

**When in doubt, art it out! Employing feminist art to enhance
transformative engagement in EFL classrooms**

***"When in doubt, art it out!" Arte con perspectiva feminista para
promover el compromiso transformativo en el aula de ILE***

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ABSTRACT

This article outlines some of the "Literacy, Gender and Diversity (LITGENDI)" (UV-SFPIE_PIEE-2732068) project outcomes, coordinated by the University of València's Faculty of Teacher Training (2022-24). Integrating a feminist point of view towards art into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, this project aimed to deepen learning through critical engagement with social issues and celebrate female artistic figures, enhancing students' critical consciousness. Implemented in a Valencian artistic baccalaureate, this multimodal approach proved to significantly boost student motivation and engagement by adopting arts from a feminist viewpoint. Despite its limited timeframe and sample size, the project showcases the impactful role of arts in fostering inclusivity and addressing gender inequality in education. It advocates for an academic shift towards transformative learning and curriculum innovation, emphasizing the importance of content selection to prepare students for global challenges. LITGENDI exemplifies art's power in revitalizing EFL multimodal education and promoting transformative student engagement.

Keywords: critical ELT, feminism, motivation, social justice, transformative learning.

RESUMEN

Este artículo resume algunos de los resultados del proyecto "Literacidad, Género y Diversidad (LITGENDI)" (UV-SFPIE_PIEE-2732068), coordinado desde la Facultad de Magisterio de la Universitat de València (2022-24). Mediante la integración del arte con perspectiva feminista en las aulas de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE) se buscaba profundizar en el aprendizaje a través de la participación crítica en problemas sociales y visibilizar la obras de mujeres artistas, para mejorar la conciencia crítica de los y las estudiantes. Implementado en un bachillerato valenciano en la modalidad de artes, este enfoque multimodal demostró aumentar significativamente la motivación y el compromiso del estudiantado adoptando el arte desde una

perspectiva feminista. A pesar de su limitado marco temporal y tamaño de muestra, el proyecto destaca el papel impactante del arte al fomentar la inclusión, la coeducación y por abordar la desigualdad de género en la educación. Aboga por un cambio académico hacia el aprendizaje transformador y la innovación curricular, enfatizando la importancia de la selección de contenidos para preparar a los y las estudiantes para los desafíos globales. LITGENDI ejemplifica el poder del arte para revitalizar una educación ILE multimodal y promover un compromiso educativo transformador.

Palabras clave: ELT crítico, feminismo, motivación, justicia social, aprendizaje transformativo.

1. INTRODUCTION

In high school settings, engaging the multifaceted nature of students becomes pivotal for an enriching learning journey. Reflecting on Hagay and Baram Tsabari's (2015) insights, it is apparent that curricula often feel disconnected from students' lived experiences, leading to a widespread disengagement. On the one hand, some scholars affirm that this is particularly evident in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, where the traditional approach can fail to spark curiosity or relevance (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Suescún-Giraldo, 2015; Kunčar, 2021). But, on the other hand, this article defends that within the dynamically transforming educational landscape of the 21st century, the EFL classroom as an essential nexus for bridging the fragmented realities presented by our digital and fragmented era (Reyes-Torres & Portalés-Raga, 2020). Following the trajectory of researchers like Cope and Kalantzis (2000), and drawing inspiration from the work of Guerrilla Girls (1998; 2020), Ballester-Buigues (2022) and Hessel (2022) on the visibility of female artists, it underscores the importance of integrating multimodal texts to enable students to navigate and decipher their complex world, starting from their own points of interest.

The fostering of a critical perspective in additional language teaching is still an emerging field, as criticality often suffers from epistemological confusion due to its polysemic nature (Dervin, 2012). This paper argues for a clarified understanding of criticality and interculturality, drawing on Atienza (2020) and Dervin's (2012, 2023) work, to inform pedagogical practices that avoid reductionism and contradiction. In doing so, this research stems from the observed disconnection in an Artistic Baccalaureate setting. Inspired by transformative actions such as those by Guerrilla Girls in the 1980s, ArtActivistBarbie, and Femme.sapiens in the 2020s, this study employs feminist critical pedagogy and responds to LOMLOE's precepts of social justice and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through an interdisciplinary lens. The research explores the use of art, specifically the underrepresented voices of female artists, as a stimulus for motivation and critical thinking in the EFL classroom, aiming to redefine EFL education through a critical viewpoint and challenging students to engage with issues of identity, power, and representation.

The research aligns with the call for a critical perspective in language teaching, examining how language education shapes and is shaped by sociopolitical ideologies (Kubota & Austin, 2007). It adheres to the challenges posed by fostering a critical

mindset in language learning while integrating the transformative potential of arts (Bori, 2022). The paper unfolds in several sections, beginning with a theoretical framework that situates motivation within EFL learning, incorporating critical pedagogical approaches as underscored by authors such as Correa (2011, 2018), and applying a feminist approach to art education (Alarcón-Arana, 2023). The methodology details the classroom intervention, analysed for its impact on student engagement and critical consciousness. The results and discussion explore the potential of art to bridge curricular gaps and foreground gender disparities, resonating with Cots (2006) and Gray's (2010) critical examination of educational materials. In the final analysis, this article will examine the transformative impact of feminist art in EFL education, exploring how it can foster not only language proficiency but also a deeper understanding of cultural narratives and gender roles, informed by critical pedagogical approaches.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Motivation and education

Motivation is a key element in any learning scenario, and it is of the utmost necessity to attempt to increase and maintain it so as to ensure that students learn in a meaningful and productive manner, achieving their goals (Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015) while also improving their academic results (Saeed & Zyngier, 2012).

Research on motivation within educational contexts, particularly in second language (L2) acquisition, remains a pertinent field of study. Consequently, its exploration has persisted, evolving and adapting to the demands of contemporary society. In fact, researchers who have dedicated decades to study motivation in learning continue to do so and new debates keep arising and new challenges keep being posited and faced. As an example, Dörnyei (2001) has acknowledged the significance of context in the study of motivation, while emphasising the importance of long-term motivation and persistence, vision, and unconscious motivation, the investigation of which would be enormously beneficial to further the understanding of motivation in the L2 world in addition to potential applications of said knowledge (Košinaga, 2020).

Motivation, despite its critical role across various fields of study and in all facets of life, remains a challenging concept to pin down. The significance it holds and the curiosity it sparks have led to extensive scholarly attention, resulting in a plethora of theories. These theories endeavor to delineate and elucidate both the nature of motivation and its underlying components. One definition of motivation is given by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998), who explain that:

in a general sense, motivation can be defined as the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out (1998: 65)

Starting from the classic definition of motivation by Gardner and Lambert (1972), we follow Dörnyei's addition of three components: integrativeness (interest toward the L2); attitudes toward the learning scenario and motivational intensity (2001). Thus, the role of both the teacher and the course is pivotal in fostering motivation for L2 learning. Among the myriad of strategies available, ensuring the lesson content's relevance to students is paramount (Dörnyei, 2001). By tailoring the curriculum to resonate more closely with students' interests, educators delve into a transformative teaching. Opting for less conventional topics in the English classroom, such as the arts, aligns well with this approach. This is further bolstered by the growing momentum behind art education, increasingly recognised as an indispensable facet of holistic education (Acaso & Megías, 2017). Furthermore, contextualising the contents taught in class can be of help regarding the lowering of the affective filter, as stated in Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis (1982). Thus, low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to 'raise' the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition.

Contextualizing lesson content is a powerful strategy to engage students, especially in helping lower their affective filter (Berhó & Defferding, 2005). When considering the profound impact of self-esteem on a student's affective filter, it becomes clear that utilizing topics where students feel competent can significantly mitigate this filter. By boosting their confidence in their own knowledge and abilities, students are more likely to approach challenges with optimism, fostering greater participation in class and in proposed activities. The positive implications of employing the arts as a lesson topic in this context will be further explored later in our discussion.

2.2 Art education and multimodal perspective in L2 Education

It is essential to scrutinize the role of art and art education within the broader context of general education. Historically, language teaching and the arts were seen as separate domains without much intersection. Yet, this perspective has shifted in recent years, with art's integration into the EFL classroom gaining momentum. Schander et al. (2013) observed that these two fields are not inherently isolated. Their synergistic benefits can stimulate profound motivation, leading to heightened participation and, notably, to substantial text production. This sentiment further underscores the effectiveness of leveraging art as a tool in language instruction. Furthermore, they defend that the arts can be taken to the EFL classroom "as a valuable teaching resource, enabling teachers and learners to engage in more meaningful and memorable learning experiences" (Schander et. al, 2013: 411), following the line of thought that defends that learning should be meaningful and that the learning linked to emotions, especially positive ones is richer. Moreover, it should be highlighted that the use of art in class does not require for the teacher nor the students to be experts so that they can uncover the historical and cultural context and content of an artwork (Schander et. al, 2013), which will be at the centre of this research.

Even more, art education should be central in any Arts Baccalaureate group or, as Acaso and Megías defend (2017), in any general education. Furthermore, both authors argue that, nowadays, when people are constantly bombarded and surrounded by images, while also being constantly creating them, it is necessary to re-evaluate artistic

education at school. The teaching methodology of the arts requires contemporary rejuvenation to better align with current educational needs, inviting a thoughtful re-evaluation and innovative redesign to ensure its relevance and inclusivity. Therefore,

Art education is asking of us to rethink it in a moment in time when visual worlds do not stop growing and becoming more complex, while the experiences by means of which processes of critical alphabetisation regarding those visual worlds can be carried out are disappearing from educational contexts whose mission is to develop it (Acaso & Megías, 2017: 29)

In line with that, the researchers argue that to reach that goal, and thus, reach students, “art education should be adapted to the social reality where it is inscribed” (Acaso & Megías, 2017: 31), which supports the idea of the importance of contextualisation of the contents that has already been commented upon. Not only that, but, as it happens with motivation, this process is actually a two-way route, and the aim should be to “connect art education with reality and connect general education with reality by means of art education” (Acaso & Megías, 2017: 32). This idea is also supported by Izadi and Baltagi (2019) who defend the use of art to incorporate culture into the EFL classroom, as “teaching culture through art is not only relevant but also a realistic and practical way to stream the classroom with the outside world” (Izadi and Baltagi, 2019: 56). Following this line of thought, Engh (2013) further defends this practice, since it increases the intrinsic motivation towards the target language, as it fosters a positive learning environment (as cited in Izadi & Baltagi, 2019). Usually, the use of art to introduce culture is done with the focus of teaching about the culture linked to the target language, which ends up helping create connections between the target culture and the students’ own (Byram, et al., 2002, as cited in Izadi & Baltagi, 2019) and “allows students to examine not only values and themes of the target cultures but their own cultural biases and beliefs as well” (Omaggio Hadley, 2000, as cited in Berhó & Defferding, 2005: 2). Nonetheless, this approach can be altered, and the art used in EFL classroom can belong to the learners’ culture, which is what has been done in the study at hand. As Badard (2016) explains:

if the teachers are able to incorporate art from where they live, or where their students come from then the lesson become[s] all that more relevant to the students. Once the students feel a connection to what they are learning then they will immediately become more engaged and interested because it will no longer seem so random or far-fetched (Badard, 2016: 6)

Hence, the use of art to introduce culture into the EFL classroom can be used to engage students to a higher extent if one uses art from their culture, as it contextualizes the lesson and makes it relevant, increasing their interest. Additionally, the benefits linked to the questioning and reflection upon the learners’ culture are even more relevant if the culture directly dealt with in class is their own, since allows them to ponder and debate about one’s own culture in a critical manner, and it can become an opportunity to create a debate in the classroom regarding topics such as values or the status quo. This idea is also defended by Badard, who expresses that “arts are a great way of

nurturing open-mindedness, which is one of the most important lessons we need to teach young children" (2016: 6), which also applies to high school students.

Regarding the contextualization of the topics or language by means of using the arts, it is important not only because of the effect it has on the motivation of the students but also because of the new context and learning opportunities it provides. These effects are behind the project Developing English Language Literacy through the Arts (hereinafter, DELTA). This project has been created by the non-profit organisation ArtsConnection, a partnership founded through a collaboration between several departments of the New York City government in the 70's that provides "innovative arts programming to millions of students in the New York City public school system, enhancing children's intellectual, personal and social growth, while developing award-winning educational models" (ArtsConnection, About Us section). The DELTA project defends that using arts in the classroom influences second language acquisition in emergent bilingual students in a positive manner. One of the ways to use art is in collaborative discussions, which is the kind of context that this project is based on, and it is in this context that contextualization shows its importance. Morgan and Stengel-Mohr (2014), in their research as part of and with DELTA mention that Walqui (2002) explains that "most of the language that students are exposed to in the classroom is decontextualised: in order to comprehend it, the learner must rely on language alone." (as cited in Morgan & Stengel-Mohr, 2014: 93). They further explain that "collaborative spaces allow for rich, authentic, and contextualized language exchange; in addition, true language learning is evidenced when learners can create novel phrases and manipulations of the language" (Morgan & Stengel-Mohr, 2014: 93). In other words, providing students with a learning situation where they use language applied to a real context and use helps them achieve true language learning and often leads to a fruitful exchange among students, which is most probably boosted if the topic being tackled is of their interest.

Moreover, Berhó and Defferding (2005: 2) argue that "both creating and studying artwork have a strong link with emotions". Even more, Egan (1997: 343) defends that "we remember things best when we can locate them emotionally and associate them with some vivid image". In addition, Berhó and Defferding (2005) further state that studying about and creating art involves linguistic elements as well as feelings and movements, which contribute to learning at a deeper level. In other words, the emotions linked to the study and creation of art, make it a more encompassing experience that involves students to a higher extent and helps create meaningful connections between the emotions being elicited and what is being learnt, which leads to a more profound level of learning. Furthermore, they state that having knowledge regarding a certain topic (in this case something related to the arts) is beneficial, as "their expertise in this area can give them new confidence in the foreign language setting. In fact, the research in the field shows a positive emotional response from L2 learners who studied or created artwork" (Berhó & Defferding, 2005: 2), which falls in line with the aforementioned ideas regarding self-image. What is more, Izadi and Baltagi (2019: 56) explain that, considering the importance of multiple intelligences, "the inclusion of art and the discussions around it will facilitate a learning environment where the learners feel valuable and confident both as learners and as individuals". This view is in consonance with Berhó and Defferding's ideas, reach the conclusion that "projects [that use art]

positively change the classroom atmosphere, and promote language learning” (Berhó & Deffending, 2005: 2). Moreover, the uses of art, especially that which features underrepresented female figures, have a dual positive effect. On one hand, learning tied to emotional resonance tends to be more impactful. On the other, the selection of topics that resonate with students' interests and prior knowledge can lower their affective filter—a concept widely acknowledged in language acquisition theories. This reduction in the affective filter, as previously explained, enhances students' confidence due to their familiarity with the subject matter and mitigates the anxiety typically associated with using a second language. The heightened interest in the topic thus facilitates a critical dialogue within the classroom, where students are more likely to question, analyse, and understand the gender dynamics and power structures present in the artistic representations they study.

This pedagogical approach aligns with the critical development goals by fostering a classroom environment that not only values emotional engagement but also prioritizes the visibility and critical appraisal of female referents in art. Such an environment encourages students to interrogate societal norms, challenge historical omissions, and embrace a more inclusive and critical perspective on the narratives that shape our understanding of art, culture and society.

2.3 Gender critical perspective in education

Discourse and debate on gender issues are ubiquitous and of the utmost currency in nowadays society. Indeed, “gender mainstreaming is an international strategy in Europe relating to gender equality using an intersectional approach” (Venegas et al., 2020: 137). This intersectional approach includes, obviously, education. Education is a tool to help young members of any society to develop their critical thinking skills, helping them inform their own vision of the world that surrounds them. In fact, “these skills are very important for young adolescents as they are starting to reflect on moral and political judgments to integrate themselves into society” (Moreira et al., 2015, as cited in Moreno-Vera and Cruz, 2023: 143). In other words, “the goals of education include more than mere cognitive and intellectual development of individuals. Education has also been a major institution shaping individuals' attitudes, values, and beliefs” (Du et al., 2020: 476). Therefore, gender perspective should be applied to education as a way to ensure gender equality. Being quoted in Shih and Wang (2020), Tasi (2008) explains:

one of the most important objectives of gender-equal education is the achievement of dual educational effects socially, culturally, and at the level of school and family through education. Gender-equal education seeks to reduce the negative aspects of gender bias and to eliminate gender discrimination and oppression and promotes the positive aspects of gender equality and gender diversity. The goal of this education is to establish a society that is not restricted by any gender roles, gender expectations, or gender stereotypes (Tasi, 2008, as cited in Shih & Wang, 2020: 47)

Incorporating gender discussions into education, reflecting on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter, SDGs), is a global initiative also echoed in the Spanish current Education Law's curricular design. This approach is also mirrored in EFL classrooms worldwide. For instance, in Japan, critical explorations of gender have

been integrated into English language teaching. Researchers have examined gendered language, addressed issues such as sexual harassment and domestic violence, and critiqued representations in media and educational materials (Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Sunderland, 1992; 2000). These studies highlight the pedagogical value of fostering a critical gender awareness among language learners. For this research, gender was considered with a double motive: first, to participate in the students' education regarding gender by raising awareness of gender disparity in the art world and, second, to use this raising of their awareness as a way to motivate them and increase their engagement in the English classroom. It is in this context of introducing discussion about gender and gender equality in the curriculum and the classroom that feminist pedagogy gains importance. According to White:

methods for teaching from the perspective of feminist modes of thought and inquiry are regarded as feminist pedagogy. Forms of education rooted in this ideological perspective are complex, unorthodox and difficult to define. Art Education in general shares this multiplicity of definition and approach with feminist pedagogy (2019: 22-23)

Thus, feminist pedagogy and Art Education can concur, being implemented together in the classroom with the objective of giving students the opportunity to reflect on and question society and the general beliefs being transmitted. Art history has followed patriarchal societal rules, leading to the canon being conformed in its majority by white male artists. Thus, art students are mostly exposed to male artists, with almost no exposure to female ones, even if this tendency has been changing to different extents in the last decades. The dissimilar exposure that students experience concerning art made by men and art made by women can, and does, affect students' knowledge and attitudes (White, 2019). Hence, the classroom offers an opportunity for the teacher to defy the perspective of art history and offer a more egalitarian view, introducing students to as many women artists as men ones. As Keifer-Boyd (2003: 317) explains, "feminist pedagogy... is enacted from the feminist educator's particular feminist values and theoretical orientation adjusted according to and within a specific context", in this case, the EFL classroom dealing with art history topics. "In art education, this causes a re-evaluation and re-assessment of didactic critique and addresses the potential for collaboration and a community-oriented, art-pedagogical experience" or, in other words, "feminist-based critique as a pedagogical approach is useful in the creation of a more inclusive society in which people are not limited based on their gender/s" (White, 2019: 2).

It is, nonetheless, necessary to question the interest this approach may have for students. Even if it is not a topic widely researched, some studies defend that students are interested in and value diverse representation in the curriculum and that they do not receive an equilibrated education in the arts regarding gender representation (White, 2019). This claim was proved in this study, as the disparity in the representation of artists of different genders was used as a shock factor that proved to be of utility to engage the students.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This study follows a qualitative research methodology (Creswell, 2009) with interpretive data (Stake, 2010). More specifically, a multiple case study design (Stake, 1999) was employed to analyse the motivation and engagement in English language learning when dealing with a current topic related to social justice, with a starting point in the academic interests of the students: the gender gap in art. All participants were from a group of 1st Baccalaureate in Arts from a state high school in València and a level of English B1-B2 CEFR. They responded to a pre and post questionnaire, whose questions required responses in both Likert scale format and short text. The 15 questions of the questionnaire were structured into four different sections: I. Previous knowledge and awareness on gender gap in art (3 short answers); II. Aspects related to art mediation and women artists representation (4 Likert scale questions); III. Aspects related to linguistic competence and specific uses of English (3 Likert scale questions) and IV. Perception of the sessions (5 Likert scale questions). Finally, an oral general discussion took place in the classroom, following an ethnographic approach to research (Goetz & LeCompte, 1988; Angrosino, 2012), through which the researcher could take notes on the contribution of a multimodal linguistic work to the development of the concept of social justice (Fraser, 1996; Weissler, 2022), gender gap awareness (Butler, 1990, 2004; hooks, 1994; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) and right of membership (Benhabib, 2004). With the aim of implementing and evaluating a learning situation that helps motivating artistic baccalaureate students into the learning of English while engaging them with social justice and feminist art, different sessions designed following LOMLOE's precepts have been created. This pedagogical background justifies the selection of multimodal texts and the scaffolding being used to guide students' productions.

3.2. Participants, context and research design

This research was carried out during the academic year 2022-23 in a group of 1st of Baccalaureate in Arts with 25 students (N=25) in a state high school in the outskirts of València. A total of six sessions (50 minutes each) were conducted. The age of the students ranged from 16 to 18 years old. Regarding gender, fifteen of them identified themselves as women, five of them as non-binary, and five as men. Culturally, the class represents nowadays diversity, with 6 students being born in other countries, mainly from South America and Eastern Europe. With respect to the class atmosphere, there existed a high level of demotivation, with a high rate of failing grades in a big proportion of the subjects. Students' attitudes varied, nonetheless, but mostly matched their motivation. The entry profile of 1st of Baccalaureate is a B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

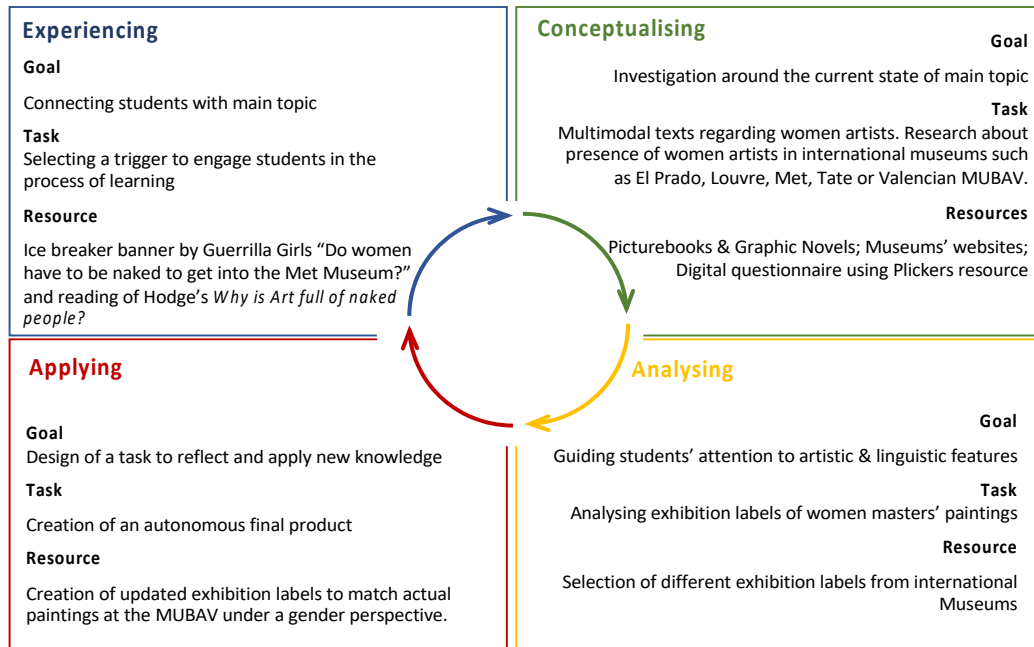
3.2 From innovation to research: design & implementation of a learning path

As a result of the evolution of the concept of literacy and the interest in the learning process as a meaning-making process, in 1996 a group of scholars known as the New London Group (hereinafter, NLG) coined the term Multiliteracies. Their aim was to establish a more contemporary vision of literacy that would also reflect the multiple forms of communication and the diverse linguistic contexts in a globalized society. Hence, Pilgrim and Martínez (2013: 62) point out that the NLG defines multiliteracies as "the multiple ways of communicating and making meaning, including visual, audio, spatial, behavioural, and gestural formats".

The Pedagogy of Multiliteracies not only incorporates the concept of Learning by Design but also the Framework for Knowledge Processes, which involves the implementation of four pedagogical acts: 1. Experiencing; 2. Conceptualising; 3. Analysing; and 4. Applying. While the elements characterizing each act can occur at any time during the learning process, Kalantzis et al. (2016) and Menke and Paesani (2019) emphasize that teachers must reflect in advance on how to combine and when to apply these processes according to their own goals. Next, in Figure 1, we present the pattern designed (based on Castellano-Sanz, 2023; Reyes-Torres & Castellano-Sanz, 2023) to include multimodal resources to actively engage and motivate students in their process of learning an additional language and develop critical literacy. Non-fiction picturebooks and graphic novels, such as those by Hodge (2016), Grande and Rosetti (2021), or Sotoca García (2022), were introduced. Additionally, other multimodal texts by Guerrilla Girls and @femme.sapiens and long overshadowed works by local and contextual women artists, such as Manuela Ballesteros, María Sorolla, Elena Carabia or surrealist Remedios Varo, among others, were incorporated to discuss and enrich the learning experience.

Learning Situation– Representing Women Masters

🕒 **Context** 1st Baccalaureate B1 Level CEFR 👤 **Participants** 25 students
 🏷️ **Topic** Art & Gender Gap ⌚ **Timing** 6 sessions



CONTENTS

<p>LINGUISTIC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital literacy: looking for information in different Museum webpages. 2. Use of specific vocabulary 3. Elaboration of informational texts: Art exhibition labels. 4. Reflection and critical discussion on gender gap in art. 	<p>ARTISTIC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating a genealogy of women artists 2. Being aware of discrimination and gender gap in art 3. Raising voice against discriminations in artistic contexts 4. Being able to analyse women’s masterpieces in their context. 	<p>MULTIMODAL</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysing banners, images and texts by Guerrilla Girls. 2. Decoding IG images by activists such as BarbieArtists or @femme.sapiens 3. Creating actual exhibition labels 4. Looking for information about gender gap in art on different platforms and formats.
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Main Goals

1. To create a timeline of Women Artists being underrepresented in history
2. To assess the reception of these women artists
3. To use the Pedagogy of the Multiliteracies to provide linguistic, artistic and multimodal scaffolding
4. To disseminate and promote the concept of gender awareness and social justice to critically engage students with their process of learning
5. To visit a museum adopting a gender perspective

Learning outcomes

1. Analysis of different campaigns made by Feminist Art Activists such as Guerrilla Girls
2. Women artists and their historical contexts
3. Acquisition of a critical point of view regarding gender gap when visiting a Museum
4. Creation of updated art exhibition labels in English with gender perspective.

Figure 1. Structure of the Learning Path based on Multiliteracies Pedagogy. Source: Created by the author.

3.2 Data collection

Students were asked to complete Likert scale questionnaires both before and after the intervention sessions. These questionnaires were chosen for their ability to solicit responses in a non-evaluative manner, as there are no 'correct' or 'incorrect' answers, thus minimizing any potential bias related to students' concern for academic evaluation (Dörnyei, 2007). Efforts were made to ensure the anonymity of responses and clarify that results would not influence their grades, aiming to encourage honest participation. The Likert scale format was selected for its ease of use and the straightforward nature of translating responses into numerical data for comparison, which is crucial for scientifically measuring attitudes (Joshi et al., 2015). Additionally, the decision to use closed-ended questions helped avoid biases linked to varying levels of English proficiency among students. Questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms, and students accessed them in class using their personal mobile phones through a QR code. On the qualitative side, data were collected from the results of a final task and continuous direct observations. The final task required students to create art labels for selected artworks, fostering engagement with content and allowing for the expression of critical thought. These tasks were evaluated using a B1 CEFR level rubric. The focus of this research was on enhancing students' motivation and reducing their affective filter, thus fostering a more confident and involved approach to English language learning.

In parallel, the teacher and researcher's direct observations provided insights into the students' participation, responses, and reflections during activities. This non-disruptive method was chosen for its ability to capture data without students feeling evaluated, aligning with the principles of qualitative research that values flexibility and sensitivity to the social context (Mason, 2002). Recognising that a researcher's neutrality is unattainable, the emphasis was placed on understanding the researcher's role in the process and selecting methods that minimized any inhibitive influence on the students (Mason, 2002). By doing so, the study aimed to eliminate negative factors and accurately ascertain the students' interest and motivation levels, thereby validating the hypothesis that changes in classroom elements could serve as a catalyst for heightened student motivation. Regarding the class discussion, the students' interactions were transcribed into Word format using a naturalized transcription (Bucholtz, 2000) in a document for working on and analysing the information. Once the questionnaires were analysed and the interviews transcribed, a thematic content analysis was conducted using NVivo 11 software, which specializes in processing qualitative data (Lopezosa, 2020). An initial coding was carried out through an inductive categorization process, as indicated in the specialized literature (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). This categorization, which involved not only identifying repeated patterns and common elements but also the uniqueness of each interaction, has helped to establish the benefits for social topics to develop critical literacy provided by female artist productions in a multimodal format. Subsequently, an analytical induction process was undertaken, which, as authors such as Goetz and LeCompte (1988) or Martínez (2006) suggest, consisted of deriving categories from the entire set of data. For this purpose, groups of textual units were associated around categories that emerged from the interpretation of the data provided by the students, both from the questionnaire and the focus group interviews. Once all

the information was organized (categorization and analysis of results), a realistic narrative approach to presenting results was chosen (Sparkes & Devís, 2007), in which references and comments to some direct quotations from the interviews were incorporated, serving as support for the set of reflections and interpretations that are presented below.

Categories	Codes
Multimodal Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity presented by addressing linguistic issues through authentic literary texts and artworks by female artists. • Need to introduce other multimodal resources that assist in visual literacy and intertextual connections, celebrating the contributions of female artists.
Linguistic and artistic mediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to artistic works on lesser-known female experiences to understand within a broader historical context. • Learning specific vocabulary to elaborate an exhibition label with gender perspective. • Opportunity to conduct controlled oral debates on current interest topics: gender equality, social sustainability, artistic representation and recognition.
Concept of Social Justice, feminism and SDGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to update and contextualise debate topics in additional language classes. • Need to provide themes that stem from students' interests, such as the study of female artists' impact on social issues. • Need to supply arguments for acquiring a critical viewpoint on how female artists' work challenges and shapes social narratives. • Need to emphasize and make visible the societal challenges addressed through the work of female artists, using them as case studies for promoting social justice and achieving the SDGs (No. 4, 10 & 16).

Table 1. Categories and units of meaning resulting from qualitative analysis. Source: created by the author.

4. RESULTS

The research main goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing motivation and critical perspective development through the integration of female artists' productions in an Artistic Baccalaureate English language learning environment. The sample size of the study was N=25 students, which included a diverse representation of gender identities. This section presents the findings from the initial questionnaire, subsequent activities, and the final questionnaire.

The initial questionnaire, completed prior to any intervention, aimed to capture the students' attitudes and opinions regarding the English subject. Utilizing short answers and a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), the questionnaire revealed a spectrum of responses. For instance, when students were

asked if they liked English as a subject (block III), 36% of them expressed a positive stance (28% Agree, 8% Strongly Agree), 24% neutral, and 40% negative (20% Disagree, 20% Strongly Disagree). When inquired about the subject's difficulty, 44% of students did not find English challenging, suggesting a readiness to engage with the language learning process. The interest in learning English was notably high, with 55% of students indicating interest or strong interest. This suggests that disengagement from the subject might not stem from disinterest in the language itself but perhaps from the teaching approach or content.

The analysis of activities focused on the role of women in the arts demonstrated a pre-existing critical engagement, with 48% of students having contemplated women's role in the arts before the study. However, recognition of women in art history was contentious, with only 52% acknowledging the underrepresentation of female artists. Regarding the previous knowledge on gender gap in art (blocks I & II), students were shocked by their little knowledge of female artists, beyond the most canonical names. In fact, no student had ever visited the Museu de Belles Arts de València (MUBAV), despite living just a few kilometers away from it, nor were they aware of the works of Valencian authors such as Manuela Ballester, Elena Carabia, or María Sorolla. Among the written responses in block I (short answers), are worth mentioning: *"I have always taken for granted that women have not had access to culture in general and to art in particular,"* (Student 1) *"What seems incredible to me is that some textbooks continue to treat female art as a movement in itself, without taking into account the general artistic movements"* (Student 2) or Student 3 who, paraphrasing Virginia Woolf wrote: *"for most of humanity, anonymous was a woman painter."* Apart from getting to know the students' awareness on gender gap in art, this research was focused on establishing a link between learning English by means of motivating contents. In this case, acknowledging their interest in art, the under-representation of women in this field and, as a final task, elaborating updated exhibition labels (informational language) for some works discussed, analysed and contextualised in class. Therefore, from the previous questions related to the learning of the English language, we highlight:

Initial Questionnaire	Strongly disagree/dislike (1 & 2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly agree/ like (4 & 5)
Opinion about English as a subject	40%	24%	36%
Is it a challenging subject?	44%	44%	12%
Are you interested in learning English?	12%	32%	56%

Table 2. Extract of answers to the Initial Questionnaire (block III). Source: created by the author

Post-intervention, the final questionnaire assessed any shifts in attitudes and perceptions. An encouraging finding was that 64% of students expressed a preference for activities related to the arts over traditional textbook content. This suggests a potential for increased engagement through curriculum content that aligns with

students' interests. Questions related to women artists in the art world revealed that a significant portion of students (72%) would be on the lookout for women artists in future exhibition visits, suggesting a positive shift in awareness. Moreover, there was a notable increase in optimism regarding the status of women in the art world, with 68% of students believing that things are changing for the better.

Post Questionnaire	Strongly disagree/dislike (1 & 2)	Neutral (3)	Strongly agree/like (4 & 5)
Opinion about English as a subject	20%	20%	60%
Is it a challenging subject?	28%	60%	12%
Are you now more interested in learning English?	8%	8%	84%
Interest of multimodal texts & realia regarding Arts		36%	64%
Will you attend and be aware of future women artists' exhibitions?		28%	72%
Regarding Museum's exhibitions, are they adopting a gender perspective?	24%	8%	68%

Table 3. Extract of answers to the post questionnaire. Source: created by the author

The final discussion in the classroom not only highlighted the immediate outcomes of the study, but it also paved the way for future research directions. By integrating discussions around gender inequality and relating them to the international advocacy campaigns #NosQueremosVivas or #MeToo, this research echoes Fraser's call for recognizing and addressing injustices that span across the economic, cultural, and political spheres of society (Fraser, 1996; Fraser & Honneth, 2003). This approach underscores the importance of incorporating feminist perspectives into educational content as a means of fostering a comprehensive understanding of social justice. Moreover, this dialogue directly ties into the SDGs, particularly goals 5, 10 and 16. Following an ethnographic approach to data gathering (Goetz & LeCompte, 1988; Angrosino, 2012), the researcher recorded and took notes of the students' oral interventions, in order to develop the discussion. Among the students' post interventions, these concerns were showed: Student 4: *"I would like to further analyse the other side of mythology, to be able to approach the universal paintings with a gender perspective (...) for example: why has Medusa come to occupy the role of the villain, when we are talking about a rape?"*.

Student 3 asserted that *"All museums should have purple glasses at the entrance, to be able to make a visit with a gender perspective. Only then can we understand paintings like 'The Satyr' by Antoni Fillol, which are also framed within the current #metoo movement"*; or Student 5 agreed that *"it has been insightful to work with this topic. The life stories of Manuela Ballester or Maria Sorolla were very interesting and I*

have adopted now a critic point of view towards exhibition. I think I will count now the number of works by women artists being exposed in the Museums I visit”.

The gathered data indicate that integrating subjects of personal interest, such as the works of female artists, can positively influence student engagement and contribute to the development of a critical perspective. The findings support the hypothesis that content related to students' artistic interests can lead to higher motivation and a more profound engagement with the English language. Future research could thus explore the effectiveness of curriculum designs that incorporate these global social justice issues, assessing their impact on student engagement and their understanding of their role in societal change.

5. CONCLUSION

In the culmination of the LITGENDI project, the integration of feminist art into the EFL classes has been thoroughly examined as a method to invigorate the academic landscape. The initiative, rooted in the soils of multimodal learning and critical pedagogy, sought to draw upon the power of visible female figures in art to foster a critical consciousness among students. This foray into the artistic tapestry of the language classroom has unveiled the potential for a profound reorientation in teaching methods and content delivery.

The results unequivocally suggest that the arts, especially when channelled through a feminist lens, can dramatically boost student engagement and motivation. The initiative has highlighted the unique opportunity that the arts provide for exploring civic issues such as gender inequality, thereby promoting a more equitable and inclusive educational experience. The active participation and input from students signal a keen interest in the subject matter, challenging the traditional confines of curriculum design. However, this study is not without its limitations. The constrained timeframe and modest sample size necessitate a cautious interpretation of the findings, which may not be universally applicable. The nature of observational research, too, carries its inherent challenges, demanding a thoughtful consideration of context in application and analysis. Despite these limitations, the implications of this research are far-reaching. It lays the groundwork for future explorations into the intersection of language learning with social justice and the arts. It beckons for continued innovation in curriculum development, teacher roles, and, critically, the content that we bring into our classrooms, all in pursuit of a holistic learning experience that resonates with students and prepares them to navigate and transform the world around them. The LITGENDI project, therefore, stands as both a testament and a beacon to the transformative power of education when it dares to embrace the arts as a vehicle for change.

NOTES

- 1 This research has been founded by the Innovative Project of the Universitat de València "Literacy, Gender and Diversity (LITGENDI): Multimodal Readings to Work on Intersectionality and Social Justice in English Teacher Training" (UV-SFPIE_PIEE-2732068), coordinated by the Faculty of Teacher Training during the 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years and with the participation of the Training, Innovation, and Resources Centres for Teachers specialising in multilingualism and artistic-expressive subjects.
- 2 All excerpts from Acaso and Megías (2017) originally in Spanish have been translated into English by the author.
- 3 Student interventions have been transcribed verbatim, with only grammatical errors corrected.

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