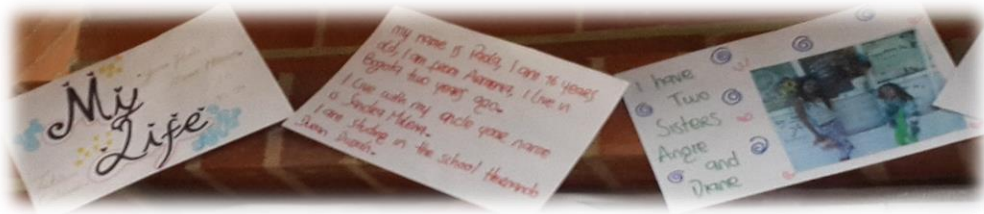


Figure 4. Artifact student's life story.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

In preceding chapters I presented the theoretical, pedagogical and methodological foundations which were designed to describe and analyze what tenth graders' written life stories as a critical literacy practice reveal about learners' emancipatory dimension in an EFL class as they were influenced by visual texts. Subsequently, the current chapter illustrates and presents the data and the interpretation of the data that emerged from the triangulation of students' artifacts and teacher's field notes, aiming at answering the research question.

As I mentioned in chapter four, students had the opportunity to see two song videos, *Story of My Life* and *Telling Stories*, the movie *Freedom Writers*, the short film *Butterfly Circus* and their own artifacts to establish relations between them and their personal life problems. The goal was that students watch the videos and their artifacts to share orally their opinions about the problems of the characters in those materials. I took notes of students' opinions in the field notes format every single class. Later, students wrote their personal reflections about the life problems (family, socioeconomic and academic) portrayed in those visual materials and their own lives. Both students' personal opinions and written reflections constituted the main data that I analyzed to answer the research question. In this way, it was possible to see how critical reflection emerged when they were exposed to visual literacy and had the opportunity to correlate the content of visual literacy material with their personal stories.

Procedure

It is important to explain that once I had taken the field notes and had collected students' artifacts during the pedagogical intervention, I uploaded the information that the data collections instruments contained to Atlas.ti. It is a software or computer program that helps researchers to organize data systematically, to analyze unstructured data carefully, and to look for commonalities in the data that help to answer the research question. The program leads to identify common categories that emerge from the data to subsequently name or label them with several codes.

Once having the data systematized in Atlas.ti, I started the data analysis, following Corbin and Strauss's Grounded Theory (1990). As the Grounded Approach suggests, I analyzed the data, following three levels of analysis called open, axial, and selective coding (Corbin & Straus, 1990). Following the principles of GT, I analyzed the data line by line to break down, label, examine, compare, conceptualize and categorize the information gathered to build theory. GT allows the researchers to break down the data to conceptualize them. Afterward, all information is put back together in new ways. So, the researcher has the opportunity not only to analyze data but also to create theory from the information collected during the research process. For this study, the procedures of Grounded Theory consisted of interpreting the relations between visual critical literacy and students' life stories.

The first level of analysis, microanalysis, consisted of reading line by line and watching the data closely. As suggested by Charmaz (2006), during the initial coding phase the researcher studies "fragments of data- words, lines, segments and incidents -closely for their analytic import" (p. 44). Then I started to name data with the initial codes which nurture the analysis of the data, always keeping in mind the research question. Therefore,

the initial coding phase opens the way to go beyond and to start with the focused coding phase, where the researcher compares data with data and codes in order to test codes and choose the ones which better portray the meaning and actions that emerged from the data.

As Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim, data gathering and data analysis are simultaneous processes. Therefore, in the open coding, I started to read the data simultaneously in both research instruments—the field notes and the artifacts—because I took field notes of the round table discussions and asked students to write their life stories (artifacts). Hence, as a researcher I considered that it was appropriate to analyze the data immediately as I was collecting them day by day. At this stage, I read the data several times line by line. Then, I started to pay attention as Glaser (as cited by Charmaz, 2006) states to more selective and descriptive data and directed some conceptual codes which describe more than lines or words from the data. Charmaz (2006) stated that “Focused coding means using the most significant codes in larger amounts of data” (p. 58) and started to name sentences that reflected the participants’ ideas and opinions that helped me answer the research question.

Figures 3 and 4 display the process of naming the data with codes using Atlas.ti. The first image on the left side shows some of the artifacts e.g. the personal T-shirts that students worked in the initial cycle to speak about themselves; and on the other side there are codes that emerged from the open coding stage. In the other image, on the right side there are the interventions that students made during the round table discussion after watching the movie *Freedom Writers*. And on the right side, one more time there is the evidence about how the open coding took place.

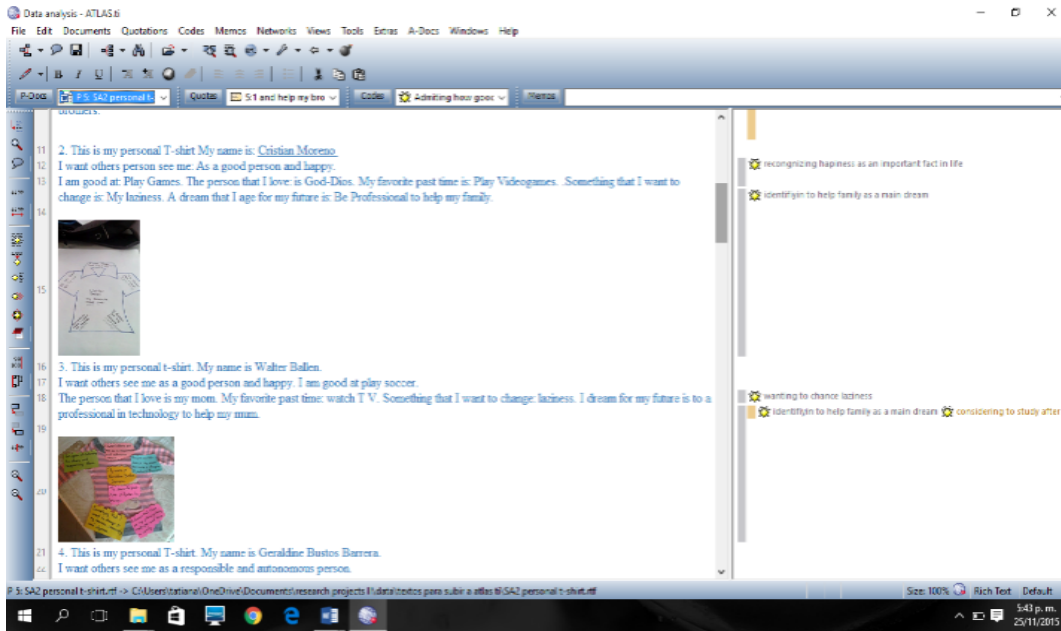


Figure 5. Atlas.ti coding stage student artifact personal T-shirts

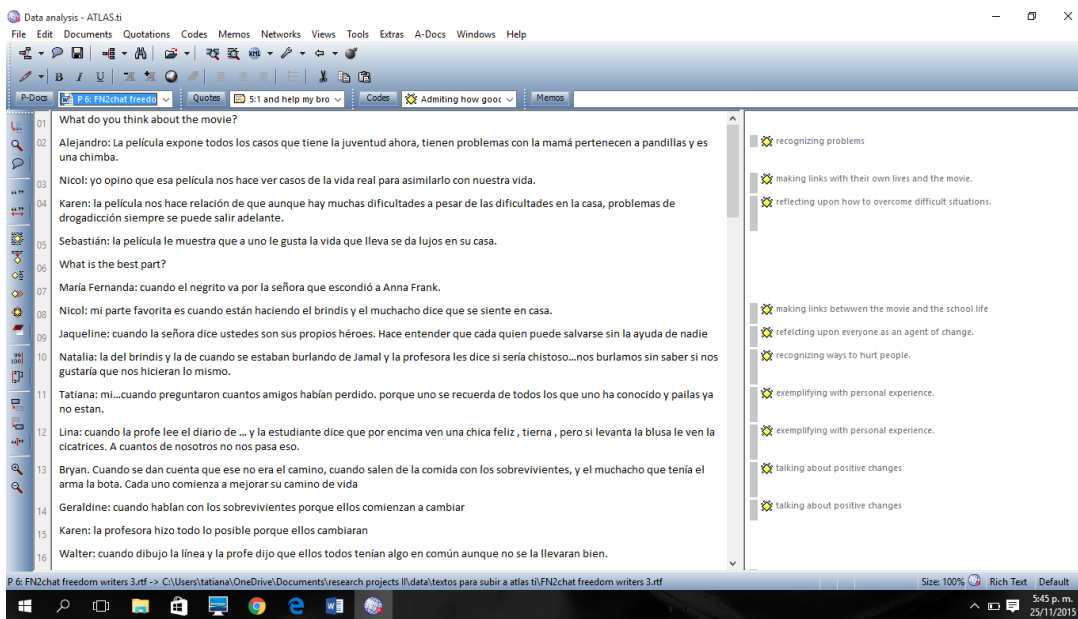


Figure 6. Atlas.ti coding stage round table discussion

It is important to reiterate that the process of gathering and analyzing data was simultaneous. This fact allowed me to be more aware of the codes that better explained the

process of coding the data in the “Overcoming a difficult experience” and “Showing my new perceptions” cycles two and three. It is significant to mention that while the first cycle, “Recognizing my story, strengths, and areas of improvement” was being coded the second cycle was taking place. In other words, at the same time I found myself coding the first cycle and gathering the data with the implementation of the second cycle. By the end of the pedagogical intervention, I had uploaded all data gathered to Atals.ti. Subsequently, as soon as I finished the process of gathering data I had forty-eight (48) codes which needed to be fractured to nurture the research process with more focused codes. So, in this phase I started to look for commonalities between codes by grouping them.

Those codes were the result of a process of saturation through picking out words that were significant to name what students were saying and writing. This process was a systematic description of what data showed concerning what tenth graders’ life stories revealed (and reveal) about the development of critical literacy in an EFL classroom. Thus, I made a list of the codes taking into account the research question and connecting those codes several times with data.

After the process of naming the data to saturate the analysis with many general codes, which described what students expressed in personal their stories, I started making comparisons between the instruments, field notes and students’ artifacts, paying attention to the repetitive codes found in the two instruments. After not having found more variations, I was able to stop the coding process and to continue making comparisons in order to group the codes.

To conceptualize the codes that portray the data, I started to read and compare them. After this comparison process I wrote notes that allowed me to see the connections among the codes and group them. Afterward, I found the links which validated concepts that

explained what tenth graders' life stories revealed (and reveal) about the development of critical literacy in an EFL classroom.

As Freeman (1998) states one should do, I started with naming and then to group, finding patterns and displaying. The patterns that the process of grouping generated were four preliminary patterns that appeared constantly when students expressed their ideas in both an oral and written way. To give a concrete example, the following figure represents the group of codes that were related with the reflections that students did about their futures, giving issues to build a group of a preliminary pattern: Unveiling a positive attitude towards life (see figure 5).

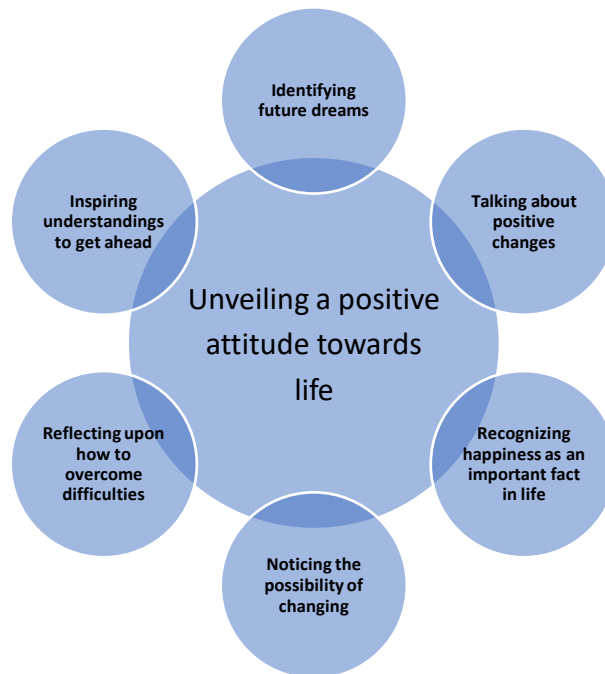


Figure 7. Display Second Preliminary pattern and related codes

After a continuous process of interaction between the data, codes and the preliminary groups which grouped the codes according to the patterns encountered, I started the process of refining the patterns: reconstructing my life story from the other,

valuing the role of the other in the construction of the self, confronting injustice and oppression in a life story and unveiling a positive attitude towards life; then, the main category appeared. It is necessary to reiterate that the category came up through the comparison of codes, the preliminary patterns mentioned previously and deep readings of the data collected.

Then, after having broken down and named the data, the next stage was axial coding which consisted of “bringing data back together again in a coherent whole” (Strauss & Corbin as cited by Charmaz, 2010, p. 60). Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that in this phase the researcher starts to answer questions like why, where, who, when, what and which that help to describe the phenomena observed. Axial coding is the process to turn the data gathered into concepts. Here the core categories can start emerging because as Strauss and Corbin (cited in Charmaz, 2010) argue, the categories appear during the conceptual stage.

After interconnecting the four preliminary groups of patterns through the comparison of codes and categories, the construction of the groups of codes, and the fact I had to name these families of codes, finding the characteristics of the categories, I came up with one category that explained what the tenth graders’ life stories reveal about the development of Critical Literacy in an EFL classroom: Using critical literacy to create a self-liberating process.

When I reflected upon this category, I realized that it was appropriate to name the data of the research proposal, since they described what students wrote and told. I discovered that using visual critical literacy to create a self-liberating process had more common characteristics which might be grouped. Firmly, it grouped and elucidated the preliminary patterns because it explained perfectly what happened while students reflected

on their life stories using critical literacy to read critically their personal contexts. After narrowing codes, Straus and Corbin claim that a closer look at the categories allow the researcher to refine them; this stage is selective coding. In this phase, as the name suggests, through a revision of the connections presented in the categories, the researcher can select and clarify them to generate a detailed descriptive category that explains in detail the phenomena observed (see table 1). Then, for the present study, what worked was to find preliminary patterns which later helped me to describe one main category that portrayed perfectly what learners expressed during the implementation of the pedagogical intervention.

Table 2 Research Question and Category

Research Question	Category
What do tenth graders' written life stories as a critical literacy practice reveal about learners' emancipatory dimension in an EFL class?	Using Critical Literacy practices to create a self-liberating process.

Using critical literacy practices to create a self-liberating process

Self-liberating process refers to an emancipatory purpose where people open their minds to real life to change oppressive conditions. Explicitly, data showed how students started to made an intellectual effort of reading their life conditions and not accepting them without reflection (Cassany and Castellà 2011). Then, learners were immersed in a Critical

Literacy process where they created a critical and liberating dialogue that helped them to begin their struggle for liberation (Freire, 1970, p. 66). The use of life stories unveiled how Critical Literacy practices permitted students to reflect on their problematic situations, facing them with a different point of view and action.

Additionally, learners used the language to recreate a social construction of the self (Shor, 1999). In other words, my students started a catharsis process that allowed them to rebuild their hard situations for getting new understanding about possibilities in their future. The liberating process was framed by the three features that the following figure displays: reconstructing my life stories from the other; confronting injustice and oppression in my life story and unveiling a positive attitude towards life. (See figure 8)

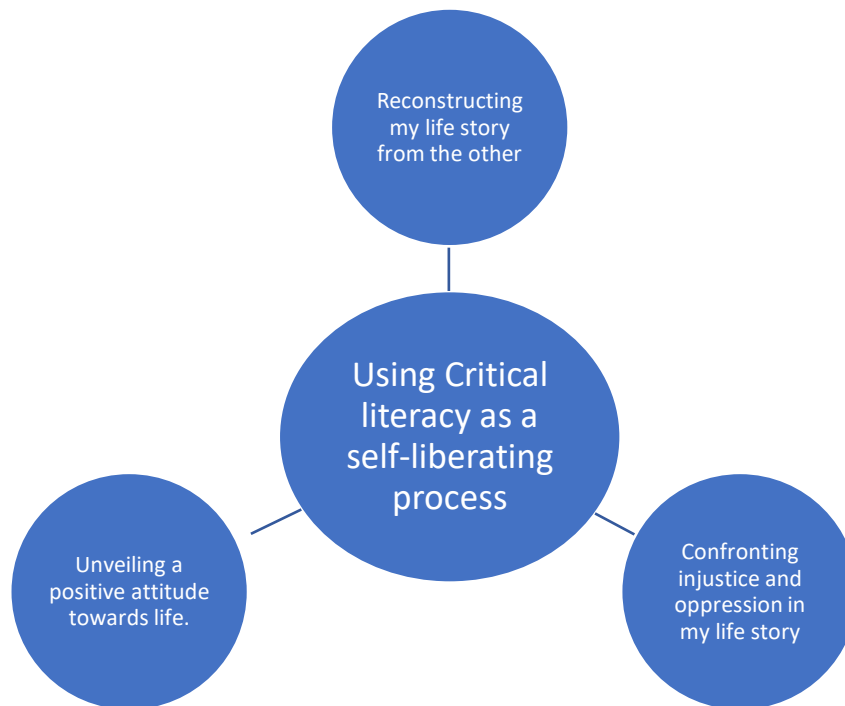


Figure 8. Category and Features

According to data analysis, using Critical Literacy practices to create a self-liberating process helps with keeping a strong relation with the vision of language that this study embraced because, when students were writing or speaking and editing their paragraphs they felt the need to ask for English expressions and vocabulary that helped them to express their ideas in the foreign language. In other words, students started to be aware of the use of language not as an object but as a vehicle to express who they were. The process of writing or speaking about their personal experiences helped students to go beyond the structures of the language because, as Fitzgibbon and Hughes (1998) state, stories make up a part of ourselves and by telling our own story we can get value to live and validate our existence and the process of learning, in this case, the process of acquiring a foreign language.

The first feature that framed the category was *reconstructing my life story from the other*. This was the result of analyzing how learners used visual literacy as a bridge to make reflections about their own lives. According to data analysis, it was observed that students made connections between their own personal stories and the events and actions that they saw in the visual materials. Hence, by making comparisons and reflecting on visual images such as the deaths of some characters, discrimination, drug abuse, violence, hope, family problems, and gangs, among others, they felt an identity with other classmates and with characters in the videos and the movies.

I am identified with the film because these things happened in my neighborhood, relatives in jail, absence and affection of my parents, are present in my life, and at school my classmates. They tell me about the problems, they have with their parents. Like Marcus or Eva, we have difficulties.

Student artifact, Oscar: life story entry, 25th February, 2016

The connections established between the visual materials and their life stories were the result of having applied Pailliotet's (1993) model of Deep Viewing, which suggests that students read images for catching literal understanding and later make interpretations related to their own life experiences.

Reconstructing my life story from the other came from the interactions between students, movies and their classmates because they started to talk about their families and others' viewing experiences making associations among films and their own family life stories. They also shared their own stories and could listen to their peers feeling that they talked about commonalities and differences between them and their personal experiences and family stories. This feature illustrates the conditions under which students used visual literacy as a bridge to reveal in a critical way their family and personal relationships and their family stories. The visual component allowed students to remember and tell others difficult life experiences, because they were able to identify similar stories in the videos, movies and their classmates' experiences by watching, reflecting, speaking and writing; thus, students had the opportunity to enrich their understandings about life through comparing their experiences with others' personal stories. At the same time, they gave their personal opinions making critical reflections about what they were sharing in class.

Students' analysis of these images as presented in their oral interactions and their writings showed their critical level of visual literacy because they watched the movie and understood the events that took place in the story but at the same time students as Gibson (1989) claim learners catch the literal meaning of the movie and give their own personal reading because the meaning of the text depends on the text itself and the context where the text is read. Hence, students did an internal process of making literal meaning without forgetting their backgrounds.

In fact, when students were expressing their personal opinions about this movie in the step “Inferences, assumptions, and evaluations” (Pailliotet, 1993) they critically said that they felt an identity with some episodes of the movie because they were able to compare personal life experiences with experiences that the characters had to face in the story. Students argued that the scene in *Freedom Writers* in which a teacher yells at one student and ridicules him, called students’ attention because they identified some habits that they had in their relationships with classmates and teachers. They criticized that this was a way to call attention and tell the other who was the owner of the class.

Margarita: Un ejemplo es cuando la profe llegó. Recuerdo bien porque yo fui una de las que volteé la mesa. Yo no quería que vinieran a reemplazar a la profe Solange, y cuando nos dijo que no nos burláramos de lo que está diciendo Oscar y yo le dije que ella no era quien pa (sic) venir a decir que me podía reír y de que no. Uy cuando yo vi esa escena la verdad me dio como vergüenza pensar en lo que hicimos ese día.

Data source: Field notes, 15th February, 2016

Here, Margarita showed the possibility to connect the language process with the students’ scenarios, making the classroom have a societal context in which learning is taking place and understanding that reading and writing are political acts in terms of roles and relationships that happen daily in the language learning practices, inside and outside the classroom (Pennycook, 2001). This excerpt demonstrated how they became aware of the fundamental role that they play in the teaching- learning process.

Also, learners’ capacity to make meaning of the visual material, the movie scenes, and the actions helped them to establish critical connections to their own life-stories in a written form, as they were asked to reflect about their lives on paper once they had finished class discussion at the end of the Deep Viewing process. The following sample of a student’s reflection on his personal life marked by violence and pain, an entry he wrote

right after watching the movie *Freedom Writers* shows how a student could re-build her/his difficult life events by comparing himself with movies characters:

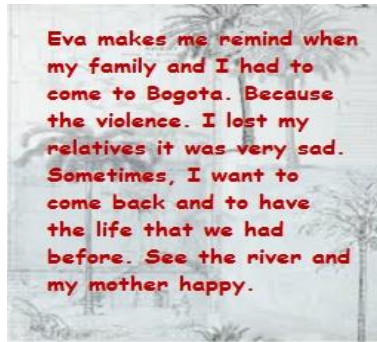


Figure 9 Jairo: Student artifact, life story entry, 25th February, 2016

Jairo's capacity to make interpretations of visual material took place when he was able to develop critical visual literacy as he mentioned that the life of the character Eva in the movie made him remember why his own family was suddenly displaced when they had to run away from their hometown due to the violence imposed by the guerrilla in the countryside. When he said, "Eva makes me remind" he showed a violent moment in the movie that compared with one that had impacted his life, specifically when Eva Benites explained why she and her family did not live in Mexico and how they had to learn to survive in the U.S.A. despite the intolerance and xenophobia. This film evoked a hard experience, led the student expressed the regrets that he had for not having said to the person he lost how much he loved him. Through writing he could tell somebody about this hard event and describe how he felt.

This participant expressed his feeling of sadness for having lost some members of the family. Through his memories, this learner reflected through vivid personal images of his past life how his family was a victim of violence and abuse, and his words show his desire of seeing his mother happy and living again in the countryside. This personal reflection indicates how the preparation during the three steps involved in the Deep Viewing model, proposed by Pailliotet, helped learners to established connections between visual materials and their own life stories. After all, those materials were the tools that made students reflect on their own context and reality (Gee, 2003).

The following is another example that shows how *Pablo* established connections to the movie *Freedom Writers*. The student made connections between the violence in his neighborhood and in the setting of the movie: Long Beach, California. He reconstructed his living context and the hardest experience in his life from the movie's setting:

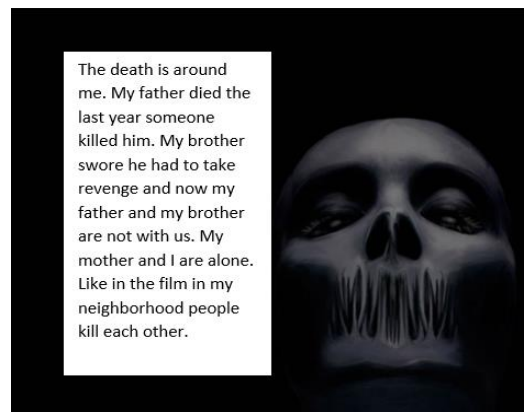


Figure 10. Pablo: Student artifact, life story entry, 25th February, 2016

Pablo was a very complicated student who used to be aggressive and rude with teachers and students. In the previous excerpt, Pablo started to use language as a mediator to express his memories. (Roger, 2002) Instead of showing his discontent by being

belligerent with his peers and teachers, he expressed the loss of beloved relatives and showed his personal experiences in his own words, going beyond the structures of the language and turning himself into a story teller who framed his reflections into a specific political and historical setting which had been impacting on his current situation. (Grbich, 2004) Through the reconstructions of his life story, as Fitzgibbon and Hughes states, Pablo started to tell his own story in order to make his classmates and teacher understand that he had a story that had shaped his behavior and at the same time was changing the role that he had played in the classroom. He got the courage and opportunity to validate his existence inside the classroom.

Carlos wrote another life story which exemplifies how writing life stories made students establish connections to the short movie “*Butterfly Circus*” in order to reconstruct their life stories. Research Cycle 2 Overcoming a difficulty is the following:

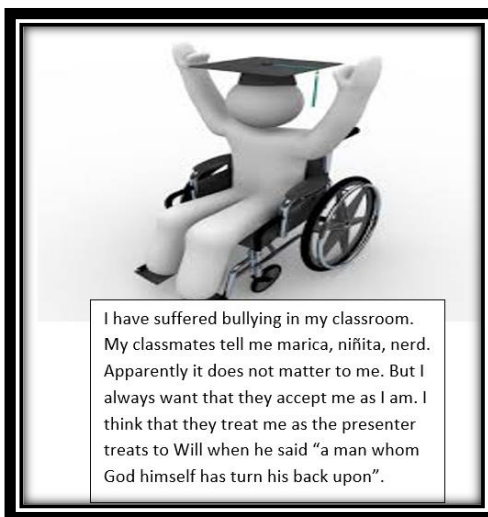


Figure 11 Carlos' life story entry, 25th February, 2016

This sample indicates how Carlos reconstructed his life experiences through the comparison of other living stories, getting a level of awareness by putting oneself in someone else's shoes. Then, critical literacy practices made student reflected on their positions in the world, understanding their own realities to empower themselves (Freire and Macedo, 1987) in order to see different possibilities to overcome what he called bullying. As such, when learners read their life stories, he would reflect on their situation of oppression and then make decisions to transform it. (Freire, 1998) Accordingly, the data, as Turbayne (1970) argues when visual literacy is embraced, helps students to develop speaking and writing because learners can be motivated to speak and write about the topics, categories, conflicts, and messages that are taken through such visual means and those topics are connected with the personal context. That is to say, that the visual component engaged learners to think critically about their life stories.

Common characteristics of the students' writings and class participation emerged. First, was when students shared their personal experiences or when they listened carefully to others, because, while they were making connections between what happened in class and their personal life stories, they demonstrated through their written reflections or class participation that they recognized themselves in others' voices. Hence, after this recognition they showed, mentioned, compared and connected their own personal experiences with other experiences in their reflections as in the sample below that shows that while students wrote, they made comparisons between the characters, their classmates and their own life stories.

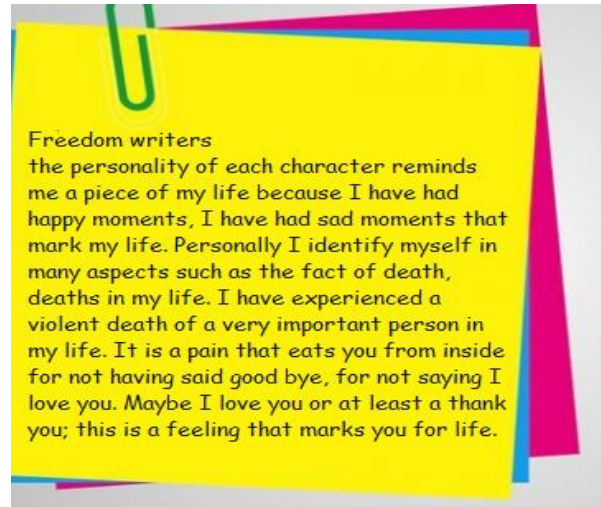


Figure 12 Data source: Milena, students' artifacts, 22nd February, 2016

Also, students recognized the others' struggles and were aware of the negative attitudes that they sometimes had towards their classmates.

“this happens in our class, the fight between la chinita y Eva. Nosotros juzgamos a nuestros compañeros por cómo se visten o se comportan. A veces hasta nos creemos los más. Pero que pasa, que no los conocemos, que simplemente somos crueles sin saber que mal padece el otro en su casa, en su barrio”.

Data source: Carla, field notes, 18th February, 2016

The previous excerpts demonstrate how students developed a sense of sensitivity towards the reality around them proving that “language has the power to shape our consciousness; and it does so for each human child, by providing the theory that he or she uses to interpret and manipulate their environment” (Halliday, 1993, p. 107) which they understood from the life stories that they shared in the English class. The process of comparing their life stories aroused critical awareness not only about their own life stories but also about their peers' stories. All in all, as Fitzgibbon and Hughes (1998) state, this feature confirmed that stories make up a part of us and by telling our life stories we value

and validate our existence. However, at the same time, this characteristic adds another important component; we validate and value the existence of others. That is to say, that the relation we had with the others took on significant relevance.

Talking about their own and others' families was an important process, since it gave them the opportunity of developing a deeper understanding about themselves as individuals. Recognizing influence and value of their family life in the construction of the self, they could make sense of the world and their relationships with it.

Students shared different kinds of family conditions, values, problems, dreams and hard family experiences. First, the ones who had both parents living with them talked about the advantages they had had in achieving their goals if they compared their life situations with others, who did not live with their parents because they had abandoned them, their parents were divorced or because they had died as shown below:

I lived with my mother, my father and my little brother. I had a good life and my parents support me. I think that I have an advantage because I am with my family. I will go to the university. This is my family dream. I will be the first who finishes the high school.

Data source: Juan, students' artifacts, *4th April, 2016*

As expressed in the above example, this student counted on the support of his family and Juan thought that he had an advantage over students who lacked the care of a family. He reflected on the importance of family values and how the values that the family shares helped him to gain self-esteem and make good choices for his future life.

On the contrary, the ones who had suffered because one of their parents had died, re-evaluated what they were doing to get ahead seeing that they had more family members. Although death had taken away one important family member, they had to continue fighting as a family:

My brother and my father are not here. I can't see them again. I have to help my mother and my sister. I have to stop to get into troubles I needed to change to be the support of my family.

Data source: Pablo, students' artifacts *14th March, 2016*

They also recognized the difficulties that their single mothers had to face to survive without the support of their husbands. Going beyond, they recognized the importance of women in their communities because they are often the ones who have the strength to get ahead and at the same time be fathers and mothers as depicted in the following field notes excerpt:

ay! profe aquí pasa como con los muchachos de la peli, la mayoría de nuestros papás no sirvieron pa nada. Nuestras mamás son las que luchan por nosotros, yo por lo menos vine a conocer a mi papá hace dos años y aún no se pa que. Mi mamá es la dura, ella trabaja duro, mi cuchita ha sido nuestra mamá y nuestro papá.

Data source: Mary, field notes, 18th February, 2016

Mary recognized that many mothers play significant and different roles in their lives. They do what they have to in order to find strategies to face particular family situations and to make life better for their children. Although they recognized their mothers as brave women, they also expressed the wrong decisions that some of them made when they chose a partner and how those choices had affected them. Here, students reflected on social issues and institutions in the following and previous evidence; they were particularly capable to reflect on dysfunctional families as an institution that had affected them

demonstrating that the structure and norms of the family were not experienced by all members of their context (Coffey, 2008) as they evidenced through student participation regarding discussions on their families:

Lo que dice “XXX” es cierto, profe los hombres son muy irresponsables. Mire mi mamita acaba de fallecer, ella tenía un marido que no nos quería, pero sin embargo ella tuvo una beba con él. Y ahora que ese señor sabe nuestra situación le vale la misma mierda, manda mensual un tarro de leche y una paca de pañales y yo tengo que responder por el resto. A él no le importa cómo estamos, bueno que no le importemos nosotros, pero ¿la hija de él? Es que uno debe fijarse con quién se mete definitivamente.

Data source: Mariana, field notes, 18th February, 2016

Positively, the process of re-evaluating the importance of the family helped them to develop critical literacy in the EFL class. Hence, it was a significant aspect that “integrate(s) knowledge systems and song systems that are regarded as perspectives from which the learner can analyze the world” (Pineda, 2001). Learners reflected on the importance of their family relationships while they were using English.

Valuing the role of the other in the construction of the self represents the value that they gave to different kinds of support in relation to some family ties to face different hard problematic situations (socioeconomic, family and academic) and the fact of listening to others (friends and classmates) helped them to understand themselves and the others gaining awareness of the fight for liberation; as Freire (1970) states, understanding “true knowledge, true learning and true love.” (p.64)

Another important feature found in the category is *Confronting Injustice and Oppression in My Life Story*. This characteristic shows hardship and the opportunity to

confront injustice and oppression recognizing one's own and others' framed problematic situations at home like economic, drugs, violence, child abuse, lack of affection, lack of family support, and lack of fathers' support. Students told about what hurt them and the negative feelings that those actions had brought to their lives. However, by means of sharing their hardships, they had the opportunity to confront themselves and this process offered a collective catharsis which allowed them to think that they were in charge of stopping or preventing suffering. Here, they recognized the power of the relationships with which they had dealt.

As Freire (1983) states, teaching reading and writing takes into account learners' actual language level, anxieties, dreams, fears, needs (social or economic), and the oppressive problems of people who are learning at schools in our contemporary world. While the pedagogical intervention was developing, students had the opportunity to confront themselves with their most difficult life experiences. In the round table discussions, they told about their problems and stated their viewpoints about how those had affected them. Students shared what they had learnt from those experiences and stated their viewpoints using the EFL class to express what mattered to them.

These features embraced the first one e.g. how students recognized themselves through others using the visual material (the videos and the movies) and others' life stories which motivated students to speak and write about hard moments related to violence, abuse, and exploitation in their lives and sharing similar experiences with their classmates, understanding that many of them had a story to tell. By confronting themselves students gained awareness for situations of oppression and injustice in their lives for starting a liberating process as the following extracts of life stories depicted:

El dolor de no ser aceptada lo he sentido en mi propia casa. Mi papá me trata re-mal, me dice muévase malparida, quien sabe con quién andaba esta vagabunda. Él me trata con mucha grosería y mi mamá no hace nada. La verdad yo espero ser una mujer menos sumisa que mi mamá, eso no sirve. Pero si toca que me comience a ir bien en el colegio y salir adelante, esa es la única.

I have felt the pain of not being accepted at home. My dad hurt me. He says: move bastard, who knows who this bum was hanging with. He treats me bad and my mother doesn't do anything. The true is that I hope to be a less docile woman than my mother. That doesn't work. However, I have to start doing my best at school

Data source: Marcela, field notes, 18th February, 2016

I am a victim of violence. But at that moment I am working and studying to get success in my life.

Data source: Betty, students' artifacts 29th February, 2016

In the above excerpts, those students recognized the value of what they were doing in their present lives, how work and study are doors to open opportunities that help them improve on their problems. At the same time, they were talking about people who had made them suffer but being aware that they were the ones who had to make the decisions to turn suffering into joy.

As Freire (1973) states, if the individual reflects on society he or she [will have] opportunities to change it. By confronting injustice and oppression in their life stories, students realized what kind of limitations they had to get their dreams or to change their current situations. One student pointed out that she would be able to achieve her dreams despite the damage that her father had caused.

I hate my father, but now I have to continue I don't allow him hurt me again I can get my dreams.

Data source; Betty, student artifact, 4th April, 2016

Yo perdí a mi mamita muy niña. Todo porque ella no supo elegir. Yo por no tenerla he sufrido muchas cosas. Pero eso es lo que me tiene que dar más fuerzas para salir adelante. Si yo no lo hago nadie lo

va hacer por mí. Ella escogió su asesino el que me dejó sin mamá, pero ellos dos no podrán escoger lo que yo seré y lo que hago día a día para salir adelante.

I lost my mother since I was a little child because she did not make choices. I have suffered a lot because she is not with me. But I need to be strong because I need to get ahead by myself. She chose her killer the one who led me without my mother, but they cannot choose what I will be and what I am doing day by day to get ahead.

Data source: Linda, field notes, 29th February, 2016

Some students blamed adults or family members for their pain. However, after doing some activities of the pedagogical intervention, they reflected on how those cruel experiences had driven their lives. They felt sorry for themselves but they started to become aware of their right to have dreams and make plans for their future lives despite the problems and those people. According to Rogers (2014), using critical literacy practices in the classroom addresses students' needs of different levels to engage them in the use of literacy as a meaningful tool that empowers learners to read critically their own world. Additionally, visual material as a critical literacy practice encouraged students to tell their truly personal agonizing memories. They told about their problematic situations: family, socioeconomic and academic problems.

The writing and speaking stages were more than correcting grammar mistakes. Definitely, it was a self-liberating process since students wanted to write and speak in a way that I could be understood what they needed to express through written and oral life stories. Using Critical Literacy practices, my students liberated their suffering through writing and speaking about concerns which had been difficult to discover in the regular English class. Thus, by means of their writings and oral interactions they let me know of

their sexual harassment, rapes, drug abuse, and violent deaths, among other problematic situations. To illustrate those problems students wrote and told about difficult personal experiences like the one expressed below:

I worked in Panatela. When my mum died, my boss offered me money to go to bed.

Data source: Daniela, students' artifacts 25th February, 2016

This student explained how people around her, after her mother's death due to a long illness of cancer, tried to take advantage of her loss. She complained about how people were cruel instead of helping her and her brothers. Before the pedagogical intervention took place, she wanted to drop out of school because she had a lot of housing problems. However, by the end of the pedagogical intervention she was aware of the importance to study to support her brothers without reliance on help from people like her boss.

Writings and oral interactions let me see the difficult socioeconomic and family situations that my students had to face. The following extract was the first time that this student told how she had become a victim of her own father:

I don't want to stay in my house. Nobody knows but my father raped me three months ago. It was the worst experience of my life. Some months ago, I just wanted to die. Now I am sad but I know that I have the right to denounce, I know that this is a way to yell the true.

Data source, Betty, students' artifacts 22nd February, 2016

This girl used language as a means to tell others what she called the worst experience of her life. Undeniably, she used writing as a self-liberating process. After having written this confession, what followed was a psychology and judicial process. In

this case, writing helped the student to tell her own story as honestly as possible because she wanted others to know it (Atkinson 1998, cited in Roberts, 2002).

Absolutely, students were able to express in their writings life facts that had shamed and hurt them. Writing their life stories in EFL class was an opportunity to write of events that were difficult to overcome and tell in a loud voice.

I woke up at Bronx and I did not remember ... My mother found me. This experience was terrible my mum suffered a lot. I did not tell my friends anything. Of course XXX knows because she was with me. But now she is not at school. I am the only one who knows. I feel sorry for myself.

Data source: Carla, students' artifacts, 3rd March, 2016

I arrived at home and my mum was hanged. My step father killed her.

Data source: Linda, students' artifacts, 3rd March, 2016

My father is a prisoner under house arrest nobody at school knows.

Data source: Mary, students' artifacts, 22nd February, 2016

By confronting themselves, students engaged in the writing process to express their personal and deep pains. Through their writings students told me the most difficult experiences that they had faced during their lives and did not want others to know. They told the events and the feelings that those experiences provoked. Additionally, they explained why feelings about the conflict remain so intense. The stories showed how interfamily violence, sexual abuse, the parents' lack of time, and drugs, among others, all result in feelings of rejection and of being under threat.

After all, this feature reaffirms the vision of language that this proposal embraced; language as a self-expression (Tudor, 2001) because students used language as a means of personal and affective expression and, also, learning goals were defined by what learners wished to express. Furthermore, through writing in English students expressed their deeper personal feelings without fear of judgment. Thus, the analysis of learners' writings confirm that the learning processes become meaningful for the learners plus the literacy practices in the classroom created an open door to read and write based on their own human realities. (Moll, 1999)

I live with my stepfather. Nobody knows but I hate him because he hits my mum.

Data source: Carolina, students' artifacts, 22nd February, 2016

Students referred to personal experiences of violence, abuse, and injustice and oppression as they had seen images related to violence and abuse in the visual material studied. Such was the case in the second cycle "Overcoming a difficult experience" when students watched the movie *Freedom Writers*. Students commented in class discussions during the steps "Inferences, assumptions, and evaluations" (Deep Viewing Modeling) that when they were making mental processes about the movie they watched, they had been impacted by images where people are put in jail, gang warfare, violent armed confrontation, people with greater power take unfair advantage of someone less powerful, etc. In addition, via watching this movie and reflecting on it, students developed critical visual literacy when they paid special attention to the characters in the story who were victims of violence and oppression such as the case of the characters as Eva Benites, Erin Gruwell, Jamal, Marcus and Ben as can be seen in the following pieces of data:

Cuando yo vi el pedazo donde Marcus le pide a la mamá que lo deje regresar a la casa. Sentí como si fuera yo, ustedes saben yo vivo solo, mi padrastro me echo de la casa, yo apenas tenía 7 años

Data source: Diego, field notes, 17th March 2016

Diego expressed what that an injustice had occurred to him when he said: *yo apenas tenia* [I was just...]. It is an expression that revealed how he felt about this specific moment when he was a child. It is supposed that children should have a happy childhood. Instead of that his stepfather kicked him out of the house when he was only seven. This student compared his experience with Marcus, one of the characters in *Freedom Writers* who had had to leave his house.

Another student disagreed with God, because she thought her mother' death was an unjust event in her life and that God was responsible for this.

Why god wanted to hurt me, she is not with me. (Referring to her mother's death)

Data source: Daniela, field notes, 17th March, 2016

Such a statement could be compared to Eva, another character in *Freedom Writers*, who questioned constantly the existence of God due to the difficulties that her family had to face daily.

They also talked about violence inside their homes because some members of the family hurt them. The following excerpt shows how some episodes of violence had affected their family dynamics:

My brother was crazy he hit my mon and me when he consumed. El vuelve a la pieza cada que quiere. Pero cuando él va yo deseo que se aburra rápido.

Data source: Milena, students' artifacts, 25th February, 2016

Some of them had suffered the experience of displacement, one more kind of violence that our children had to face, developing this intervention.

Ellos nos sacaron, solo quedamos mi mamá y mis hermanos el resto, pasábamos por encima de ellos, yo vi como los mataron.

Data source: Jairo, field notes, 25th February, 2016

This piece of data is from a student who came from La Macarena, Meta. He was in Bogotá because they did not have more options. He told about how the violence took away his loves ones and forced him to abandon his home. He also compared his life with Eva Benites' life, (one of the principal characters of *Freedom Writers*) because she was in the USA but her parents were from Mexico. They left their country behind because of the violence and the lack of opportunities.

Learners' interpretations of the images/scenes in the movie *Freedom Writers* also led them to relate such visual material to situations of violence and exploitation in their own lives. The girls especially told about how people with economic power over them manipulated the situation to ask for having sex, as one student pointed out in the following example:

My boss wanted to have sex with me. He knew I needed the job. Mi jefe es una mala persona él sabe que yo tengo que trabajar soy la mayor de mis hermanos y la única que respondía por nosotros ya no está. Entonces que dijo él yo le digo a esta vieja que le doy algo y ella inmediatamente me sigue la corriente. Entonces como soy pobre y él tiene algo de dinero puede comprarme.

Data source: Daniela, field notes, 25th February, 2016

Some students recognized the importance of rebuilding family relationships to get ahead, valuing the importance of living together to balance, love, help, and heal one another. Treating everyone equally, regardless of the differences between family members as mentioned in the feature; valuing the role of others in the constructions of the self. However, other students had to confront the pain of having a family that hurt them.

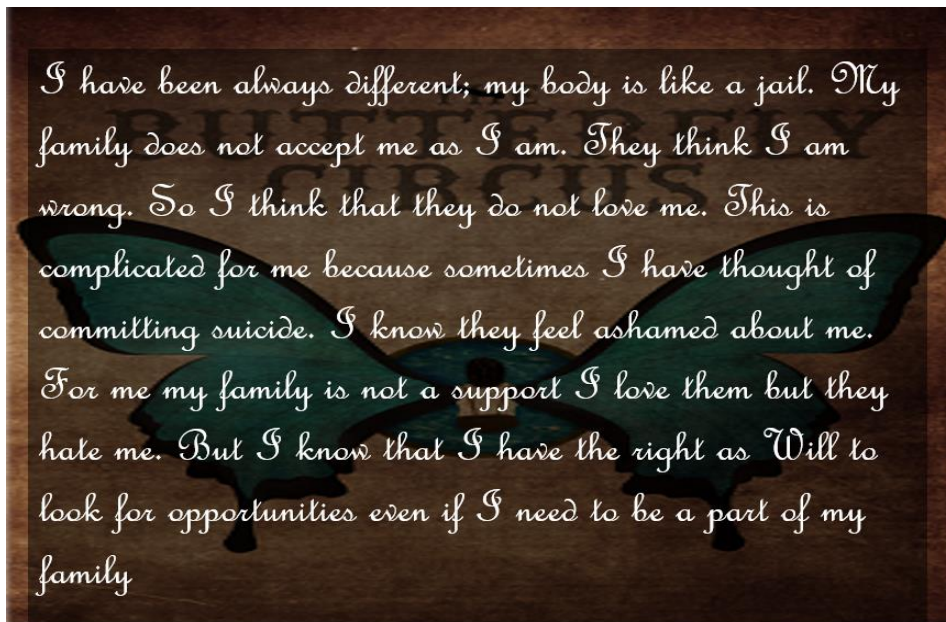


Figure 13 Data source, student artifact

In the above life story excerpt, they recognized the suffering that the family caused, and having the opportunity to think critically if they deserved to be judged by their relatives or if they deserved the chance to be loved. It was a way to question themselves about whether or not their family story had the right to define their entire lives or if they would change facts for favoring themselves.

Some students not only wrote those stories but also talked about these issues in the round table sessions to teach others how misery made up part of their life stories and to demonstrate that they felt strong connections with the characters who had suffered in the movie *Freedom Writers* and the short movie *Butter Fly Circus*.

By telling about those experiences students started digging inside themselves to recognize what hurt them in order to renovate it into critical reflections upon what was important or true for them. Thus, they started to use literacy practices as a means for expressing their knowledge and understandings through critical reflections about who they were.

By the use of life stories in the EFL class students *unveiled positive attitudes towards life because they* had the chance to mirror in on their living context in order to have opportunities to change their difficult life conditions, because after watching movies and sharing with their classmates, students had the opportunity to take into account the fact that everybody has problems but at the same time everyone is responsible for facing life, recognizing her/his strengths and weaknesses in order to design plans to overcome difficulties.

This feature attempted to describe how tenth graders reflected on their life problems from a critical literacy standpoint. The act of reflecting on their own life stories and comparing their lives with their classmates' lives provided a framework that helped students start, as Freire (1970) states, the fight of liberation. Then, students used the visual literacy component to remember, reflect and tell how they had to face injustice and oppression in their lives; they could see different personal stories as a mirage of themselves, as well. The use of visual literacy allowed them to start the process of

inquiring on the inside about ways to overcome their difficult current situations. They made inferences, assumptions, and evaluations. According to Pailliotte (1997), students evaluated how they apply what they have “naked” during the pedagogical intervention because they connected what they were with what they saw. So, they started to braid paths between literal and inferential levels in order to make explicit their ideas to realize that they gained new understandings about something that students thought they knew perfectly-- themselves.

Talking about how much they knew themselves, in sessions 2 and 3, Cycle 1, *Recognizing my story, strengths and areas of improvement*, students designed a personal T-shirt in order to inquire themselves about their dreams, important people for them, and their abilities and weaknesses to become aware of themselves. This was a difficult activity because they were not ready to talk about themselves, recognizing who they were. Many of them started the process after they saw their classmates doing their best to design their personal T-shirt and write the paragraph to explain the artifacts in front of the class.

Certainly, when they saw the first student presenting they were engaged in the activity and this fact made them want to present and show who they were. So, they had to reflect seriously about their dreams, abilities, bad qualities and important people in their lives. One of the most attractive reflections was when they thought about their future lives. They did not know what they wanted to do after graduating from high school. Learning from what they saw in others' presentations they started to reflect on their future lives. The following figure is an example of the visual tool that they elaborated and the other is the paragraph that they wrote to talk about their T-shirts in front of the class.



Figure 14. Data source, students' artifacts, 28th January, 2016

The personal T-shirt activity helped students to start the process of thinking about whom they were, what expectations they had and the things that they liked doing. However, as I mentioned before this activity was complicated for my students since they did not find it easy to tell about a dream they had for their future, a special moment for them, how they wanted other people to see them and things that they did well. This activity demonstrated the poor learners' capacity to make interpretations about themselves for they had difficulty recognizing their dreams and positive qualities. On the other hand, they did not have any difficulties mentioning their bad habits and misbehaviors; as one student pointed out:

Profe esta camiseta es más difícil de lo que parece. Uno se emociona todo porque vamos hacer una actividad manual, pero a la hora de responder que para que soy bueno, o que quiero ser, uno como que nunca piensa en eso. Um! En cambio, cuando me dicen que quiero cambiar de mí, ¡uy! tengo varias cositas que yo sé y todo el mundo me dice. Es que uno a la final como que ni se conoce y se deja es creer.

Data source: Carla, field notes, 28th January, 2016

Then, after the personal T-shirt activity students watched *Freedom Writers* and *Butterfly Circus* in the second cycle and reflected on their futures. Subsequently, they went through the process of making connections between what they saw and recognizing that there were more possibilities for their future lives.

One example of those reflections took place after seeing *Freedom Writers*, especially the segment of the movie where Ms Gruwell's students had a meal at the Marriot with three Holocaust survivors. So they started to think about making changes in their lives. Some of them threw their weapons down and began reading Anne Frank's diary.

Si xxx, esto es como pensar en que uno siempre esta es pensando en lo negative, (risas) en el problema que tuvo, pero no piensa en que sigue. Cuando los pelaos van a ese restaurante tan elegante y ven a esos viejitos ahí de pie después de todo lo que vivieron. A lo bien, esa peli lo hace a uno recordar, pero también pensar en si lo que uno quiere es seguir acá, como si esto fuera nuestra única opción. Por ejemplo, Pérez, todos sabemos que se fue a seguir con el oficio del papá y el hermano. Todo el mundo sabe quién es esa familia. Pero si de pronto él es el que decide y no deja que, porque su familia es así él también, podría cambiar y querer ser alguien en la vida.

Data source: Linda, field notes, 18th February, 2016

This student made meaning from what she had watched and lived. She invited her classmates to reflect on students' future lives. Those kinds of reflections demonstrated how students were visually critical in class discussion because students built interpretations not only from what they were watching but they also made links with real examples taken from their daily life experiences. After all, as Hall (1997, cited in Aiello, 2006) stated, the whole discursive formations had two important parts: the text itself and the context where the text is read. Students read song videos *Story of My Life* and *Telling Stories*, the movie, another movie, *Freedom Writers*, the short film *Butterfly Circus* and their own life stories which gave them the opportunity to re-create what they saw: As Freire (1970) states, being aware of oppression, unjust life conditions, and relations of power in order to re-create their social environments, giving themselves the chance to transform, improve and take an action to make a better world. The above sample is probably an opening to begin the process of re-creating what students watched in the movie with their life experiences and to reflect on making changes in their personal lives.

Another moment that made students start to ask themselves about their future lives was when they were reconstructing the *Butterfly Circus* story: *activity called what goes first?* They talked about the importance of thinking about what they wanted for their future lives. The next sample is about the scene in which Mr. Mendez said to Will: *The greater the struggle, the more glorious the triumph!*

S1: Vea esta escena es muy bacana porque aquí es cuando él lo pone a pensar en lo que realmente él es, puede y quiere. Que no porque tenga esa dificultad con su cuerpo es incapaz de pensar en cosas mejores.

S2: si y vea lo que traduce según Mr. Google, que entre más dura sea la batalla más glorioso será el triunfo. Es que enserio uno a veces no hace sino quéjese y quéjese, y como dice la profe no hace que las cosas pasen. Uno debe hacer que lo que uno quiere ocurra o por lo menos intentarlo.

S3: eso me decía la profe el año pasado que pareciera que yo me hubiera matriculado y el primer día me hubiera levantado diciendo: “bueno empecemos que vamos a ir con toda a perder el año”. Yo me reía, pero ahora lo pienso y tiene razón, uno es el que con lo que hace se busca un mejor o un peor futuro, o en ultimas se queda así, como que si las cosas se pueden bien o sino también.

S2: um! Mijo que chespirito como digo una cosa digo otra.

S1: no sea así que entendimos. Es que uno tiene que pensar que quiere y no esperar a que caiga del cielo hay que tener un plan.

Data source: field notes, 29th February, 2016

To exemplify another part of the pedagogical intervention that allowed students to reflect upon their future was when they had to write after watching the short movie

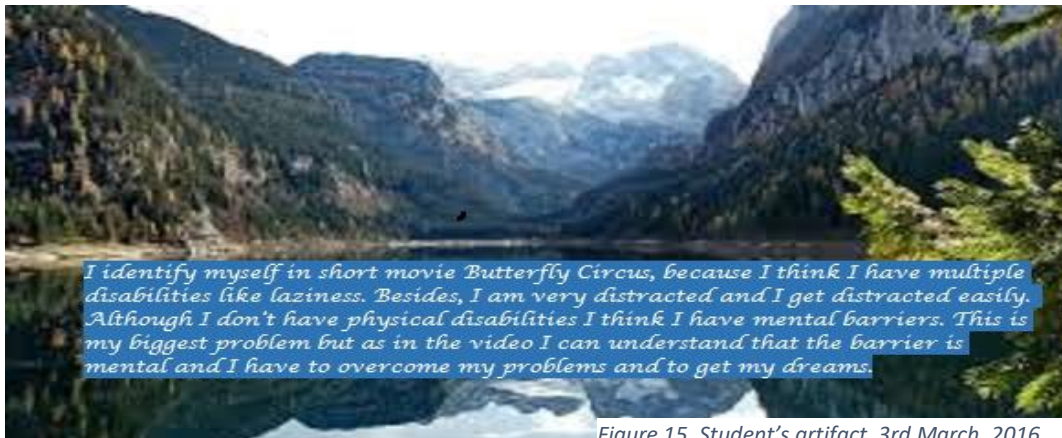


Figure 15. Student's artifact, 3rd March, 2016

Butterfly Circus.

At the end of the episode I posted a question: Do you have a little Will inside you? This was because the main character did not have limbs but his main limitation was his own perception of himself, because he was not able to see himself in a positive way. The

following student's written reflection let me see how a student read the short film feeling an identity himself with the story.

This student saw more than the limitations of a man without limbs. This student reflected upon their bad qualities understanding that these were negative barriers which blocked his achieving his dreams. Learners were connecting their life experiences with the videos, seeing in them a mirror image of their own story. Then, the students' written life stories were the evidence that working with visual and verbal materials at the same time cause learners to find stronger messages than when either is used alone (Braden ,1993, p.7) because students made sense in applying what they learned in class in ways that mattered to them.

Irrevocably for this qualitative research study, "a life story always brings order and meaning to the life being told, for both the teller and the listener. It is a way to understand the past and the present more fully and a way to leave a personal legacy for the future." (Atkinson, 1998, p. 126)

Conclusively, unveiling positive attitudes towards life confirms what Atkinson (1998) states; that the act of telling stories is a way to be aware of the past and present in order to leave a personal legacy for the future. In this case students were thinking of past experiences, choices and consequences. They started to understand that they were capable of making future plans to improve their present thinking of past experiences as a learning experience.

To sum up, the four features, Reconstructing my life stories from the other, Valuing the role of the other in the construction of the self, Confronting injustice and oppression in

my life story, and Unveiling positive attitudes towards life were the result of deeply analyzing the data collected to discover what tenth graders' life stories revealed about the development of critical literacy in an EFL classroom. Definitely, they were braiding the path to understand how students can use critical literacy practices as a self-liberating process.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Implications

The intention of this study was to portray what tenth graders' life stories unveil about the development of critical literacy in an EFL classroom, based on three theoretical pillars: Critical Literacy, Visual Literacy and Life Stories. This chapter portrays the conclusions of all the research processes, revealing findings, implications and possible future studies.

To answer the research question, life stories were considered as a main and primary source of knowledge to get a starting point to develop critical literacy practices in order to provide learners with the opportunity to acquire the language through authentic information that matters to them. Digging inside themselves, students found a rich source of knowledge not only to write about in the foreign language but also to reflect upon on social issues that were tangible in their living contexts. Thus, learners gained a deeper understanding about themselves using the foreign language as a mediator to make sense of their life stories, seeing them as a changeable process and not as a static and inalterable legacy.

In this case, meaningful learning was built through making connections between the English class and students' personal experiences, problems, and life conditions by their use of English as a vehicle to express themselves. This experience bore in mind that the use of life stories made learners understand that "language has the power to define and shape the human experience, because through language we can name our experiences" and "others can make interpretations of us" (Chang, 2010). Then, the English class was a space to read

and write about others and to be read by others where the students had the opportunity to learn from their own and others' life experiences.

The English classroom should be a place where students use the language as a vehicle to reflect on who they are, what they need, and why and how they should seek new possibilities to overcome their current problems. It is also important to clarify that this study sought to open students' vision about themselves with the expectation that it was the first stage they could talk about their aspirations, dreams, and plans to become better people, exemplary citizens, and dignified human beings. The English class should be a place where learners not only study grammar structures and learn vocabulary, but find ways to understand their conditions, identity, and potentialities as they make sense of life experiences through the enhancement of critical literacy practices. Clavijo et al. (2004) point out that it is important to create different strategies to encounter the theory and the practice to transform students through meaningful teaching practices. Then, how can EFL education be a meaningful learning experience for students? How do we build the bridge between teaching and research to help learners not only improve their literacy practices, but transform their lives for the better?

Having in mind critical literacy practices, we see it is significant to mention how visual texts helped students to contextualize their life stories. As Aiello (2006) argues, to identify the meaning of the image, it is necessary to put it in context. Every single image has multiple understandings depending on the background of the viewer and the context where the viewer is reading the image. In other words, as Hall (1997, cited in Aiello, 2006) states, it is "the whole discursive formation to which a text or a practice belongs" (p. 97). However, a text or an image has an intention, and this could be modified or interpreted

differently according to the reader's context. In this case the movie *Freedom Writers*, the short movie *Butterfly Circus* and two song videos, *Telling Stories* and *Story of my Life*. It did not matter in which places the events happened because the readers of the Hernando Duran Dussan School put the images in their own contexts to analyze their own concerns.

Talking about the pedagogical implications, it is worth saying that as a teacher in the public sector I had been wondering about the motive and need of teaching English in this arena, feeling that there was not any reason which emerged from my students. It is difficult to teach a subject that they do not use in their daily lives and as my students expressed during the delineation of the statement of the problem, they did not see the importance of learning English for their lives because they thought that it was not only difficult, but knew that they were never going to use it in their future lives. However, with new ways to see the relation between teaching and learning a language, teachers can give learners meaningful excuses to put the language into practice. In this case, they had a motive to use English to write critically about issues that matter to them: their own life stories.

Through writing and sharing their experiences, learners established connections between visual material and their own life stories, giving them the opening to talk about experiences of injustice and oppression and helping them to reflect on their future lives and how those hard experiences could not define their future stories. Categorically, they had the opportunity to act as researchers by digging inside themselves thinking of their hardest memories in order to tackle them with a different point of view and action to enable them to move beyond the problems of the past.

It may be said that I discovered how recreating and reinventing my teaching practices got my students involved in a meaningful literacy process. Freire and Macedo (1987) called those kinds of practices “emancipatory literacy” (p.156) where teachers and students can begin to renovate our society. In this case, at least students had the opportunity to think critically about their realities, empowering themselves and becoming agents of change in their immediate contexts.

Additionally, visual texts engaged students to write in English. Whereas my students were writing, they asked me to check their paragraphs seeking approval. Despite that the idea was to write in order to express their thoughts, when they asked for checking if they were doing their writings well, I used the writing correction code (see figure 6) explaining to them one by one what each symbol that I wrote on their papers meant. Then, they revised their papers among themselves, being aware of some grammar mistakes.

S1: Profe porfa mire si voy bien.

Teacher: let me see. Ummm

S2: no profe cierto que no yo le dije que si él va a escribir que la otra mujer de su papá no puede escribir Her wife...a menos que sea la esposa de la mamá.

Teacher: So, how would you write the sentence?

S2: así profe his wife, y él quiere escribir que no lo quiere entonces yo le digo que escribe his wife do not want me...

Data source: field notes, 3rd March, 2016

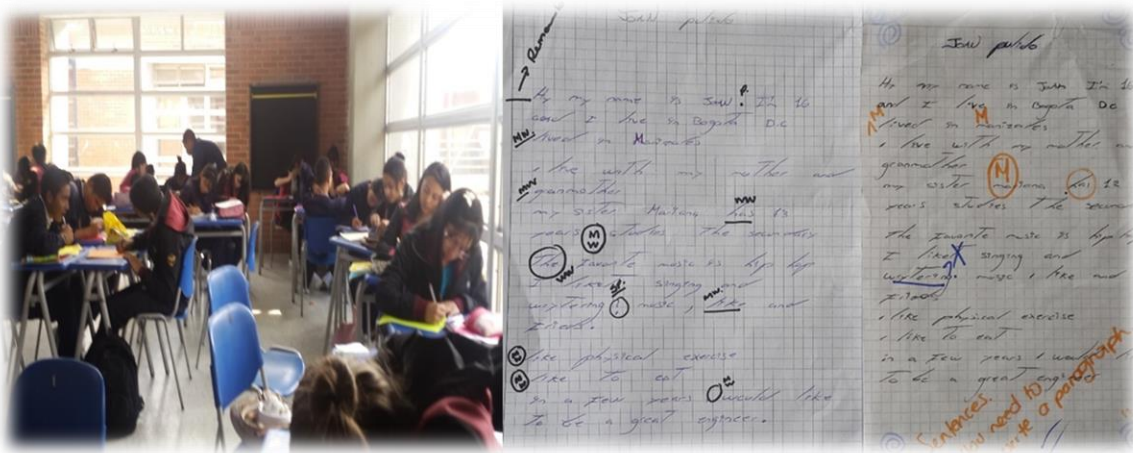


Figure 16 Editing and rewriting process.

It was an important issue to correct them not because they wanted to take care of the form per se, but they believed that their ideas deserved a form which did not produce confusion as they needed to be heard in order to share their own stories.

Moreover, I have to mention that the oral interactions compiled in the field notes were a significant and fruitful source of information for this research study. However, it is undeniable students' artifacts e.g. written life stories were an objective and tangible source to portray what life stories reveal about the development of critical literacy.

“Most of the students asked me for vocabulary or expressions to tell their stories, there are a lot of examples of this kind of process. I hope this motivation goes beyond of this proposal: Teacher tell me ¿cómo se dice que mi papá fue un irresponsable que nos abandonó y que por eso y todo lo que mi maita ha hecho es la reina de mi vida? Profe yo quiero decir que mataron a mi mamá? When I have to teach grammar because my students ask me to do it, the basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns become in relevant ideas that my students need to express using the target language. Then, grammatical features mean more than a way to write correctly hence, I believe that the learning process is happening.

Data Source: Field notes, writing process, 22nd February, 2016.

In regard to further research, From the present study I can say that learners produced multiple understandings and made meaning of their life conditions when they wrote; as such, it is undeniable that reading and writing were the bases to build the path to write about vivid experiences of who they were, what they did, and what position they had in relation to their family, community, and the world. In this way, learning processes become meaningful for our students as literacy practices in the classroom constitute an open door to reading and writing based on their own human realities. Moll (1999)

Then, it will be fascinating to expand the boundaries of this research exploring the connections between identity, power and critical literacy practices that emerge when the learning process is happening because students are immersed in power relations that affect how they position themselves in academic and social scenarios (school) and the way that they access knowledge. Observing this phenomenon, teachers can offer students vivid and real possibilities of getting enough cultural capital to narrow the gap between private and public institutions in Colombian education.

Thus, future teacher researchers can focus their interests on answering the following research questions:

|*What do students' life stories reveal about the construction of students' identity in the EFL class?

*In what ways do power relationships outside the classroom affect the development of critical literacy practices?

*How can critical literacy practices in an EFL classroom help to enrich the perception of the self?

*What factors affect the acquisition of a foreign language as cultural capital in Colombia?

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Appendixes

Appendix #1 Cycles of the pedagogical intervention in light of Pailliotet’s visual literacy model

Cycles	Visual material Implemented	Application of Pailliotet’s model of visual literacy (model of Deep Viewing)	After the Deep Viewing model, student wrote life stories about
<p>Cycle 1: Recognizing my story, strengths and areas of improvement</p> <p>(Dates) From 25th January to 8th February</p>	<p>Two song videos: 1. <i>Story of my life</i> (One Direction)</p> <p>2. <i>Telling Stories</i> (Tracy Chapman)</p> <p>3. Personal T-shirt</p>	<p>1. Giving voice and summarizing: Students shared what they watched; images about family celebrations, brothers and sisters, people that disappear in the pictures because they died and people in a bus who have different hidden life stories. Then talked about the images.</p> <p>2. Making observations: students answered some question to reflect on their personal interpretations about their families and what they have to face daily like jobs, bad people, a lack of affection, violence, abuse, and death.</p> <p>3. Making inferences and assumptions: Students made connections between images. In the videos (young problems, death, poverty, difficult life situations) and themselves. Here students worked on the past experiences and their personal weaknesses and strengths recognizing their capacities.</p> <p>1. On the center of your T-shirt write your name.</p> <p>2. Under your name write your favorite pastime</p> <p>3. On the neck of the T-shirt, write a word that describes how you want</p>	<p>Students write about the importance of the family in their lives, family problems and the importance to recognize everyone as a story.</p> <p>They were engaged to reflect on memories and families through guiding questions like:</p> <p>1. What do you think happens in the video? What are they talking about?</p> <p>2. Can you make connections with daily life and these videos?</p> <p>3. What images in videos call your attention? Why?</p> <p>What they wrote exactly on the T-shirts was about important people for them, how others perceive them, strengths and weaknesses etc. to recognize personal staff.</p> <p>After answering those questions they wrote a paragraph about important people in their lives and their strengths and weaknesses and how they</p>

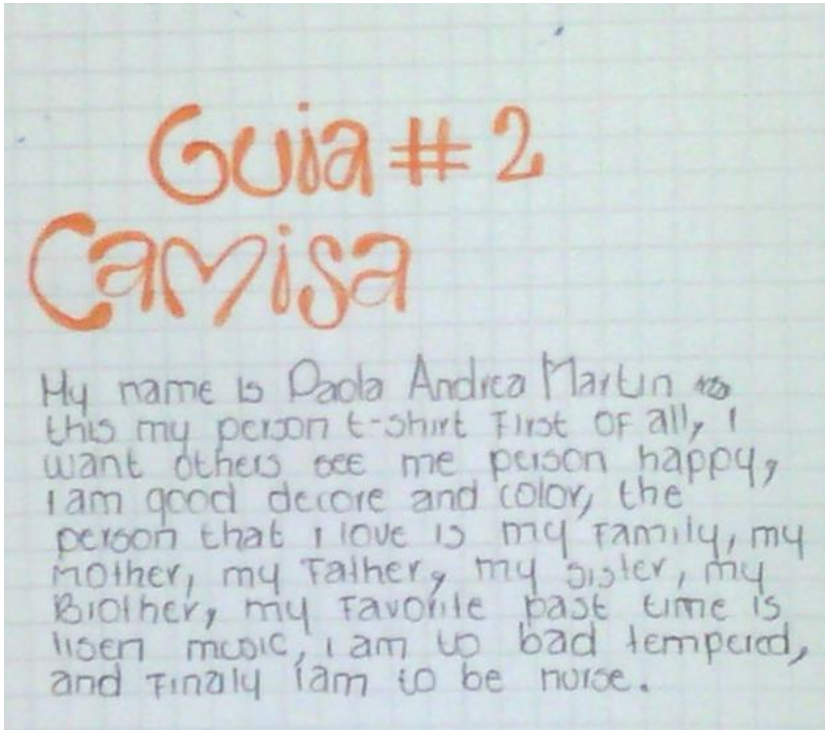
		<p>other people to see you.</p> <p>4. On the right-hand sleeve, write a name of a person that you love.</p> <p>5. On the left-hand sleeve, write one or two things that you do well.</p> <p>6. Under your name, write your favorite pastime.</p> <p>7. Under your favorite pastime, write a date that represents a special moment for you.</p> <p>8. On the bottom left-hand corner of the T-shirt, write one negative quality or negative habit you want to change about yourself.</p> <p>9. On the bottom, right-hand corner of the T-shirt, write a word about a dream you have for your future.</p>	<p>thought others perceive them. Then they shared in front of the class their personal T-shirts.</p>
<p>Cycle 2 Overcoming a difficult experience: From 11th February, to 3rd Mar /2016</p>	<p><i>The Freedom Writers</i> the teacher Erin Gruwell is assigned to a complicated group of teenage students that the rest of the teachers called unteachable. Students have many worries: dysfunctional families, gangs, drugs consumed, lack of opportunities, low incomes, etc. Gruwell is not accepted by her students because they are Afro-American, Asia-American and they think that a white woman does not understand them. She invites them</p>	<p>1. Giving voice and summarizing: Students shared their personal memories about difficult life situations connecting them with movies and scenes that caught their attention.</p> <p>2. Making observations: students answered some question to reflect on their personal interpretations about the life stories of the movies.</p> <p>3. Making inferences and assumptions: Students made connections between what happened in the movies; family problems, gangs, lack of opportunities, poverty, drugs, poor self-esteem and frustration, and their personal experiences.</p>	<p>Students wrote about difficult experiences and ways to overcome them. They expressed how they were strong to go ahead. They express the mismatch between the school and their daily lives and how this problem could be overcome if they had the opportunity to use their personal experiences to enrich their learning process. They wrote about the importance that teachers recognize their students as a story to consider that sometimes they go to school to escape from their homes and not for studying. They also talked about the opportunities they can find at school. They wrote about opportunities in life and how problems can be seen as an opportunity to improve their situations.</p>

	<p>to write a journal and to read <i>The Diary of Anna Frank</i>. Then, they start to build meaningful relationships to open students' minds to the opportunities in life.</p> <p><i>-Butterfly Circus.</i> This is a short film about a man without limbs called Will, who works in a circus as one of the freak attractions. One day the director of <i>Butterfly Circus</i> goes to the show and tells Will that he is wonderful. Will decided to escape from the circus, hiding himself in a truck of the <i>Butterfly Circus</i>. When he arrives at <i>Butterfly Circus</i> the director tells him that he won't be part of the show but at least he found his greatness.</p>		
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<p>Cycle 3</p> <p>Showing my new perceptions about life</p> <p>10th March 4th April</p>	<p>Make a video</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giving voice and summarizing: Students shared their ideas about their perceptions as to how they view themselves after reflecting on their life stories. 2. Making observations: students answered some questions to reflect on their personal interpretations about what they did during the process of watching and reflecting. 3. Making inferences and assumptions: Students made reflections on what they learnt during the process, their future plans and ways to tackle difficult life situations. 	<p>Students wrote about their future and how these kinds of activities help them to reflect and to tackle their lives with a different point of view and action.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What sense can you make of the process of watching and reflecting? 2. What do you feel after the process is done in the EFL class? 3. How can you connect those reflections with your current situation? 4. How can you overcome problems that don't allow you get your goals? 5. How can you connect what you do in school with your daily life?
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Appendix #2 Students' artifacts: T-shirt for the first project



Appendix #3 Students' artifacts: students first entry on their life stories

Appendix #4 Field notes format:

Participant/Observer Tatiana Calderón Class Date unit Stage	What do tenth graders' life stories unveil about the development of critical literacy in an EFL classroom?	Research objectives To establish relations between critical visual literacy and students' life stories
<div data-bbox="269 627 386 995" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"><i>Notes</i></div> <div data-bbox="269 1312 386 1625" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><i>Comments</i></div>	This area is intentionally left blank for field notes	

Appendix # 5 Consent Form School

Formato de Consentimiento Directivas colegio IED HERNANDO DURAN DUSSAN

Señor

Mario Ernesto Morales

Colegio IED HERNANDO DURAN DUSSAN

Jornada Mañana DIA _____ Mes _____ AÑO _____

Cordial saludo:

A través de la presente, deseo informarle que en la clase de inglés con el grado 9 que está a mi cargo, se planea realizar un proceso de investigación que busca fortalecer habilidades críticas en los estudiantes por medio de la escritura reflexiva que ellos hacen de sus historias de vidas. Estos análisis de sus historias personales, serán compartidos con sus compañeros de clase por medio de escritos reflexivos.

La recolección de datos se hará durante el primer periodo académico (2016), esta incluye video grabaciones, notas de campo, escritos reflexivos de los estudiantes La información será utilizada para documentar y reportar el proceso de investigación que adelanto en la Maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la enseñanza del inglés en la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.

Con lo expuesto anteriormente, solicito su autorización para que los datos proporcionados por los estudiantes sean socializados sin detrimento de su identidad.

Agradezco su valiosa colaboración para el desarrollo de esta propuesta investigativa.

Atentamente;

Rina Tatiana Calderon Peña

Docente de Inglés Jornada Mañana

Yo _____ rector de la IED HERNANDO DURAN DUSSAN, autorizo a la docente TATIANA CALDERON para que desarrolle el proyecto de investigación educativa con el grado 9 de la jornada mañana.

Appendix #6 Consent Form Parents

Formato de Consentimiento Padres de Familia

Señor (a)

Padre / Madre de Familia

Colegio HERNANDO DURAN DUSSAN IED Jornada Mañana

Día_____ Mes_____ Año_____

Cordial saludo:

A través de la presente, deseo informarle que en la clase de inglés con el grado 10 que está a mi cargo, se realizará un proceso de investigación que busca fortalecer en los estudiantes las habilidades críticas, a través del análisis que realizarán de sus experiencias de vida.

Estos análisis de sus historias personales, serán compartidos con sus compañeros de clase por medio de escritos reflexivos.

La recolección de datos se hará durante el primer periodo académico (2016), esta incluye video grabaciones, notas de campo, escritos reflexivos de los estudiantes La información será utilizada para documentar y reportar el proceso de investigación que adelanto en la Maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la enseñanza del inglés en la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.

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Agradezco su valiosa colaboración para el desarrollo de esta propuesta investigativa.

Atentamente;

Rina Tatiana Calderon Peña

Docente de Inglés Jornada Mañana

Yo _____ identificado (a) con C.C. _____ de _____

Autorizo a mi hijo (a), menor de edad para que participe en el proceso de investigación adelantado por la docente Rina Tatiana Calderon Peña con el curso _____ jornada mañana de la IED HERNANDO DURAN DUSSAN.

Appendix # 7 Story of My Life

Written on these walls are the stories
That I can't explain
I leave my heart open
But it stays right here empty for days

She told me in the morning
She doesn't feel the same about us in her bones
It seems to me that when I die
These words will be written on my stone

And I'll be gone gone tonight
The ground beneath my feet is open wide
The way that I've been holdin' on too tight
With nothing in between

The story of my life, I take her home
I drive all night to keep her warm and time
Is frozen (the story of, the story of)
The story of my life I give her hope
I spend her love
Until she's broke inside
The story of my life (the story of, the story of)

Written on these walls
Are the colors that I can't change
Leave my heart open
But it stays right here in its cage

I know that in the morning now
I see us in the light upon a hill

Although I am broken
My heart is untamed, still

And I'll be gone gone tonight
The fire beneath my feet is burning bright
The way that I've been holdin' on so tight
With nothing in between

The story of my life, I take her home
I drive all night to keep her warm and time
Is frozen (the story of, the story of)
The story of my life I give her hope
I spend her love
Until she's broke inside
The story of my life (the story of, the story of)

And I've been waiting for this time to come around
But baby running after you
Is like chasing the clouds

The story of my life, I take her home
I drive all night to keep her warm and time
Is frozen

The story of my life
I give her hope (give her hope)
I spend her love
Until she's broke inside (until she's broke inside)

The story of my life (the story of, the story of)
The story of my life

The story of my life (the story of, the story of)
The story of my life

Appendix #8 Telling Stories

Tracy Chapman

There is fiction in the space between
You and reality
You will do and say anything
To make your everyday life seem less mundane
There is fiction in the space between
You and me

There's a science fiction in the space between
You and me
A fabrication of a grand scheme
Where I am the scary monster
I eat the city and as I leave the scene
In my spaceship I am laughing
In your remembrance of your bad dream
There's no one but you standing

Leave the pity and the blame
For the ones who do not speak
You write the words to get respect and compassion
And for posterity
You write the words and make believe
There is truth in the space between

There is fiction in the space between
You and everybody

Give us all what we need
 Give us one sadder sordid story
 But in the fiction of the space between
 Sometimes a lie is the best thing
 Sometimes a lie is the best thing

Appendix #9 Students' artifacts

CYCLE	SESSION	TOPIC	LINGUISTIC OBJECTIVE	"SOCIAL" OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	COLLECTED DATA
Research cycle 1 Recognizing my story, strengths and areas of improvement	<p><i>Session 1</i> 25th January , 2016 55 minutes -Watch the videos during the class. -discussion about what they see in the videos.</p> <p><i>Session 2</i> 28th January ,2016 110 minutes Develop the worksheet to draw their personal t-shirts</p> <p><i>Session 3</i> 1st February , 2016 55 minutes Write paragraph about their personal T-shirt.</p> <p><i>Session 4</i> 4th February ,2016 110 minutes' Write paragraph</p>	Who am I?	<p>To Follow instructions to do what I have to do during the class.</p> <p>To use images, body language and context to understand the message.</p> <p>To understand the general idea of the text</p> <p>To have a critical position of the text.</p>	To explore students' general perceptions about themselves	1. Students will be watching two song videos Life Story by Tracy Chapman https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bIEGRYj0sXU and Story of my Life by one Direction. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-TE_Ys4iwM 2. Students answer some personal	Students' written reflections giving insights on how they perceive themselves. Students' participation


	<p>about their personal T-shirt. Edit paragraphs.</p> <p>Design their personal T-shirt at home</p> <p>Session 5 8th February , 2016 (round table) 55 minutes Presentation personal T-shirt.</p>				<p>question, designing a T-shirt where they will write their answers.</p> <p>3. Students write a reflection using the information that they wrote onto the T-shirts.</p> <p>4. Teacher helps students to edit their written reflections</p> <p>.</p> <p>5. Students share their reflections , presenting their personal T-shirts and reading aloud the written reflections</p> <p>.</p> <p>6. Homework: watch the movie <i>Freedom Writers</i>.</p>	
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<p>from Research cycle 2 Overcoming a difficult experience</p>	<p>Session 6 11th February, 2016 Watch the movie 2hours 10 minutes</p> <p>Session 7 15th February, 2016 55 minutes Develop the worksheet of Freedom writers</p> <p>Session 8 18th February , 2016 110 minutes (Round table meeting) Discussion on students' insights of the movie.</p> <p>Session 9 22nd February, 2016, 110minutes. Writing process</p> <p>Session 10 25th February, 2016, 55minutes Editing paragraphs</p> <p>Session 11 29th February, 2016 55 minutes Watch the short movie (19 minutes, 35</p>	<p>Reflecting on how to face my daily life while I am reading movies.</p>	<p>To value writing and reading as a means to express what I think.</p> <p>To write about my life in order to recognize my weaknesses and strengths</p>	<p>To gain new understandings about the way of facing life.</p>	<p>Students watched <i>Freedom Writers</i>. (at home) Students fill a worksheet about the movie. (at home) 6. Students discuss during the class their insights of the movie. 7. Students produce their written paragraph linking what they watched in the movie with what is happening in the class. 8. Students will watch <i>The Butter Fly Circus</i> in class. 9. Students fill the worksheet about the short film. Students</p>	<p>Students' written reflections will give me insights on how students perceive themselves. Teacher's field notes about the discussion.</p>
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	<p>seconds) Round table discussion 20 minutes. Discussion on students' insights of the movie</p> <p>Session 12 3rd March , 2016 110 minutes. Writing process. Edit paragraphs.</p>				<p>discuss the short movie. 10. Students write written reflections about the short film</p>	
<p>Research cycle 3 Showing my new perceptions</p>	<p>Session 11 <i>10th, 14th, 17th March</i></p> <p>Thinking of what we have done in our English class. Writing process. (Writing a script) Editing process</p> <p>At home: Recording myself talking about me and my experience.</p> <p>Session 12 <i>28th, 31st March and 4th April, 2016</i> <i>165 minutes</i> Sharing videos</p>	<p>My understandings</p>	<p>To use EFL as a means to express who I am</p>	<p>To provide information about how new understandings make me reflect critically on my life story.</p>	<p>Write about the process done during this pedagogical intervention. Answering the following questions: What do you think of the different activities done during the process? How can these activities help you to reflect on your personal life story? Teacher helps students edit the written</p>	<p>Unstructured interview. Divided into two moments Written reflections (script) and a video, talking about the questions (developed in the written reflections).</p>

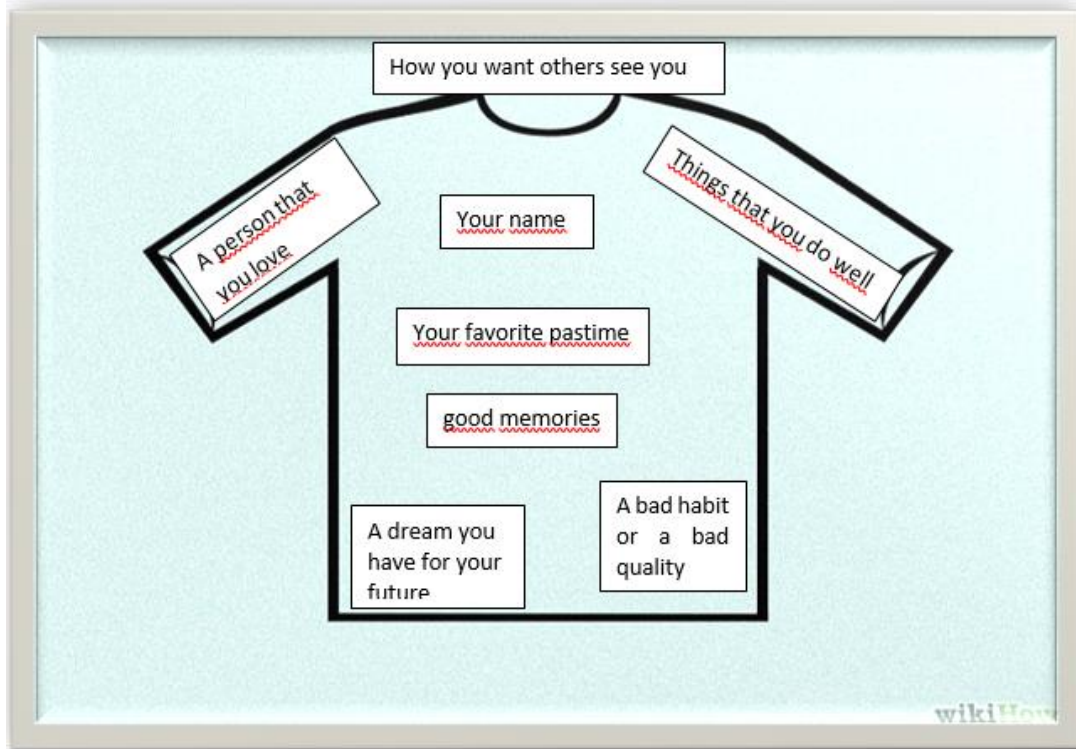
					<p>reflections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Students record a video talking about the experiences and understandings of what they have gained during the process. Students show their videos to their classmates and teacher.	
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Appendix #10 Workshop

COLEGIO HERNANDO DURÁN DUSSÁN I.E.D Resolución de Aprobación 08016 del 23 de Febrero de Código Dane: 111001100048 NIT: 900825161-3	 2015	Activity: Guide <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Lab <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/>	With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts. Eleanor Roosevelt
SUBJECT: English EDUCATOR: Mss. Tatiana Calderón		Version: 1	
STUDENT:		DATE:	GRADE:10 th
INSTRUCTIONS: Please read carefully the steps to make your personal T-shirt and enjoy the activity.			Recognize weaknesses and strengths


PERSONAL T-SHIRT

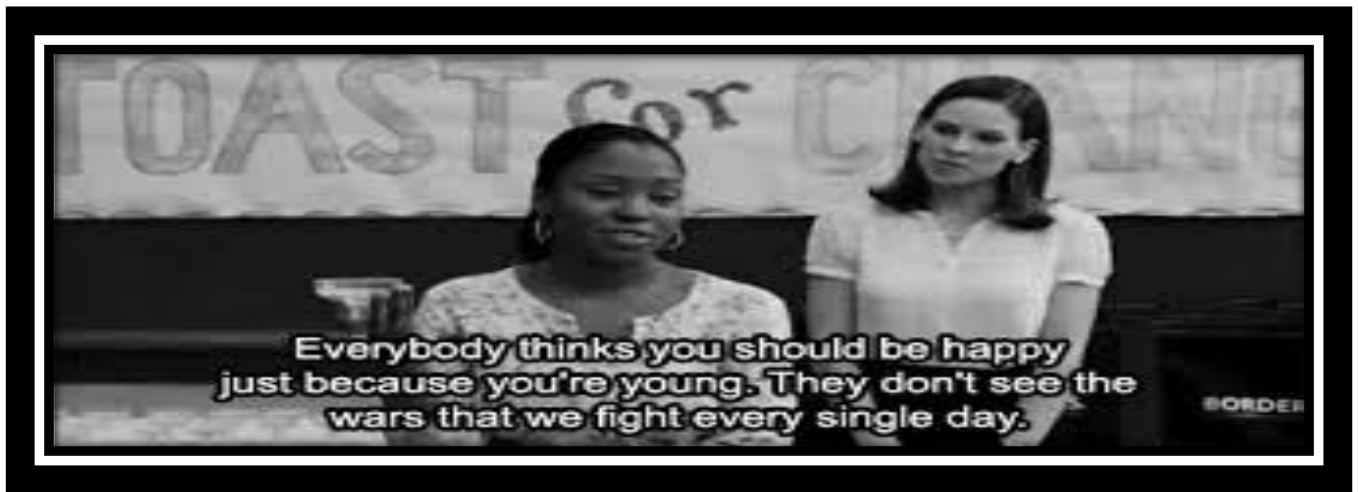
1. On a piece of paper, draw a T-shirt large enough to write on. Use different materials to decorate it.



2. Please pay attention to your teacher. She draws a personal T-shirt on the board, putting this information on the T-shirt.
 - a. On the center of your T-shirt write your name.

- b. Under your name write your favorite pastime
 - c. On the neck of the T-shirt write a word that describes how you want other people to see you. [Please write to see you on the T-shirt example above]
 - d. On the right hand sleeve, write a name of a person that you love.
 - e. On the left hand sleeve, write one or two things that you do well.
 - f. Under your name write your favorite pastime.
 - g. Under your favorite pastime write a date that represents a special moment for you.
 - h. On the bottom left-hand corner of the T-shirt write one bad quality or bad habit you want to change about yourself.
 - i. On the bottom right-hand corner of the T-shirt write a word about a dream you have for your future.
3. Next, in groups of 4, hold up your paper T-shirt and tell your group about yourself. Do this by explaining the information you have written on your T-shirt. Your teacher will model this activity by telling the class about her own T-shirt.
 4. When everybody in your group has finished presenting the T-shirts, your teacher will write on the board a paragraph about her personal T-shirt. Then you write your own paragraph.

COLEGIO HERNANDO DURÁN DUSSÁN I.E.D Resolución de Aprobación 08016 del 23 de Febrero de 2015 Código Dane: 111001100048 NIT: 900825161-3		Activity: Guide <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Lab <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/>	Adapted from Lee Ka Yan Cathy Teaching materials on The Pursuit of Happiness www.andrewseaton.com.au/Rubric%20Biography.doc
SUBJECT: English EDUCATOR: Mss. Tatiana Calderón		Version: 1	
STUDENT:		DATE:	GRADE: 10 th
INSTRUCTIONS Write a paragraph reflecting on what happens in the movie and some aspects of your daily life.		OBJECTIVE: To write a reflection about the connections between what happens in the movie and their lives.	



1. Do you feel an identity with what happens in the movie? Why or why not? / What are some of the difficulties of balancing your academic or professional life with your personal life?

Appendix #13 Pictures taken during the pedagogical intervention

