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Promoting and Working on Cognitive Skills through Videos and Drawings in the EFL Classroom

Margalida Frau Clar

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UIB Master's Thesis Supervisor: Dr Susana María Cortés Pomacóndor

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Abstract

This research aims to promote and work on the students' cognitive skills in the EFL¹ classroom in order to facilitate interpersonal relations among them and with the surrounding society through short videos and drawings. To that end, a didactic proposal of six lessons is designed for forth of ESO students to work on their social skills whilst enhancing their English-language proficiency and academic performance.

The proposal is based on a cognitive skills training of a social competence programme inspired by Professor Robert R. Ross of University of Ottawa that has proved very successful so far. Hence, the theoretical part of this paper presents a general overview of the bases that underpin it. Special attention is paid to the development proposals of one of the human intelligence types proposed by Gardner, which is the *interpersonal intelligence* (Gardner, 1983). However, the primary focus lies on the five interpersonal cognitive problem-solving (ICPS) skills identified by Spivack and Shure before Gardner.

Keywords: cognitive skills, interpersonal intelligence, five interpersonal problem-solving skills, videos, drawings

¹ EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, many schools are aware of the importance of the enhancement of their students' social competences and emotional intelligence. Education has become a difficult task for various reasons such as demotivation, aggressiveness, media, drugs and dysfunctional family situations among others. Education -as a means of instruction with the main focus on teaching concepts within the different subjects specified by the curriculum- is causing even more demotivation and rejection among young people. Parents and teachers report more and more time consumed by disciplinary measures intended to correct students' antisocial behaviours (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

Schools are under pressure to create safe, orderly and effective learning environments where students acquire social as well as academic skills that will allow them to succeed in school and beyond (Vincent, Horner, & Sugai, 2002). That is why some new educational programmes that focus on teaching to think, cognitive skills development, emotional education and values have been implemented in the last couple of years in schools around the world.

IES Son Rullan in Majorca (Spain) was the first high school to implement one of these social competence programmes in secondary education in that territory as a separate subject in the curriculum. It has been taught for two years now and has proved very successful so far. During my observation period there for the practicum proposal of the Master's degree in Teacher Training (MFPR), I became very interested in the subject and this led me to think that it would be ideal, at least, to put into practice some of its methodologies in the English class.

This way, students would work on their social skills whilst enhancing their English-language proficiency. Socially appropriate behaviours in the classroom are likely to decrease the amount of time spent on disciplinary actions and increase students' access to academic content (Vincent, Horner, & Sugai, 2002).

2. Aims and Objectives

IES Son Rullan follows a very complete programme because it includes the three key factors for good communication and interpersonal skills: a) cognitive; b) moral or ethical; and, c) emotional control. It consists of two volumes: the first one is aimed at students of 1st and 2nd of ESO, whilst the second one at 3rd and 4th of ESO students. However, it encourages using the first volume to do the whole programme during the first year of ESO and the second one during the third year. For this reason, it is highly recommended to conduct programme maintenance tasks during second and fourth of ESO so that the learners continue working on their social skills during that time. For this purpose, using short videos and drawings² in order to consolidate the five interpersonal cognitive problem-solving skills proposed by Spivack and Shure (1974) is highly recommended.

My proposal will be aimed at fourth of ESO students so that the maintenance tasks can be carried out in English. At this level, they will already be used to the dynamic of the activities, as they will have previously coursed the social competence subject in the previous years either in Catalan or in Spanish. Moreover, students are supposed to have a sufficient level of English at that time; therefore, it should not be difficult for them to follow the lessons. The objective of the European Union for 2020 is that at least 50% of 15 year-old students are able to have a simple conversation in English, which means a B1 level described by the CEFR³. This technique will, at the same time, serve as a tool for improving language learners' skills; it will not only make the classes more stimulating and communicative, but also will enhance students' critical thinking skills.

In my research, I will specially focus on the cognitive training of this programme and how it could be implemented in the English class. Hence, the main aim of

² All the illustrations included in this dissertation have been donated and specially designed by Coloma Clar Garí for the proposed lessons included in the didactic proposal section.

³ CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

this study is to promote and work on the students' cognitive skills in the EFL classroom in order to facilitate interpersonal relations among them and with the surrounding society through short videos and drawings.

For this, I will pay special attention to the development proposals of one of the human intelligence types proposed by Gardner, which is the *interpersonal intelligence* (Gardner, 1983) that reflects social skills, entailing emotions, empathy, behaviour, etc. However, I will focus on the five interpersonal cognitive problem-solving (ICPS) skills (Shure, 1982; Spivack, Platt, & Shure, 1976) identified by Spivack and Shure before Gardner. They considered these five skills to be essential for personal relations: a) causal thinking; b) alternative-solution thinking; c) consequential thinking; d) sensitivity of problems; and, e) means-end thinking.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Overview

There is no doubt that over the last decades, school populations have become increasingly diverse. Classrooms today are characterized by its multicultural nature: children come from a broad range of cultures, languages and socioeconomic backgrounds. Schools have faced an urgent need to create environments that are appropriate and sensitive to all students and that support and fulfil their social and academic needs. As Vincent, Horner, and Sugai (2002) state “[schools] can no longer afford to focus exclusively on delivering academic curricula; they are also responsible for establishing and maintaining socio-cultural microcosms that teach young people to negotiate the diverse values and social norms of a pluralistic society” (p. 2).

Due to this fact, children are also more likely to face and experience a variety of risk factors such as alcohol, drugs, violence, delinquency, premature sexual activity, and other problematic behaviours that can more easily lead them to poor school involvement. Some studies indicate that the greater the number of

risk factors for children, the greater the chance of a negative behavioural outcome later in life (Hawkins, Catalano, & Arthur, 2002). Wester, Stratton and Taylor (2001) stated that several social-emotional skill deficits often go hand-in-hand among young children with behavioural problems. This fact increases the probability of risk for difficulties in school and peer relationship (Gagnon, Craig, Tremblay, Zhou, & Vitaro, 1995).

With all this in mind, it is no difficult to realise that disciplinary challenges are undoubtedly part of most schools daily routine. Disciplinary measures intended to correct students' antisocial behaviours have therefore become more and more frequent among teachers and parents. Most educators tend to use traditional discipline approaches such as punishment and exclusion in order to prevent or eradicate misbehaviour, as they seem to be effective at first glance. It is my belief though, that these are not always the more appropriate and fair solutions to take, and yet there is sometimes an overuse of this type of discipline approaches. From my point of view, before making use of punishments it would be crucial to investigate whether there is an underlying problem causing the misbehaviour and to give the student an opportunity to explain him or herself.

In the traditional discipline approaches the desired behaviour is normally reinforced whereas the infractions are punished. This model has been largely criticised and even many authors such as Smith and Laslett (1992) consider it inappropriate for many reasons. These include:

- They foster an inappropriate model for human relationships.
- They foster anxiety and resentment.
- They have a short-lived "initial shock" effect.
- They encourage pupils to develop strategies to avoid getting caught.
- They do not promote good behaviour directly, but simply serve to inhibit or suppress misbehaviour.
- They do not deal with the causes of the misbehaviour.
- They focus attention on the misbehaviour.

Mayer (1999) agrees in the fact that when punishment is applied frequently it ends up losing its effectiveness; thus, it is no longer punishing. He also empathises the fact that these measures may provide a short-lived reprieve from disciplinary problems, but research has shown that in the long term, punishment and exclusion are ineffective and can lead to renewed incidents of disruption and escalating behaviours.

There are occasions though, where punishment becomes necessary, especially those in which the use of other measures has not been sufficient to prevent or eradicate a certain misbehaviour. However, even though punishments are sometimes a necessary part of maintaining discipline, many schools are characterized by their excessive punitive approach to manage infractions. Brodinsky (1980) found that schools spend more time and energy in implementing punitive measures than in implementing preventing or positive ones.

The Constructive Discipline is another existing discipline approach that serves as an alternative to the traditional ones and that offers a method for preventing punitive school climates and student misbehaviour. It emphasises functional assessment and a positive and preventive behavioural interventions. With this approach, students are no longer considered to be the source of the problem, and factors within schools that promote antisocial behaviours are corrected. As Mayer (1999) said "it focuses on constructing repertoires by teaching how to behave rather than how not to behave" (p. 52).

We should not forget though that each method of dealing with misbehaviour has its strengths and weaknesses and that the ideal would be that punishments were totally unnecessary. So, what schools can do in this respect is trying to prevent this kind of behaviour setting up effective learning experiences in order to improve the learning process. At the same time, they can help students develop social and emotional competence, as it is an essential link in reducing problem behaviour (Wright & Masten, 2005). Teachers will therefore play an important role in monitoring students' educational progress and general

wellbeing. In fact, one of the most significant change in schools over the years has been, according to Kyriacou (1997), “the shift towards seeing the teacher’s role as one of setting up learning experiences in which pupils are active and have a marked degree of control over the work they undertake” (p. 147). Nowadays, teachers not only deliver information and knowledge but they are also responsible for creating and conducting activities which enable students to develop intellectual and social competence involved in learning. There is evidence that the child’s competence, self-esteem, social support, and social and problem-solving skills can moderate the impact of risk factors during children’s school career (Rutter, 1987).

In this sense, we can say that the way students learn should be as important as the content of what is taught. There is currently a vast number of types of teaching methods used in schools and teachers are more concerned about the importance of process compared with product. For this, using learning activities, which incorporate more active pupil involvement, is essential. Such “active learning” approaches have, according to Kyriacou (1997), “increased in use, not only because they can foster greater understanding, better skills and increased transfer of learning, but also because of their beneficial effects on motivation and attitudes towards learning” (p. 39).

Burgess (1986), for example, outlines the need for the school curriculum to make use of the following ways of working, both within the traditional school curriculum subjects and through cross-curricular, interdisciplinary and extra-curricular activities:

- Active learning. Pupils learn through the practical activity of doing and through applying to their own experiences their knowledge and skills.
- Problem solving. Pupils are encouraged to identify problems and find their own solutions to them.
- Creativity. Pupils discover and develop their creative abilities by doing, making and organising.

- Communication. Pupils are encouraged to share with others their work, ideas and problems.
- Co-operation. Pupils learn to get on with others by working in groups and teams of different sizes.
- Negotiation. Pupils negotiate their work programme with teachers to meet their personal learning needs.
- Assessment. Pupils receive frequent and appropriate recognition of their achievements and experiences as recorded and assessed by themselves and others.

The activities proposed in the teaching proposal section of this Master's Thesis have been created and designed taking into account these principles. As we will see, students will be able to put into practise the English they have learned in an active and communicative way dragging on their own experiences. Discussions will be held in class in groups of different sizes where they will need to co-operate and negotiate with their classmates in order to reach agreements and find solutions to certain problems posed by the teacher. Creativity will also be enhanced by the "image and phrase" exercise where they will have to draw a picture that summarises the discussion topic of the correspondent lesson and add a suiting phrase to it. The teacher will also assess the students trying to give as much feedback as possible whilst monitoring the activities. It is important to highlight that, when assessing, the importance should be given to the skills developed by the process involved in this type of activities rather than to the product itself.

Moreover, the importance of the collaboration involved between students in such activities is tangible, as they will mostly work in groups rather than individually. For this reason, the proposal can be treated as a good example of "collaborative learning". As stated above, groups will be of different sizes but these will mainly vary from large to small groups of four or five students which, according to Kiriadou (1997) is "the optimum size for small group work for most types of tasks" (p. 50). She also mentions that the process involved in this form of work tends to develop social and communication skills among others, which

are crucial for the English class as well as for other subjects and life in general. It is important as well that the teacher shows skills in handling and understanding groups, as some studies of small group work have indicated that it enhances its effectiveness.

It can also be said that this proposal makes use of “experiential learning” which can be easily related to the cooperative learning stated above. Felicia Patrick (2011) defines this type of learning as “the process of making meaning from direct experience, namely learning through reflection on doing” (p. 1003). Kiriadou (1997), on her behalf, state that experiential learning involves “providing pupils with an experience which will totally and powerfully immerse them in ‘experiencing’ the issue which is being explored, and will as a result influence both their cognitive understanding and their affective appreciation (involving their feelings, values and attitudes)” (p.52). She also mentions that one of the most common examples of experiential learning is, among others, “watching a film or videos, which focus on a particular person’s perspective” (p. 53).

Videos are an important part of the didactic proposal of this Master’s Dissertation, as we will see and, these have been carefully selected in accordance with the lesson’s topic and, most of the times, with its main focus on a particular person’s perspective. These will serve as an effective learning tool that will be used actively in the English class. This means that students will not just sit back and watch the screen, but they will have to be attentive and retrieve their previous knowledge of language in order to comprehend when listening and watching the videos. Moreover, as Lansford (2014) mentions, Internet usage has increased from 16% in the world’s population in 2005 to about 40% today and nearly 80% in developed countries. So, we can say that our students are, with no doubt, totally accustomed to using video on a daily bases, and teachers should use that to their advantage.

3.2 Social Competence Programmes

It has been previously mentioned that education -as a means of instruction with the main focus on teaching concepts within the different subjects specified by the curriculum- is causing demotivation and rejection among young people. It is becoming increasingly clear that instruction is not enough and therefore students need to be educated. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are currently being used in education to assist students to learn more effectively (Flecknoe, 2010); however, these cannot teach students to become good people in an effective way. This is the main reason why, in recent years, new educational programmes including those promoting interpersonal cognitive problem-solving skills are emerging.

Some of these programmes do focus on teaching to think, that is the development of cognitive skills; whilst others pay special attention to the emotional education and the acquisition of moral values by the students.

Among the programmes that teach to think, we can mention the philosophy in the classroom programme by Matthew Lipman, the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment (FIE) programme by professor Feuerstein, the CoRT Method by Dr Edward de Bono or Howard Gardner's proposals for the development of multiple intelligences. Other authors emphasises the need for a proper emotional education and, working on this line, we find Goleman, professor Mark T. Greenberg with his famous PATHS programme or Robert Sylwester with his proposals. Others mainly focus on moral values and try to help their student discover them. In this respect, Kohlberg's method involving the discussion of moral dilemmas is a good example of it.

It can be said that all these programmes are useful and well structured but not complete. They just include some of the three key factors for a successful interpersonal relationship, which are according to Segura, Expósito & Arcas (2001): a) cognitive; b) moral or ethical; and, c) emotional control.

As previously mentioned, the didactic proposal of this dissertation is based on a cognitive skills training of a social competence programme inspired by Professor Robert R. Ross of University of Ottawa that has proved very successful so far. The success of this programme since its first implementation some years ago in Spain by Professor Garrido Genovès of University of Valencia has probably come from the fact that it includes the three key factors stated above.

This social competence programme has two main characteristics. The first one is that it focuses on interpersonal relations, on problems of coexistence and way these can be solved; and, the second one is that it uses a cognitive-behavioural approach. It is known that this type of approach has had a remarkable influence in the management of emotional disorders. Hence the aim of this programme is that students can develop positive relationships even though their surroundings are not that positive. These can be achieved with a cognitive-behavioural approach that takes into consideration social skills and moral maturity.

A large base of research indicates that that programmes promoting interpersonal cognitive problem-solving skills are beneficial in preventing early high-risk behaviours and later more serious problems (Fraser, Galinsky, Smokowski, Day, Terzian, Rose, & Guo, 2005). There is a proved evidence of the effectiveness of teaching the skills to children. Studies suggest that ICPS training is generally effective in improving the behaviour of children who show early signs of social maladjustment. It is therefore strongly recommended that such programs be integrated into regular classroom curriculum and daily life (Boxer & Dubow, 2002).

According to Gresham (1998) the succes of teachers in helping students develop social competence depends on their hability to infuse the curriculum with situation-specific social skills lessons that target key behaviours. Hence the intention of this disertation is to present through six lessons a didactic proposal that infuses the English curriculum with ideas of a social competence programme in order to enhance studen's social skills and English-language

proficiency at the same time. As mentioned earlier, special attention is paid to the development proposals of one of the human intelligence types proposed by Gardner, which is the *interpersonal intelligence* (Gardner, 1983). However, the primary focus lies on the five interpersonal cognitive problem-solving (ICPS) skills identified by Spivack and Shure before him. For this reason, a brief description of these ideas is presented in the following pages.

3.3 Theory of Multiple Intelligences

In order to train students' cognitive skills I will benefit from Gardner's ideas and his theory of multiple intelligences proposed in *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (first published 1983, revised edition 1993). According to him, an intelligence is "a bio-psychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture" (Gardner, 1999). Products can be a television, a plane, a piece of music, a dance movement, a political idea, etc. He proposed that there are eight intelligences and has suggested the possible addition of another intelligence, which he calls "number eight and a half": the existential intelligence, i.e. a capacity to contemplate the big philosophical questions such as "why are we here?" or "What is the purpose of life?" Gardner theorizes that people do not have just an intellectual capacity, but have many kinds of intelligence including musical, interpersonal and linguistic intelligences among others. However, a person might be particularly strong in a specific area -being normally two or three intelligences-, and not that strong or null in the others. The eight identified intelligences include 1) linguistic intelligence; 2) logical-mathematical intelligence; 3) spatial intelligence; 4) musical intelligence; 5) bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; 6) naturalistic intelligence; 7); intrapersonal intelligence; and, 8) interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1999).

In conceiving of intelligence as multiple rather than unitary in nature, the theory of multiple intelligences (hereafter MI) represents a departure from traditional conceptions of intelligence first formulated in the early twentieth century, measured today by IQ tests, and studied in great detail by Piaget (1950, 1952)

and other cognitively oriented psychologists. In this sense, Gardner has challenged the cognitive development work of Piaget bringing forward evidence to show that at any one time a child might be at very different stages and has successfully undermined the idea that knowledge at any one particular developmental stage hangs together in a structured whole (Smith, 2002, 2008).

However, Gardner's MI theory has come under criticism by both psychologists and educators. These critics argue that Gardner's definition of intelligence is too broad and that his eight different "intelligences" simply represent talents, personality traits, and abilities.

Despite this, MI theory is very popular among educators around the world as many teachers use multiple intelligences in their teaching philosophies and work to integrate Gardner's theory into the classroom. As Smith (2002, 2008) states, while there may be some significant questions and issues around Gardner's notion of multiple intelligences, it still has had utility in education. It has helped a significant number of educators to question their work and to encourage them to look beyond the narrow confines of the dominant discourses of skilling, curriculum, and testing. To the extent that his MI theory has helped educators to reflect on their practise, and given them a basis to broaden their focus and to attend to what might assist people to live their lives well, then it has to be judged a useful addition.

In this proposal I will mainly focus on the *interpersonal intelligence* and its development but, in order to have an overview and to learn about the major characteristics of each type of intelligence, I will draw upon some of Kendra Cherry's (2018) brief definitions:

- 1) Linguistic intelligence

People who are strong in linguistic intelligence are able to use words well, both when writing and speaking. These individuals are typically very good at writing stories, memorizing information, and reading.

- Strengths: words, language and writing.
- Some potential career choices: writer, journalist, lawyer or teacher.

2) Logical-mathematical intelligence

People who are strong in logical-mathematical intelligence are good at reasoning, recognizing patterns, and logically analysing problems. These individuals tend to think conceptually about numbers, relationships, and patterns.

- Strengths: analysing problems and mathematical operations.
- Some potential career choices: scientist, mathematician, computer programmer, engineer or accountant.

3) Spatial intelligence

People who are strong in spatial intelligence are good at visualising things. These individuals are often good with directions as well as maps, charts, videos, and pictures.

- Strengths: visual and spatial judgment.
- Some potential career choices: architect, artist and engineer.

4) Musical intelligence

People who have strong musical intelligence are good at thinking in patterns, rhythms and sounds. They have a strong appreciation for music and are often good at musical composition and performance.

- Strengths: rhythm and music.
- Some potential career choices: musician, composer, singer, music teacher or conductor.

5) Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence

Those who have high bodily-kinesthetic intelligence are said to be good at body movement, performing actions and physical control. People who are strong in this area tend to have excellent hand-eye coordination and dexterity.

- Strengths: physical movement and motor control.
- Some potential career choices: dancer, builder, sculptor or actor.

6) Naturalistic intelligence

Naturalistic is the most recent addition to Gardner's theory and has been met with more resistance than his original seven intelligences. According to Garner, individuals who are high in this type of intelligence are more in tune with nature and are often interested in nurturing, exploring the environment, and learning about other species. These individuals are said to be highly aware of even subtle changes to their environments.

- Strengths: finding patterns and relationships to nature.
- Some potential career choices: biologist, conservationist, gardener or farmer.

7) Intrapersonal intelligence

Individuals who are strong in intrapersonal intelligence are good at being aware of their own emotional states, feelings and motivations. They tend to enjoy self-reflection and analysis -including daydreaming, exploring relationships with others and assessing their personal strengths-.

- Strengths: introspection and self-reflection.
- Some potential career choices: philosopher, writer, theorist or scientist.

8) Interpersonal intelligence

These who have strong interpersonal intelligence are good at understanding and interacting with other people. These individuals are skilled at assessing the emotions, motivations, desires and intentions of those around them.

- Strengths: understanding and relating to other people.
- Some potential career choices: psychologist, philosopher, counsellor, salesperson or politician.

The final two intelligences are what Gardner called “personal intelligences” (Gardner 1999: 41-43). In *Frames of Mind* he treated the personal intelligences “as a piece”; they are often linked together because of their close association in most cultures. However, he still argues that it makes sense to think of two forms of personal intelligence. Hence in this dissertation we will just focus on the interpersonal intelligence development and, more specifically, on the five interpersonal cognitive problem-solving skills proposed by Spivack and Shure (1974), which will be defined in the following section. The latter are, practically speaking, what Gardner called interpersonal intelligence.

Gardner also claimed that the intelligences rarely operate independently; apparently, they are used at the same time and tend to complement each other as people develop skills or solve problems.

According to Norman (2003), Gardner also acknowledges the concept of an MI profile, also called multiplicity of intelligences and she declares that:

This is based on the understanding that each intelligence category actually covers a range of different skills and abilities. For example, music is made up of rhythm, tone, pitch, notation, playing a range of different instruments, singing, etc. Any one person will have different levels of skill in each of these aspects, and we all have potential in them all, but to different degrees. Potential may be enhanced or lost depending on how much we practise and develop each aspect, and Gardner does say that intelligences are to be developed. (p. 30)

3.2 Interpersonal Cognitive Problem-Solving (ICPS) Skills

In general terms, social problem solving (SPS) is the process of achieving social goals and is a framework for considering social competence (Rubin et al.,

1991). Interpersonal cognitive problem-solving (ICPS) is an aspect of social and emotional learning that influences social cognition, adjustment and competence (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Sure (2001) states that ICPS emphasises the way in which children think concerning social situations rather than the content or specific behaviours, and includes the abilities to generate alternative solutions to problems, recognise consequences, and use cause and effect reasoning.

Spivak and Shure (1974) indicated that social problem solving skills consist of a number of interrelated elements including the abilities to: a) identify and understand the motives and behaviour of others; b) produce alternative solutions to solve interpersonal problems; c) express potential consequences of social actions (consequential thinking); d) understand or recognise interpersonal problems; and, e) think of steps to reach social goals (means-end thinking).

Before moving on to the methodology section of this study and in order to know what the five interpersonal cognitive problem-solving (ICPS) skills consist of, in more detail, some explanations are given below. To that end, we borrow some of Nancy Eisenberg's (2014) and Segura, Expósito & Arcas (2001) brief definitions:

a) Causal thinking

It is an understanding or appreciation of the fact that how one feels or acts may have been influenced by (and, in turn, may influence) how others feel and act. Those who have not developed the causal thinking do tend to attribute everything to coincidence, bad luck or they are simply speechless when they face an interpersonal problem.

b) Alternative-solution thinking

It is the ability to generate an assortment of different solutions to a certain problem but not necessarily recognise the best one. It also refers to the ability to open one's mind and to see many different outcomes. People with unthinking or

aggressive attitudes have a lack of alternative-solution thinking and therefore they just normally see a violent solution.

c) Consequential thinking

It is the tendency to consider the consequences of one's social acts for others as well as oneself, and to generate alternative consequences to a social act before deciding what to do. Nowadays, there are a lot of people who have a lack of this type of thinking mostly due to the audio-visual culture we are surrounded by. They always complain and regret not having considered the consequences of their acts. These acts can include their attitude towards their family, spending more money than what they have, taking drugs, etc.

d) Sensitivity of problems

It is "an awareness of the variety of possible problems that beset human interactions and sensitivity to the existence of an interpersonal problem or at least the potential for such problems whenever people get together" (Spivak et al., 1976, p.5). In other words, it is the cognitive skill to put yourself in another person's shoes. That is the ability of looking at a situation from a different point of view; the ability to empathise, which is opposite to selfishness. This is the thinking that makes us to love and, ergo, the one that makes us humans. Aggressive people and specially those who have violent thoughts normally do not have this ability.

e) Means-end thinking

It refers to the ability to articulate the step-by-step means that may be necessary in order to carry out the solution to any interpersonal problem. It is a skill that includes recognition of obstacles that could interfere with goal completion, and the realisation that goal satisfaction may not occur immediately. Alternatively stated, it is setting objectives and arranging the means to achieve these specific objectives.

4. Methodology

There are many ways of working on the five interpersonal problem-solving skills. However, one of the most practical and entertaining one for the students is through short videos (or films if there are no time constraints) and drawings. It is worth mentioning that these materials can always be adapted to the age of the students and their level but, as I have previously mentioned in the introduction, this proposal will be aimed at fourth of ESO students.

The five interpersonal problem-solving skills will be developed through six lessons, each one focusing on one of the aforementioned skills. The sixth lesson will recapitulate all the ICPS previously seen and will therefore be the perfect closing of these six proposed lessons. Furthermore, in each lesson not only the main skill will be present but also one or some of the other skills will secondarily be used. Two lessons per term can be introduced into the regular English classes. However these can be divided in as many sessions as required. If students participate enthusiastically in these lessons, the 55-minute regular session will not probably be enough.

The technique used is quite simple and will be repeated throughout the six lessons. Each lesson will be divided into three stages: a) “topics”, b) “metacognition or general discussion questions”; and, c) “image and phrase”. All three stages can be presented either through videos, images or simply explaining them to the learners; however, we must try to use as many visual aids as possible so that the classes are more dynamic and fun. It is not necessary though -as we will see in the following sections- that the three stages are presented in a particular order; this way we will prevent our students from getting bored during the process.

The teacher will always start the lesson introducing the skill or skills the students are going to be working on that day and explaining how the session will be organised. During the introduction and the metacognition or general discussion questions, both the students and the teacher sit in a circle because

that position fosters more participation, whilst for the other exercises, students will work in small groups of four or five students. It is important that we form heterogeneous groups and that those are different in each lesson.

There will always be two discussion topics per lesson and these will follow the same methodology, unless otherwise indicated: we propose the topic and we give our students approximately one or two minutes to think about it in silence; after that, they work on the topic during four or five minutes in small groups; and, finally, all groups share their ideas and thoughts through a representative previously chosen by the group.

It will be preferable that, when possible, the discussion topics are chosen in accordance with the unit previously seen in the English class so that the actual curriculum is infused with situation-specific social skills lessons that target key behaviours. This way, students will be able to practise the vocabulary and some grammatical structures recently reviewed.

During the metacognition stage where the students sit in a circle, the questions are asked to the whole class. So, the learners who want to talk must raise their hand in order to do so and, of course, the more students that get involved, the better.

In the image and phrase exercise, students are asked to draw a picture including a short phrase summarising what has been discussed during the class in groups of five. To that end, a copy of the drawing proposed in each lesson is given to them as an example. Then, all the groups share their drawings and, not only the artistic merit is valued at this stage, but also the creativity and the appropriateness plays an important role.

5. Didactic Proposal

5.1 Lesson 1. Advantages, disadvantages and doubts.

5.1.1 Introduction

This is going to be the first lesson of the didactic proposal. We can, therefore, start the class by discussing with the students about their idea of intelligence. They can explain whether they think an intelligent person is just the one who has more studies or it can also be someone who is able to resolve conflicts and get along with people with different characters and completely different interests. After that, we can give a brief explanation of the five interpersonal cognitive problem-solving skills and remind them that it is not possible to socialise with people without having them.

In this lesson we are mainly going to exercise the consequential thinking and, at the same time, the alternative-solution thinking and the sensitivity of problems thinking. We start with the consequential one because students are more used to think about advantages and disadvantages of day-to-day situations. However, as it is not extremely necessary to start with this lesson, we might decide to do it when studying the advantages and disadvantages in the EFL class so that the students can put in practise what they have learned so far in terms of vocabulary, grammar structures, etc.

Moreover, they are going to be working in groups so that they will have to listen actively, not only to their group members, but also to the other groups when sharing different ideas. They will also learn to respect each other more and not make fun of what other people say. A part from that, we will reflect on the metacognition questions and will enhance creativity by thinking all together of an expressive drawing.

5.1.2 Methodology

As previously mentioned, it is much better that, when possible, both the students and the teacher sit in a circle because that configuration fosters participation.

To start, we can explain a bit more what the consequential thinking is and its importance for our interaction with others. We can also mention the seriousness of the situations in which the lack of this type of thinking could lead us to.

Then, we propose the first discussion topic to the students and we give them approximately one minute to think about the topic in silence and to write down as many advantages and disadvantages as they can. After that, they work on the topic during four or five minutes in groups of five or six students.

Finally, all groups share their ideas and thoughts as follows: each group chooses a representative for the “advantages”, one for the “disadvantages” and another one for the “doubts” -doubts are those consequences we do not know whether they are positive or negative and can be formulated as questions rather than as statements-; the teacher asks the first group for one advantage, then the second one which has to give another advantage without repeating what the first one said, and so on. We will continue until the advantages are all said. After that, we proceed with the disadvantages but, this time, we start with the second group so that the first one will become the last to speak. Lastly, students share their doubts in the same way, starting with the third group.

When everyone has finished, the second discussion topic is proposed and we follow the same methodology one more time. The teacher will have to make sure –as a good moderator- that all students take part in the activity, that they listen actively to their classmates and that the ideas shared are not repeated.

After that we move on to the “metacognition” stage and conclude the lesson with the “image and phrase” exercise.

5.1.3 Topics

In order to exercise the consequential thinking the following topics can be addressed:

- What would the main advantages, disadvantages and doubts be if everyone had the same salary?
- The second discussion topic can be presented through a video that has become quite popular thanks to social media. I am referring to a video about the rock, pebbles and sand analogy for time management. This video will make students reflect on what are the important things in their life and also think about the advantages, disadvantages and doubts of managing the things that really matters first. In terms of vocabulary, this video is quite simple and can be easily followed by the students just with their previous knowledge. However, if there are some students that we think that might need help, we can always print the transcription of the video or a vocabulary worksheet with the most difficult terms to have a quick look at before playing the video.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5ZvL4as2y0>

5.1.4 Metacognition or general discussion questions

In order to reflect on the substantive theme of discussion that is the need to foresee the consequences -either positive or negative- before taking any decision, the following questions can be posed:

- Is it easy to think about the advantages, disadvantages and doubts before taking any decision? Do we normally do it implicitly?
- What shall we do if we have many doubts? (The answer here should be looking for more information in order to clear out the doubts rather than playing heads or tails).
- Which is the main thinking we have exercised in this lesson? Which are the secondary ones? (The answer is the consequential thinking as the

main one and the alternative-solution thinking and the sensitivity of problems thinking as the secondary ones).

- Do we think about the pros and cons before taking any decision or we rather decide what we want and then look for reasons to justify the decision we have taken?

5.1.5 Image and phrase

As previously mentioned, this lesson concludes with a creative intelligence exercise. It consists of drawing a picture with a short phrase at the bottom in small groups that summarises what has been done during the class. All group members have to participate and all should agree on the picture they want to represent and the accompanying phrase.

They can find inspiration in the image that appears below (Fig. 1). For that, we can hand in a copy to each group before starting this drawing stage. If they need further help with the creative exercise, we can provide them with the following ideas:

Possible short phrases:

- Sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.
- One must pay the consequences for one's actions.

Possible drawings:

- A girl who knows that her fiancé is very jealous and starts dancing with another boy.
- A person who finds a good job after spending many years studying and preparing him or herself for it.



Figure 1. What shall I do? Think about the consequences and do what is best for you.

5.2 Lesson 2. The way things stand. Considering the current situation under the current circumstances: getting the right diagnosis.

5.2.1 Introduction

In this lesson we are mainly going to work on the causal thinking: the cognitive ability that consists in being able to define a problem and to diagnose a certain situation. I am referring to interpersonal situations and, more specifically, those in which there is a conflict.

In order to make a correct diagnosis, it is necessary to have as much information as possible to know the factors that shape a certain problem. If we are not aware or we do not give enough importance to a relevant factor, then we won't be able to make a correct diagnosis and therefore provide a suitable solution.

When we are in a relationship, for example, and there is a problem, we normally tend to put the blame on our other half, rather than on the root of the problem, which might be job stress, too many responsibilities, etc. With the students something similar happens: bad behaviour and poor performance at school is normally attributed to the age or the classmates when maybe there is an underlying issue related to their family or even drugs.

Moreover, most of us, at some point, have had some kind of problem because we have forgotten something relevant such as an important birthday or the CV when going to an interview...

So, in order to be able to consider all relevant factors affecting our lives and our relationships, in this unit we are not only going to work on the causal thinking - as previously mentioned-, but also we are going to be using the alternative-solution thinking, the sensitivity of problems thinking and the consequential thinking. That is because we are going to be considering several factors; we will try to put ourselves in someone else's shoes in order to see how they perceive a certain problem or situation and we will also have to take into consideration the consequences of our actions and decisions taken. Hence, the five interpersonal problem-solving skills are always interrelated.

5.2.2 Methodology

Once we have briefly explained the ideas mentioned in the introduction to our students, we can start this lesson with the "image and phrase" exercise, then we will move on to the "metacognition" stage and, finally, we will end up with the two "discussion topics". It is important to remember that for the introduction and "metacognition" stage both the students and the teacher sit in a circle whilst for the other exercises, students work in small groups just as in the previous lesson. Discussion topics will always follow the same methodology too.

5.2.3 Image and phrase

In this lesson, students will start with this creative exercise with no more information than the one provided by the teacher in the introduction and their own life experiences. For this reason, it is extremely important that they understand our explanations on the topic before proceeding. In this respect, it is advisable that some questions are posed and a dialogue is conducted before starting.

In small groups, students will have to draw a picture with a short phrase at the bottom that represents graphically the need to inquire about something and to consider all relevant factors before taking any decision, especially if that is an important one.

We can hand in a copy of the drawing below (Fig. 2) to each group and discuss it with them before starting with this stage. If they need further help with the creative exercise, we can provide them with the following ideas:

Possible short phrases:

- Think the best and you won't be far wrong.
- Do not give a gift without understanding first the recipient's personality and tastes.

Possible drawings:

- A person who has just arrived from the supermarket and realises that something is out of date.
- Someone that tells an inappropriate homophobic joke to a homosexual person.



Figure 2. Finding a great gift for someone is not that easy, make it personal!

5.2.4 Metacognition or general discussion questions

We can pose the following questions to the whole class when sitting in a circle in order to generate a lively discussion, as participatory as possible:

- Imagine what would happen if we became well informed of a certain topic before having a discussion of any kind? (The answer is that we should strive to get the right information so that we would not talk nonsense before knowing what we are talking about). In order to answer, modal verbs such as “should” or “would” will be required.
- Recall an anecdote about someone -it can be about yourself, a family member or an actor in a film- making a blunder. The students will therefore have to use past tenses such as past simple and past continuous in order to express so.

- What could we do if we are afraid of forgetting or missing something important when doing an interview? The modal verb “could” should appear in the students’ answers.
- Don’t you think that we do sometimes just see what we want to see? For instance, when we want to buy a second hand car and we pay more attention to the colour rather than to the price or the motor condition. Students will be able to use some useful expressions to express their opinion such as: “in my opinion”, “in my eyes”, “as far as I am concerned”, “speaking personally”... And, if these have not been revised for some time we can provide them with a list.

5.2.5 Topics

In order to exercise the causal thinking the following topics can be addressed:

- The first discussion topic can be presented through an interesting video called *How to Magically Connect with Anyone* about a talk given at TEDx event by Brian Miller who is a magician, corporate keynote speaker, and youth motivational speaker. At the beginning of the video he talks about the magicians and the art they have mastered of understanding different perspectives in order to create illusions and connect with the audience. Later on, he explains how he used that skill to create magic for a blind man. Then, he shares how you can use the same technique to make better, more meaningful connections with people in your life, both personally and professionally.

As this video is a bit longer than the one we use in the first lesson and its level of difficulty is a bit higher, it is recommended to print out the transcription and hand in a copy to each group. This way, students can first read it and ask any doubts they may have in terms of vocabulary or grammatical structures. The vocabulary present in the video is highly related to magic and magicians so pupils are likely to learn new expressions and words related to this topic.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4cV8yfgNyl>

- The second discussion topic could be the factors to be taken into consideration when choosing a career path. We can give some specific examples if needed such as taxi driver, doctor or teacher.

5.3 Lesson 3. Rules and regulations.

5.3.1 Introduction

Life without rules would be a complete chaos. Regulations facilitate the way in which an activity is developed and, for this reason, rules and regulations are in our day to day. We find laws in every country; there are rules in all the games; there are compulsory rules for road traffic...

In order to establish good and positive rules, or, in order to be able to judge whether the existing ones are good, the means-end thinking is completely necessary. We need to draw a clear distinction between “good” rules and “bad” rules. Bad rules can lead to inefficiency, authoritarianism and injustice whilst the good ones are a valuable assistance for all of us although they may seem not as positive when restricting, to some extent, our liberty.

So, during this lesson, we will be exercising the means-end thinking, and, at the same time, students will learn to accept fair and effective rules and regulations more easily.

As regards to the use of English, we can say that, undoubtedly, modal verbs will be present and will play an important role throughout the lesson, both in past and present tenses. We tend to use these verbs when we want to express permission, prohibition, obligation or no obligation and, therefore when talking about rules and regulations, which is the main discussion topic of this unit. These include: “have to / don’t have to”, “must / mustn’t”, “should /shouldn’t”, “can”, “may” or “could”.

5.3.2 Methodology

To start this lesson we explain the ideas previously mentioned in the introduction to our students in an entertaining yet amusing way. For this purpose, after our brief explanation and before moving on to the regular methodological stages, we can start with a quick game. So, in groups of four, students will have to think of a sport or game and write down at least five of its rules. This way, they will start exercising the means-end thinking whilst practicing some modal verbs.

After that, and sitting in a circle, we can move on to the “metacognition” stage, which will include a discussion of a video. Then, once all the questions have been answered and discussed we can continue with the “discussion topics” in the same way we have been doing it in previous lessons and finish with the “image and phrase” exercise.

5.3.3 Metacognition or general discussion questions

We pose the following questions to our students and we discuss them one by one:

- When would you say that a rule is “good” and when would you say is “bad”?
- Why do you think we do not generally like rules?
- Do you think that all the rules must stipulate a fair and proportionate consequence or penalty for those who fail to follow them? If there was not a foreseen penalty, what would be the difference between a rule and a piece of advice?
- Would it be possible to live with no rules? After this last discussion question, we can play a 10-minute video of an abandoned city in the desert of California called Slab City that has no rules. After watching the video, students must discuss what they have seen and whether they would like to live there rather than in a city with laws.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUTYSyd3LR0>

5.3.4 Topics

In order to exercise the means-end thinking the following topics can be addressed:

- Which rules would you establish to start living on a desert island?
- Which are the five rules you consider essential to keep a good and fair relationship working?

5.3.5 Image and phrase

We can start the last activity by discussing the drawing proposed for this lesson (Fig. 3) and that we will have previously handed in to each group before starting with this stage. After that, we ask each group to create their own one and, at the same time, we provide them with the following ideas in case they need further inspiration:

Possible short phrases:

- Equal rules for all.
- Rules, standards and laws should be reviewed from time to time.

Possible drawings:

- Imagine the chaos of what would happen in your city if there were no longer any road signs or traffic lights.
- Imagine a football match without police officers monitoring the grandstands.



Figure 3. Are classroom rules needed?

5.4 Lesson 4. Aims, goals and objectives.

5.4.1 Introduction

Having goals that we are passionate about give us something to look forward to each and every single day. In other words, it helps us to know where we are going. That is why it is so important to set goals for our life, otherwise we would not have a reason to wake up every morning, to go to school, or to live. Some people say that aiming at nothing is setting yourself up to nothing.

For this reason, we are going to be working on the means-end thinking one more time. However, this time, instead of conceptualizing the means in terms of rules and regulations -as we did in the previous lesson-, we are going to be focussing on moving towards a certain goal. Moreover, the sensitivity of problems will also be present this time as we should also be interested in discovering what other people's objectives are. This is not out of mere curiosity,

but getting to know what other people's objectives are, especially if they are close to us, might let us help them to achieve these.

During this unit, students will mostly use future tense, as they will discuss about their future, their hopes, goals and plans. This tense can be confusing to some English language learners. So, it would be advisable to briefly review its different forms of use as follows before proceeding further: "will + a verb", "be going to + a verb" and "be + a verb + ing".

5.4.2 Methodology

This lesson starts with both the students and the teacher sitting in a circle. This way, the teacher explains the ideas of the lesson introduction and the importance of having goals in life. After that, the lesson will be developed as follows: firstly, we will start with the "discussion topics"; secondly, we will move on to the "image and phrase" exercise; and, lastly, we will finish with the "metacognition" stage.

5.4.3 Topics

In order to exercise the means-end thinking and, at the same time, the sensitivity of problems, the following topics can be addressed:

- We can present the first discussion topic through a very emotional Egyptian short film by Sarah Zorik based on a situation of Ghandi's life titled *The Other Pair* in which the theme is altruism and empathy. After watching the video we ask our students to discuss the story and its meaning. Apart from that, as there is no dialogue in the video, we can tell them that the film is based on an event in the life of Mahatma Gandhi and read out the story so they can still exercise their listening skills:

"As Gandhi was stepping aboard a train one day, one of his shoes slipped off and landed on the track. He was unable to retrieve it as the train started moving. To the amazement of the other passengers, Gandhi took off his other shoe and threw it back along the track to land close to

the first shoe. Later a fellow passenger asked him, 'Why did you do that?' Gandhi replied, 'The poor man who finds the shoe lying on the track will now have a pair he can use.'"

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGh0iduZOJQ>

- The second discussion topic can be about themselves and their future. We can ask them what are their plans or goals in life once they finish high school.

5.4.4 Image and phrase

As we normally do, we start this exercise by handing in a copy of the lesson's drawing (Fig. 4) that we use as an inspirational example for the students. Once they have it, we can hold a quick discussion all together about the message of the image and the phrase. After that, we ask each group to create their own drawings with the accompanying phrases reflecting what it has been discussed so far. As we normally do, we provide them with some ideas in case they need further inspiration:

Possible short phrases:

- Before taking the first step it is crucial to know where we are going.
- They can because they think they can.
- No pain, no gain.
- The longest journey starts with a single step.

Possible drawings:

- An architect carefully draws a house plan before he actually begins to build it.
- Someone planning his or her next trip.



Figure 4. A sculptor visualizes the piece of art before its completion.

5.4.5 Metacognition or general discussion questions

We can pose the following questions to the whole class when sitting in a circle to help students think about the importance of having objectives and goals in life. It is worth recalling that the discussion must be lively and everyone should take part in it:

- Some people say that in order to avoid any kind of disappointment, we should not entertain any illusions about someone or something. Do you agree?
- Think about something you failed at. Did you think that particular goal you had previously set was impossible to achieve or you rather had not worked or tried hard enough?
- Discuss the following sentence: “Living means having goals and living with somebody means sharing those goals.”

5.5 Lesson 5. Priorities.

5.5.1 Introduction

In previous lessons we have tried to help our students open their minds and broaden their perspectives on the world around them. To that end, we have made it clear that before taking any decision we should first think of the consequences, consider all the possible paths of action, or alternatives that we have in front of us and also take into account not only our point of view, but also different points of view. Nevertheless, in the decision-making process that we have now approached there is another important step we have not mentioned yet but that is also crucial when the time comes to take a decision or make a choice. I am referring to the fact that it is essential to limit choice in our life in order to take an appropriate decision, otherwise it is possible that we get overwhelmed by the huge number of options that are within our grasp.

The way we live our lives or the way we spend our time and money is determined by the options we take and the choices we make. In today's consumer culture, we are bombarded with infinite choices, whether it is from intrusive commercials on TV, continuous offers at the supermarkets, or simply from having too many possibilities due to the nature of society today and globalization. Hence it is so important to place the different options, or alternatives in a priority ranking, based upon our own value system.

Making thoughtful decisions and setting up priorities is a sign of maturity. In this regard, children are sometimes unable to choose because they just want to have it all. Little by little though, we learn to favour certain alternatives and giving up others. For this, it is very important to have a clear hierarchy of values.

We should always remember the popular phrase "first things first" when organising our time, spending our money, planning our job or deciding what kind of people we want in our lives. This phrase is used to say that one should do the things that are most important before doing other things, or, in other words, that prioritising is a must.

This lesson will bring us a step closer to the decision; the action, and, at the same time, it will entail emotional control, willpower and not being afraid to commit oneself and to jump in. Moreover, when setting up our priorities, we have to take into account that others can legitimately have different priorities. That is why the sensitivity of problems will play a special role during the lesson together with the alternative-solution thinking, the causal thinking and the consequential thinking which will also be required.

It is also important to mention that, this time we will not only focus on the cognitive aspect but also on values and their hierarchy, with a significant emotional component.

5.5.2 Methodology

As we normally do, we start this lesson in circle explaining our students as briefly and clearly as possible the ideas mentioned in the introduction. This time the methodological stages will be presented as follows: “image and phrase” exercise, “metacognition” stage and “discussion topics”.

The “image and phrase” exercise will be done in small groups. In the “metacognition” stage, classroom seating is arranged in a circle to allow greater group interaction. And, finally, during the last stage, we give our students approximately one or two minutes to think about the “discussion topics” in silence; after that, they work on it during four or five minutes in small groups; and, once all groups are ready, they all share their ideas and thoughts.

5.5.3 Image and phrase

We must remember that when starting the lesson with this creative exercise, students will only have the ideas they have heard and understood from the introduction to create their own representative drawings. So, it is very important for us, as teachers, to make sure that the lesson’s main idea is clear enough for everyone. For this, we might like to pose some quick questions first, and then

hand in the copy of the drawing included in this lesson (Fig. 5) and that we always use as an inspirational example to all groups.

As always, after having a class discussion on the topic, we can give them further examples as per below:

Possible short phrases:

- One must do ones have to's before doing ones wants to's.
- I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become.

Possible drawings:

- A boy that spends the whole afternoon watching TV and doesn't do the homework he has to present the next day in class.
- A girl who goes to visit her sick grandmother even though she knows she will miss her favourite TV programme.



Figure 5. Work responsibilities should be addressed before fun.

5.5.4 Metacognition or general discussion questions

The following questions can be posed to the whole class sat in circle in order to generate a lively discussion:

- When we decide which our priorities are, should we also take into consideration others' priorities or just ours?
- We tend to prioritise urgency over importance. How would you solve this recurring problem?
- What is the relation between priorities and "hierarchy of values"? Does everyone in class have a clear hierarchy of values?
- Could you give an example of a priority that is quite obvious?

5.5.5 Topics

In this unit the following topics can be addressed so that our students exercise the sensitivity of problems as the main thinking and, additionally the alternative-solution thinking, the causal thinking and the consequential thinking:

- Are your current priorities the same ones you had last year?
- In order to present the second discussion topic we can play an animated short film from the Institute of Animation, Visual Effects and Digital Postproduction at the Filmakademie Baden-Wuerttemberg in Ludwigsburg, Germany named "The Present". This short film tells the story of an upset disabled teenage boy who is playing video games when his mother surprises him with a present. When he opens the box, reveals an energetic puppy that is also missing most of its left front leg. At the beginning he seems disgusted with the dog and tries to ignore him, but when he sees the dog is so happy and can do lots of things, he goes outside to play with him.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjqiU5FgsYc>

After watching and discussing the video, we can ask our students the following questions: What priorities do you think this boy has before he is given the puppy as a gift? Do they change once he has the puppy? Do you think the puppy is like a mirror of the boy?

This time, we should try to use the passive voice as much as we can and make our students use it as well. We tend to use it when we want to focus attention on the person or thing affected by the action. The idea here is to focus attention on the present given by the mother, which is the puppy and also the boy who has been given the present. For this purpose, and if the teacher considers it necessary, he or she can do a quick review of the passive voice, its grammatical structure and usage.

5.6 Lesson 6. Explaining and deciding

5.6.1 Introduction

We have now reached the last lesson of the didactic proposal, which has been devoted to the development of interpersonal intelligence through the five problem-solving skills. For this reason and, as previously mentioned in the methodology section, in this sixth and last lesson all skills will be present. However, we will pay special attention to the alternative-solution thinking, as it is the one that helps open people's minds. We are going to exercise it in its double aspect of backward and forward. Backward in order to search for an appropriate explanation of a past event and, forward in order to choose what is the best decision to make.

For the explanations we will need to retrieve information and, for the decisions we will need the double moral standards of efficiency and justice in order to decide on what is more effective and fair.

Students will therefore practise the use of past tenses to describe things that have already happened, the present perfect tense to analyse what has happened and future tenses to describe things that have yet to happen. Moreover, they will need to use conditional tenses in order to speculate about

what could happen, what might have happened, and what we wish would happen.

The way in which we should present the subject of explanations and decisions to our students is described in the methodology section below.

5.6.2 Methodology

As we have been doing in the previous lessons, the teacher briefly explains the main ideas contained in the introduction with all the students sat in circle.

In this last lesson we are going to start working on the “discussion topics”; after that, we will discuss the “metacognition or general discussion questions” and; finally, we will do the “image and phrase” creative exercise. The “metacognition” stage will be conducted in a circle and “topics” as we have always done but, this time, we will add something new, which is set out below.

We leave our students a minute to think about the first topic, which is about looking for explanations, and then four more minutes to discuss it with their respective groups. Then, a first round is conducted so that they say all the possible explanations they come up with. After that, with the whole class in circle, any student can ask a question in order to determine whether a certain possible explanation was, in fact, true. The teacher can just answer “yes” or “no” depending on the explanation he or she has considered as true.

On the second topic, which is about coming to a decision, we also leave them a minute to think about it and, four minutes of group work. We ask them to think about not only all the possible decisions, but also about the decision they would take in that particular case, taking into consideration the moral standards of efficiency and justice. We encourage them to reach an agreement with their group, however if that is not possible, each group can suggest several decisions they would take, stating that there is not unanimity.

5.6.3 Topics

In order to exercise the five problem-solving skills the following topics can be addressed:

- For the first discussion topic we will tell a black story to our students and, at the end, we will ask them to analyse what has happened. The students can ask as many questions as they need until they come up with the solution previously set by the teacher. A good example of it would be as follows: a lonely woman jumps from the rooftop of a skyscraper. Just before crashing, she completely regrets doing it. The answer is that she was the only survivor -or that she thought- of a nuclear war. After a year all by herself, she decides to commit suicide. In the moment when she jumps from the building, she hears a phone ringing. Obviously, there is another survivor out there.
- For the second discussion topic we are going to use the drawing included in this lesson (Fig. 6) and its corresponding phrase. So, we discuss the hypothetical situation in which you see a friend of yours shoplifting from your local shop and then pose the following questions: which are the possible decisions I can take? Which is the one I would end up taking?

By answering these questions, students can put in practise, apart from the grammatical structures mentioned in the introduction, some vocabulary related to shopping and marketing.

5.6.4 Metacognition or general discussion questions

In order to generate a lively and participatory discussion on this subject, the following questions can be successively posed to the students:

- What criteria would you follow in order to choose the right and true explanation? (The answer should be the one that responds to authentic data and not to opinions. This means that we need reliable information).

- Which are the criteria that should guide us in our decisions? (As we already know, these are efficiency and justice).
- Can a decision be fair and not effective or effective and not fair? Could you give some examples?
- Is it difficult to find the true explanation of other people's conduct and even ours?

5.6.5 Image and phrase

We finish this didactic proposal with the creative exercise of drawing a picture reflecting what has been learned during the last unit. This means the need of coming to a truthful explanation and taking a fair and effective decision. As always they can use the lesson's drawing (Fig. 6) as an inspirational example for their own drawings. The students can decide whether they want to draw something related to explanations or decisions.

Possible short phrases:

- We must not label people by the characteristics they show.
- A decision is useless without efficiency and an unfair decision leaves us disturbed.

Possible drawings:

- A young lady who has a driving license and does not want to drive.
- Whilst watching an amusing TV programme my TV stops working and that is the only one I have.



Figure 6. What would you do if you caught a friend of yours shoplifting?

6. Conclusion

Unfortunately, it was not possible to implement this teaching proposal due to the lack of time we had during the practicum of the Master's degree in Teacher Training (MFPR). However, I firmly believe that it can with no doubt be implemented in the English classes with success.

This way students would be able to work on their social skills whilst enhancing their English-language proficiency and academic performance through the methodology proposed in the previous sections.

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