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INTRODUCING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is an undeniable fact that men and women have the same rights and duties before the law in the developed countries, but when working together daily, we can appreciate some differences, being the physical one the most remarkable, but we think, feel, suffer or love in a distinct way. We tend to assume that it is our biological sex what predetermines us to have some abilities but not others; just like boys being better at maths or girls at language. We conceive this idea because our culture overflows gender stereotypes that influence our lives. Gender is a special issue that reminds us of women and violence against them, but the term has a broader meaning: equality and same opportunities for men and for women in any field. Six and Eckes (1991:58) define gender stereotypes as “products of normal everyday cognitive processes of social categorization, social inference and social judgement”. We contemplate these fixed and generalized ideas about people’s behaviour, roles and interests as appropriate based on a person’s biological sex. At the same time, gender stereotypes may destroy the dreams of people who would like not to follow these rules, but they cannot because our patriarchal society avoids so. In this sense, it is absolutely necessary to finish with these obsolete ideas to become free and fulfilled individuals. In fact, UNESCO’s Medium-Term Strategy for 2008 – 2013, has pointed out gender equality to be an urgency of the organization and it still remains as a priority for the period 2014 – 2021. UNESCO supports the application of the *Priority Gender Equality*, in the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women.

Jin (2013:116) expresses what many other authors (Dat, 2006; Ghorbani, 2009; Ndura, 2004; Diekman and Murnan, 2004) state about the perception of women in our society. Society still sees women as an inferior human being, thus, in addition to all the efforts made by institutions and governments, we must do something to alleviate this outdated situation, and education is the best way of starting to change this circumstance. Boys and girls need to learn that they can be whatever they want to be, no matter their biological sex, and we have to work hard from kindergarten because stereotypes are widely spread on films, in advertisements, in the labour market and in families’ relationships.

Dealing with this special issue in the languages classroom is easy. Languages exist to communicate between individuals, to express ideas, feelings, emotions, events or thoughts. As, they are best learnt by practicing, let us use any theme that can influence our students' lives. There are several methods to introduce the topic, each teacher has his or her favourite ones, but this study will propose using films in the ELT classroom with the aim of teaching and entertaining at the same time. Watching a particular film in the classroom can discover the students the possibility to be whatever they want to be, no matter what others may think about them. For this reason, the selection must be carefully considered, bearing in mind several aspects we will see later, showing films that are not set by stereotypes, but by strong characters that fight hard until they reach their goals. The movies selected for this study are *Dead Poets Society*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *Snow White and the Huntsman* and *Whale Rider*, where each main character shows us that it is worth fighting for our dreams and ideals until the end, not to get the glory, fame or money, but to reach their hopes and desires.

2. ACADEMIC JUSTIFICATION

Although we are already living in the 21st century, society keeps on relegating people to a second place in the community just because they do not follow the rules and stereotypes this patriarchal culture we belong to dictates. There is an absolute need to raise awareness to society about gender stereotypes and their consequences, for example, in schooling, since it is a fact that the access for girls and boys to untraditional studies or jobs is still difficult, not to say forbidden, although the article 9.2 from the Spanish Constitution states that

Corresponde a los poderes públicos promover las condiciones para que la libertad y la igualdad del individuo y de los grupos en que se integra sean reales y efectivas; remover los obstáculos que impidan o dificulten su plenitud y facilitar la participación de todos los ciudadanos en la vida política, económica, cultural y social.

We cannot expect national and regional governments will do the entire job, it is our duty as members of the community to contribute to this important change our culture needs. Only working with rigour and pursuing quality, we can achieve the objective described in article 27.2 from the Spanish Constitution: «La educación tendrá por objeto el pleno desarrollo de la personalidad humana en el respeto a los principios democráticos de convivencia y a los derechos y libertades fundamentales». So, one of the focus of

education should be trying to end with the hindrances young people, women and men to an equal, find when choosing their professions. Education is one of the elements a society needs to care about because it will influence directly on the future working life of the country. Being gender education the main factor bringing about differences in the career choice between women and men, thus, gender equality is one of the most important demands for teaching. The aim is not to have the same number of girls and boys in every profession, but to break the glass ceiling that prevents women and men selecting untraditional studies or jobs. We must take into account gender equality for girls but also for boys, so plan scope should include both groups. A non exclusive, demanding, quality educative system guarantees equal opportunities and makes possible each pupil develops their potential to the maximum. The moment of the implementation is a characteristic school communities have to care about. If children experience equality in roles and activities since they are very young, they will be prone to repeat that behaviour when they get older. It is advisable to insert gender equality from the early stages of education as part of the curriculum for the children to accept equal roles as norm so they can carry with them into adolescence and adulthood.

Including gender stereotypes in the curriculum is a difficult task. Teachers and school staff must observe and avoid all forms of sexist resources, such as vocabulary, task distribution, discriminatory images, violence, etc., they could be using unconsciously every day in front of the students. Textbooks deserve special attention since they are an important source where pupils learn aspects of their behavior. Textbooks that include this type of pictures and vocabulary reinforce stereotypes, promote social inequalities and record these roles in society. Jin (2013:116) recalls Holmes (2001) words: "Sexist language is one example of the way a culture or society conveys its values from one group to another and from one generation to the next". Thus, teachers need to ensure that in the textbooks they are going to use girls and boys of any race share roles.

3. OBJECTIVES

This study presents the need of dealing with gender perspective at school, showing the benefits of education in equality to students, stakeholders, educational community and society in general. Education in equality is defined by the co-education guide, Instituto de la Mujer, 2007, as

La propuesta pedagógica actual para dar respuesta a la reivindicación de la igualdad realizada por la teoría feminista, que propone una reformulación del modelo de transmisión del conocimiento y de las ideas desde una perspectiva de género en los espacios de socialización destinados a la formación y el aprendizaje.

This special education tries to eradicate discrimination not only against girls, but also against boys at schools, attempting to involve the whole educational community in this commitment. It tries to encourage equal relationships and cooperation between both sexes reflecting about the fact that the sex who is usually discriminated is the feminine and the values that are highlighted are the masculine. Information about these issues can stop gender violence and discrimination. Women should be presented to the society as the respectful people they are and they deserve to be, not to take part on a *war of sexes* but to appreciate the differences that will boost equality between genders.

The main objective of the application of gender equality and the encouragement of that parity between sexes in education and pedagogical activities is to contribute to achieve a society where everyone is able to develop their interests, abilities, and potential no matter their sex. That equality must be the base for education and should be applied since kindergartens to be effective and long-lasting, and will contribute to the development of free, fulfilled individuals

3.1 Specific Objectives

- To promote equality between girls and boys without attending their sex, but fostering their vocation aiming at their competencies and aptitudes that will bring equal chances and treatment for both male and female.
- To encourage teamwork, with cooperative non sexist activities to raise responsibility for one's work and for other people's work. Students should learn the importance of their contribution to the group, but also the importance of the contribution of their mates to the group, promoting participation, discussion, reflection, imagination and invention.
- To encourage students' responsibility and involvement in tasks distribution at school and in the families, stimulating co-responsibility and causing the change of mind to society that will open all the opportunities to everyone.
- To encourage understanding, acceptance, tolerance and solidarity among people, no matter any personal characteristics as culture, race, religion or sexual identity.

- To encourage conflict resolution in a peaceful, non violent way, paying attention to the use of non sexist language. Students should learn to avoid violence not only against women but in all its forms. Vocabulary should be examined to find other alternatives of language use.
- To encourage the creation and maintenance of personal relationships. Students should be aware of the importance of being a social person and the enrichment some relationships may be. This is achieved ensuring equality and freedom for both sexes from early ages.
- To show students the relationship between the subjects they study at school and the social problems they are living. It is important pupils build a continuous between real life and subjects at school. Mother and foreign languages have an advantage: we use them to communicate problems, feelings, experiences, any situation students may be living outside school.
- To show that gender equality does not weaken but strengthen humankind. By hampering education and job access to some people, we may be losing good workers and that is when the community weakens. Making aware of women contribution to the world will help to develop our society.
- To highlight the importance of co-education between families and schools to eradicate stereotypes at school and to follow non-sexist models in the community, appreciating the influence of these two entities on the students' behaviour.

It is advisable, when necessary, teacher education courses will be enhanced or implemented and should have more emphasis on improving equality between boys and girls. This require a revision of the way teachers are prepared, taking into account not only the subjects and the course curriculum but also the characteristics of the people that want to become teachers as capacity to have critical thinking, acceptance of different cultures, be a problem - solving person and know how to resolve problems in a non-violent way. As Karsten et al (2002:170) explain: "a significant [...] variable in citizenship education would be the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers [...]. Thus, it seemed important to us to study both those preparing to be teachers (pre-service) and teachers in the classroom (in-service)". These professionals are responsible for teaching students two different behaviours. First, at the beginning of schooling, they explain the pupils how the group can accept them, and then, when they grow up, they teach the students how to be individuals capable of thinking and acting on their own.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Gender perspective in EFL.

The concept of gender refers to the social differences between men and women, establishing stereotypes boys and girls suffer since they are born. Gender exists given the relation between masculine and feminine and thus it is a people's concern. It has nothing to do with the biological and physical characteristics each sex have, but with the functions, capabilities, values, responsibilities and influences they play in society and in family life. Gender principles describe the responsibilities each sex has in society, for instance, who will be the family carer and who will be the moneymaker. From the moment we decide the colour of an unborn baby's nursery, we are starting influencing the function that person will develop in the world as member of the group.

Although a lot of work has been done, there are still gender inequalities throughout the world in schooling, family life, job access, health, economy and indigence. Politicians and other institutions should bear in mind gender policies as the ones included by UN (UNHR, 2011):

Mandated by Member States to promote the universal respect for, observance and effective enjoyment of all human rights by all, OHCHR focuses attention on those who are at risk and vulnerable. OHCHR aims to ensure that States take all necessary steps to enable every person to enjoy their human rights. These steps include the removal of obstacles to the equal enjoyment of such rights, the adjustment of domestic legislation, the adoption of measures of protection, but also positive measures in all areas, so as to achieve the effective and equal empowerment of women. By applying the principle of universality in gender integration and in the promotion of women's rights, OHCHR strives to ensure that cultures and their diversity, religious values and traditional practices, do not negatively impact women.

We can detect gender stereotypes in every feature of society: work, family, daily vocabulary, advertisements and television are a few examples of the fields where we can find them. Gender stereotypes, transmitted from father to son through generations, affect all areas in human relationships, hampering the building and development of a free society. Boys dress in blue and girls in pink. Boys study science and technology and girls languages and literature (in case the community allows them to learn). Men fight and

women cry. Men earn money and women take care of the house and the family. All these ideas seem to teach us that girls deserve to be underestimated, that they are incapable of making decisions or taking important responsibilities, and we also learn that men are unable to be sensitive enough to develop an artistic career. Sending men to war or to earn money and relegating women to a second position where they could not develop the potential they are able to, decreases the benefits to society. A woman is able to have the same abilities than a man, she can be strong and independent and she does not need to follow the rules men impose. Both, girls and boys should free to choose their future and their identity. Thus, there was a need to create a tool to understand the causes of women's subordination and to finish inequality between women and men. Gender perspective was conceived to consider the differences between men and women's needs, conditions and situations, to change women submission and gain equality, justice and solidarity between sexes at home, in the community and in the institutions.

The Spanish laws and regulations act as guarantors for the implementation of equality at schools. In Castilla y León, for example, the 1st Regional Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2013) declares as its educational objectives:

Fomentar la coeducación como modelo educativo para favorecer la eliminación de prejuicios culturales y estereotipos sexistas.
Contribuir a la prevención de la violencia de género desde los centros educativos ejerciendo su papel de transmisores de valores igualitarios.
Utilizar la cultura y el deporte como transmisores de los valores de la igualdad y contra la violencia de género.

Schools are the main educational element in childhood and adolescence. In their classrooms, students acquire not only knowledge but also roles, aptitudes and values; that is the reason why the gender approach integration in education is a basic and fundamental tool if we want to educate towards social justice and achieve a social change. Haque (2004:22) reminds us that:

It is important to address gender bias in educational materials because they are part of the educational experience that helps determine ideas and values that children come to accept as norms. There is considerable tendency for children to carry with them into adulthood misconceptions and preconceived ideas about the roles of males and females, which they receive in their early years. These misconceptions will lead to role stereotyping which can affect their career advancement as well as their personal lives.

Schools have to foster plays and activities since kindergarten, where girls and boys are not discriminated, where children are stimulated to choose to play roles according to their likes and aptitudes without regard if they are *feminine* or *masculine*, reminding students there are women who work in science or politics, but also men who dance or stay at home taking care of their families.

Since teachers are an example for the students, they should avoid sexist practices and sexist language and should observe school staff's behavior, in order to encourage good practices at school. Karsten et al (2002:169) quotes Cogan and Derricott's words on this point:

Students must see their teachers as living examples of what they are professing, as people who are personally involved in their communities, working on projects of a civic or public nature, knowledgeable about developments in other parts of the nation and the world, able to debate key civic and public issues with other colleagues in the school as well as those in the community at large, aware of the historical antecedents of these issues so that they have a context for their discourse, and possessing a vision of what might be done to resolve or at least improve the situation. (Cogan & Derricott, 2000:177-178).

We should pay special attention to textbooks. They reinforce social roles, spread values and cultural issues conscious and sometimes unconsciously. Sunderland (1992:83) reminds us that:

[Pedagogic grammars] have an obligation to describe new forms which are in reasonably common usage and do not flout the rules of English syntax. However, they also be selective, and whether a given item is selected, as well as what is said about it, will depend very much on the individual author.

Many editors have realised things have changed in society and the general tendency is to present women and men representing different races and playing roles in equality, although there are still work to do to eliminate stereotypes in textbooks. They still picture women as passive beings working as teachers or nurses and men as sergeants or directors. These limited working opportunities for women may intimidate girls, who will not struggle for a better job. Hence, textbooks should show men that women are as capable to develop any task as they are and give women confidence to choose male professions. This is another step to build a free, equal society.

Sexist language is another element to fight against in many societies. Lei (2006:87) defines this issue as “language that expresses bias in favour of one sex and thus treats the other sex in a discriminatory manner. In most cases the bias is in favour of men and against women”. Some groups of people accept this type of discriminatory and misogynist vocabulary as natural, and its use reflects the social attitudes of a group. “Sexist language is one example of the way a culture or society conveys its values from one group to another and from one generation to the next” (Holmes, 2001 in Jin, 2013: 116). These vocabulary foster discrimination and may offend people if they see they are not included in the group. Some examples are the male generics; that is, words as *man*, *he*, *him* referring to women and men or the use of *-man*, *-ette*, *-ess* in occupational nouns. The usage of this type of words is inaccurate and it forgets about the existence of women. For instance: *chairman*, *salesman*, *mailman*, *policeman*, *goddess*, *shepherdess*, *asilorette* or *conductette*. There are also feminine words whose meanings are unfavourable compared to the masculine form. Just have a look at *master* and *mistress*, *governor* and *governess* or *professional* used with *man* or with *woman*.

Lei (2006:90) gives us the following hints to avoid sexist language:

1. Practices for women and men are asymmetrical. We can find inequality when a person does not mention a woman's title, but allude to the man's; when a woman is addressed simply by her first name but a man is addressed by his title, first name and surname; and in some salutations, directed to a man and a woman, when the woman is not addressed. The use of the title *Mr* before a person's name merely identifies that person as a male adult. The titles *Mrs* and *Miss* identify the person addressed as a woman and, in addition, they state her marital status. The use of the title *Ms* is the alternative for not revealing a woman's marital status. It can be followed by the woman's own name, or if she prefers, her spouse's name. *Ms* is the same whether singular or plural. To address a letter or a note we can use:

Dear Sir Dear Sir / Madam; Dear Sir or Madam Dear Madam / Sir; Dear Madam or Sir
Dear Principal Dear Householder Dear Officer Dear Customer Dear Colleague Dear
Subscriber Dear Sirs Dear Gentlemen and Ladies Dear Ladies and Gentlemen Dear
Mackenzie Pty Ltd (in case of a company) Dear People (informal) Dear Mr Benetti Dear
R. Benetti (sex unknown) Dear Mr / Ms Benetti Dear Mrs Braun Dear Ms Braun (if title
preference unknown) It is also acceptable to address reports and references to 'To
whom it may concern' if the recipient is unknown to the writer.

2. Alternatives for *man*

2.1 It is recommended to avoid the use of *male-specific* and *male-identified* words in the generic sense, namely, man (generic sense) humans, human race, human beings, human species, humanity, humankind *or* women and men, person(s), man and woman, individual(s), people(s), etc.

2.2. The speaker or author should also avoid the use of *man* in idioms and phrases when they clearly intend the expression to include both women and men. Expressions such as *the man on the land* not only make women's presence and achievements invisible but can also lead to discrimination. Alternatives for some common expressions are suggested below: *the best man for the job*--- the best candidate or applicant, person for the job, the best man or woman for the job; *man to man*----- person to person.

2.3 Occupational nouns and job titles ending in *-man* obscure the presence of women in such professions and positions. Here are some alternatives:

- businessman ---business executive, business manager, business owner, business person, entrepreneur, financier, investor, proprietor
- chairman--- the chair, chairperson, convener, coordinator, discussion leader, head (of) ... , leader, moderator, person chairing a meeting, person in the chair, president,
- clergyman--- member of the clergy Depending on the denomination, other terms may include priest, pastor, ecclesiastic, etc.
- craftsman ---artisan (artist), craftworker, technician
- fireman --- firefighter boiler attendant, fire tender, stoker (railways, marine etc.)
- foreman --- supervisor, work supervisor, leading hand
- milkman--- milk deliverer, milk supplier, 'milko' (informal)
- policeman--- member of the police, police officer (term indicating rank)
- postman--- letter carrier, mail carrier, mail deliverer, postal delivery officer, postal worker, 'postie' (informal)
- salesman--- sales agent, sales associate, sales attendant, salesperson, sales
- spokesman --- advocate, representative, (person) speaking on behalf of ... , speaker, spokesperson
- sportsman--- athlete, player, sports competitor, sportsperson
- Mankind--- humanity, humankind, human species, human race, people
- Manhood--- (generic) adulthood
- man-hour(s)--- labour hours, working hours, work hours
- manpower--- human resources, labour, labour force, personnel, staff, staffing,

3. There are many ways of replacing the *he / him / his* pronouns without distorting the message or compromising style or readability. Here are some major strategies:
- recast the sentence in the plural
 - leave out the pronoun
 - repeat the noun
 - use *he* or *she*, *she* or *he* or in writing *s/he*
 - recast the sentence and use another pronoun, for example, *you*, or *we*
 - recast the sentence to avoid pronouns
4. The speaker should avoid occupational nouns and job titles that refer exclusively to women. Often these have been derived from male job titles by adding such suffixes as *-ette*, *-ess* and *-trix*. This practice reinforces the view that women's status is dependent on, or derived from, that of men. Job titles like *girl friday* and *sales girl* trivialise the work women do. Here are some examples:
- cleaning lady--- woman cleaner (house cleaner, office cleaner)
 - camera girl--- camera operator (*see also cameraman* for other alternatives)
 - career girl ---professional, executive (or be specific about the profession)
 - salesgirl--- sales assistant, shop assistant, saleswoman
 - tea lady--- tea attendant
 - matron (nursing)--- director of nursing

Women should be shown as participating equally with men. Generic terms, for example: *doctor*, *lawyer* and *nurse*, should be assumed to apply equally to a man and a woman. Expressions such as *male nurse*, *woman doctor*, should therefore be avoided in contexts where the reference to a person's sex is irrelevant. If gender specification is necessary, the use of the adjectives *female* and *male* before the gender-neutral noun is to be preferred.

Those teachers interested in avoiding sexism in language should apply these suggestions with precaution. Students have to be aware of their existence, but above all, they have to recognize the best situation to use them. Avoiding sexist language is a step towards sexism reduction, but it is necessary to work hard on prejudices and stereotypes.

Language features make its teaching as the perfect subject to deal with cross-curricular topics. Teaching a foreign language should consist of transmitting concepts included in social subjects that make students realise that they can speak about the things

they are worried about at school. Thus, the foreign language they are learning appears to the students as something valuable and useful, related to his or her problems and interests. To include cross-curricular subjects joins the school with the world outside, it becomes a reflection of society. Dealing with social subjects in the classroom enriches the foreign language allowing the students to deal with authentic materials. In this way, educators not only teach knowledge, but also build thoughtful, competent, caring human beings able to respect other people and also to communicate in a foreign language. The idea of working all these important aspects through cross-curricular subjects allows us to work with authentic materials and the development of personal and critical opinion in the students.

The elimination of stereotypes is a task where everyone is involved in: institutions offering real opportunities, companies hiring professionals with disregard of their sex, families changing roles at home, schools teaching in equality and general public rejecting sexist advertisements are a few examples how we, as a community, can build a new society. The roles men and women played in the world were historical and traditionally marked. Gender stereotypes were consolidated through time in the society so deeply that it is normal to associate women to fragility and men to strength, what derives in the male superiority, suppressing women to male will. Women devoted their time and lives to household, children and family care, while job success belonged exclusively to men. It is our duty as educators to underline these disparities and make students aware of the problem giving them a new point of view that free individuals from that burden to develop freedom at their fullest, remarking the idea that there is no need to fit into any social role. Citizens should be free to choose what they want to be, what makes them happy, and teachers should teach and implement this notion.

I would like to finish this section by quoting Josh Whedon when he was awarded for his support of women's rights at the event 'On the Road to Equality: Honoring Men on the Front Lines' in 2006, who summarized equality in the following words:

Equality is not a concept. It's not something we should be striving for. It's a necessity. Equality is like gravity. We need it to stand on this earth as men and women, and the misogyny that is in every culture is not a true part of the human condition. It is life out of balance, and that imbalance is sucking something out of the soul of every man and woman who's confronted with it. We need equality. Kinda now. (Josh Whedon American screenwriter, film and television director).

4.2 Use of films in ELT

The use of videos and films in the language classroom is an important technique in the teaching and learning students' process. It can be a fundamental part of the subject if implemented appropriately.

Brown (2010:45) justifies the use of films in EFL classrooms:

With the development of technology in the last 40 or so years, EFL classrooms have also expanded their methods of exposing students to the target language through the use of popular foreign films via digital media. Using English Speaking Foreign Films (ESFF) (as opposed to native films with English subtitles or dubbing) provides students with an excellent source of native dialogue, cultural context and interesting material. [...] ESFF have the potential for rich visuals and exposing students to a variety of positive learning experiences as well as exposure to the associated culture of the target language. Encounters including: natural (seeming) discourse, accents and dialects, slang and colloquialisms, body and gesticulatory language and lastly, cultural customs.

It is undeniable that video usage in language classrooms offers several advantages that make pupils' expectation grow when lights are switched off at the beginning of the lesson.

- It increases students' motivation because it is an activity they like doing on their spare time. If the issue calls students' interest, they will be enthusiastic, keeping the interest until the end of the session.
- Images help the listening comprehension thanks to the body language or the context, assisting the dialogue comprehension.
- It gives the pupils the opportunity to get in contact with everyday language outside the classroom, showing important cultural components. They are exposed to real vocabulary and its real settings, preventing the students from falling into future misunderstandings.
- It changes the classroom pattern, a fact students enjoy a lot.
- It improves the listening comprehension of the listeners.
- Visuals help students to retain better the concepts.
- Films are images taken from reality. Students can learn there are another ways of living beyond the one they know.

- It improves the classroom atmosphere.
- It allows working the four language skills at a time. Pupils can talk or write about what they have seen or like in the film after listening to a part of the film. In addition, it is advisable to read the new vocabulary before starting the activity to understand the movie completely.
- It can be a perfect frame to learn cultural aspects from the target language.

Although watching films can (and must) deal with the four language skills, listening is the one that plays an important part of the understanding process. It has been thought to be a passive activity, receiving less emphasis in the learning method. Despite the silence it needs, it is actually recognized as an active exercise due to the processing in the learner's mind. It is worth remembering briefly the processes Nunan (1998) recommended to use: the bottom-up and the top-down.

The bottom-up processing model assumes that listening is a process of decoding the sounds that one hears in a linear fashion, from the smallest meaningful units (or phonemes) to complete texts. (...) The alternative, top-down view, suggests that the listener actively constructs (or, more accurately, reconstructs) the original meaning of the speaker using incoming sounds as clues. In this reconstruction process, the listener uses prior knowledge of the context and situation within which the listening takes place to make sense of what he or she hears.

4.2.1 *Implementation requirements*

The use of films in the classroom is a funny activity that needs a lot of preparation. The film has to be integrated in the didactic unit we are dealing with if we want to get a continuous in our lesson. It is also important to choose suitably the film to show, bearing in mind some characteristics as pupils' age, level and interests; film length, or the timing, to consider if the film is appropriate and if students are going to understand the message. King (2002) advises us "films with explicit sex, gratuitous violence and excessive profanity should probably be ruled out. However, films with minor scenes of sex, violence and profanity should be skipped and fast forwarded past whatever may be deemed offensive".

One of the disadvantages full films provide to teaching is the time constraint. If we want the pupils to get the message, they should be attentive, so a long film could not bore them. In that case, it can be split into two sessions, if necessary. That division offers the

opportunity to include explanations and exercises that reinforce understanding. King (2002) suggests:

It is better to show a two-hour movie in two class periods for students that are more proficient. It serves as good intensive listening training. When students are attracted and deeply absorbed by the story, they do appreciate the continuity their teacher allows. For low-level learners, usually one class period is recommended since the problem of overload and intensive concentration is required while watching a movie.

Student interest is another feature to take into account when selecting the film to watch. It should be interesting to the student, maybe they could feel they are represented by any of the characters, the topic dealt in the film is also common to them or the film can awake their curiosity, imagination or creativity.

Nowadays classrooms have internet connections that enables us to use a film (or an excerpt of it) whenever necessary, but it is advisable not to depend on a connection that can bring any problem, but have the video already downloaded in an external unit or USB. Thus, we ensure that compatibility will not be another inconvenience to dodge.

The main aim of showing a film is students' understanding of what they are watching, so it could be very positive to stop the video every so often to explain a concept, a situation, the setting, the costume or the culture. The teacher can always rewind to catch the idea again. To be sure that students understand what they are watching, teachers can prepare a little test with questions about the characters or even about the impressions pupils got from the film. This is also helpful to the attention level, which will be higher if they know they will have to answer some a post watching test or participate in a debate. The inclusion of subtitles will rely on the students' level. Usually, Spanish teenagers do not have a high language level, so it is advisable to use them. What is more, subtitles will help to maintain understanding, and thus, interest, preventing boredom, disinterest and distraction.

4.2.2 Implementation technique

Kusumarasdyati (2005:5; following Allan, 1984 and Underwood, 1989) divides the presentation of films in three stages: previewing, view and post viewing.

Previewing consists of giving the student hints about the film to help comprehension. It is an introduction of the main plot and / or the vocabulary they are going to hear, important hints about culture differences, costumes, non-verbal language or any additional issue. It can be presented in a list or the students can guess the meaning by the context or by a synonym.

Depending on the complexity of the film, the introduction of the characters may be useful. It is in this moment when teachers do the hand out of the worksheet for the students to familiarize with the exercises and get to know what they should concentrate on when watching the film. An example of a worksheet can be the following:

Part 1. Previewing	
Familiarize yourself with some of the characters to help you understand the film:	
<u>Teachers:</u>	<u>Students:</u>
John Keating	Neil Perry
Headmaster Gale Nolan	Todd Anderson
McAllister	Knox Overstreet
	Richard Cameron
	Gerard Pitts
	Charlie Dalton
	Chris Noel

Figure 4.1 Worksheet for *Dead Poets Society*
Source: Yolanda Corral from Kusumarasdyati (2005)

Step two consists of the main activity: viewing the film. Students are supposed to pay attention to the movie and at the same time, write down the answers to the questions of the worksheet. The type of questions is determined by the presence of subtitles and requires short answers as names or adjectives for the pupils to have time to answer. To ensure that students will not lose their attention and follow the film without problems, teachers can pause it and even rewind it to listen to the dialogue and watch the scene again. Comprehension questions can be included too, although they may consist of a brief description and thus, they will require more time to answer.

A very funny activity to do in this step is to stop the film several minutes before the end of the session and ask the students to write down how they think the story will end. The next day, when finishing the film, they can compare their predictions with the actual ending. This is an example of a worksheet teachers can use while watching the film.

<p>Part 2. While viewing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Who does Pai live with? Why? _____2. Does Koro want a granddaughter? _____3. Does Koro like Pai? _____4. Who and what does Koro teach? _____5. What does Koro discover on the beach? _____

Figure 4.2 Worksheet for *Whale Rider*
Source: Yolanda Corral from Kusumarasdyati (2005)

The last step, post viewing, is a very active one. It is the moment to verify if they have understood the film. Students can work the four language skills in pairs, in groups or the whole class together. They can talk or debate about the main topic, the characters, a scene especially relevant, the difference between cultures, etc. They can follow some hints given in the worksheet or they can raise anything they think is significant. An example of a worksheet for this step can be the following:

<p>Part 3. Post viewing</p> <p>Think about the answer to the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What do we learn about feminism in this film?2. What do you think about Maggie's character?3. What is the difference about this film and other boxing films like Rocky?4. Why is so important to Maggie the following quote: "<i>She grew up knowing one thing: that she was trash</i>"?

Figure 4.3 Worksheet for *Million Dollar Baby*
Source: Yolanda Corral from Kusumarasdyati (2005)

Additionally, and as homework, they can write an essay proposing a different ending for the film or a scene they think would fit into the movie, as an evening out with friends, an argument between two characters, a morning at work, a wedding, an illness or the appearance of a new character they think is missing. It is very important to note that if they are going to talk about cultural differences, they must show respect for the target culture, bearing in mind that no culture is better than other is and that it is possible to have different points of view over the same issue, being all of them right and acceptable.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Corpus

I have selected for this study a set of films that deal with gender stereotypes and whose characters try to open a new way breaking the social norms that rule behaviours in society. They show us that we distinguish ourselves as individuals when we get out of the group and follow our own desires and judgements. As Steve Jobs said:

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary. (Steve Jobs, Stanford Commencement Speech)

The main characters of the following films encourage us to do as Mr. Jobs said because life is too short to spend it living it as expected, under social conventions that do not fulfil us as persons.

In the first film, Mr. Keating, one of the teachers at Welton Academy in *Dead Poets Society*, teaches to see things from a new point of view, to live life at fullest and to seize the day. He loves teaching and sacrifices everything for it. After the death of one of his students, he is blamed and he is expelled from school, but he is satisfied with his job when he sees half of his class calling him “Oh Captain, my Captain” as they climb on their desks.

Maggie is the main character in *Million Dollar Baby* and she shows us there is a way for women in male activities like boxing. No matters how difficult it seems to be or how hard you have to fight. If you have a dream, strive for it and you will get it. Maggie also teaches us it is worth reaching our goal and enjoying success although it lasts too little time.

In this new version of Snow White, she becomes a leader for her people. The main character in *Snow White and the Huntsman* is not interested in housekeeping or marriage as in Brothers Grimm's tale; she wants to help her country, freeing it from the evil Queen. She is not protected by Prince Charming, on the contrary, she is the one who becomes the heroine, facing fighters, magic beings and spells but with determination and a little help Snow White reaches her goal, defeats magic and becomes Queen.

Paieka is another example of a girl determined to achieve her goal. She is the main character in *Whale Rider* and she suffers her own grandfather's rejection, although her destiny is to bring changes into her tribe and its traditions. She lives eleven years suffering her grandfather's grief for not having a grandson but a granddaughter, and thus, she is not allowed to learn anything related to leadership; in spite of that, she manages to discover the way to study the ritual chants, to use the stick fight and to become the future Chief.

5.1.1 *Dead Poets Society (1989) Peter Weir*

This is the story of a group of students at "Welton Academy", a fictional preparatory school in the northeast of the United States in 1959. It is a very conservative school, where boys (girls are not allowed) are prepared for the best universities. The main story centers the influence Mr. Keating, an English and poetry teacher, wields over his students, teaching them about poetry, but also to "*seize the day*" and to live life with passion. "I stand upon my desk to remind myself that we must constantly look at things in a different way," John Keating told the boys in his English class as he stands literally on his desk. He taught that there were other options apart from the one that sometimes society imposes us, we just have to stand up for our convictions and fight until the end to transform our dreams into reality.

Some of his students recreated the “Dead Poets’ Society”, a secret club Mr. Keating created when he was a student at Welton, and whose main objective was to talk about poetry, philosophy and other topics. This society was banned by the school because the students were not allowed to think by themselves, on the contrary, they were not allowed to think by themselves, listening to the radio was banned and they could only use the material prescribed by the institution. The film tells us what happens when a group of teenagers decide to live with passion, finding themselves and fighting against conservative forces that refrain from change.

5.1.2 Million Dollar Baby (2004) Clint Eastwood

This film narrates the story of a thirty one-year-old woman, Maggie Fitzgerald, whose dream is to become a boxer. She tries to persuade Frankie, an old coach to exercise her, but while she is completely optimistic, he is burned out, and he declines the offer because he does not train girls and because she is too old to start a sport. They are jointed together by Eddie “Scrap-Iron” Dupris, who is also the voice over.

Maggie and Frankie start a relationship based on mutual respect, admiration and affection. Maggie becomes a good boxer with many fans that love her, until the day she received an illegal punch fighting for the World Welterweight title that paralyzed all her body so she could not move any part of her body no more. Although this sorrowful accident, she is happy and proud of what she has done in her life. She let Frankie knows it when she says:

I can't be like this, Frankie. Not after what I've done. I've seen the world. People chanted my name. Well, not my name, some damn name you gave me. They were chanting for me. I was in magazines. You think I ever dreamed that'd happen? I was born two pounds, one-and-a-half ounces. Daddy used to tell me I'd fight my way into this world, and I'd fight my way out. That's all I wanna do, Frankie. I just don't wanna fight you to do it. I got what I needed. I got it all. Don't let 'em keep taking it away from me. Don't let me lie here 'till I can't hear those people chanting no more. (Million Dollar Baby, 2004)

5.1.3 Snow White and the Huntsman (2012) Rupert Sanders

King Magnus and his wife, Queen Eleanor have a pretty daughter, Snow White, who lives happy with her friend William until her mother dies and his father marries a beautiful prisoner from an invader army. The new Queen, Ravenna, is a sorcerer and kills King Magnus on their wedding night to bring her army, guided by her brother Finn, into the

castle. The princess is imprisoned in a tower, but years later, the Magic Mirror tells Ravenna that Snow White is the source to immortality, so she requests her brother to fetch her, but the girl manages to escape to the Dark Forest. Queen Ravenna orders a widower huntsman to capture Snow White, promising him to bring his wife back to life after that. When he discovers that the Queen lied to him, he changes sides, deciding to help and protect Snow White. While walking through the forest, they find the Dwarves, who lead them to the magic Fairytale Land. When Finn's army attacks the group, William joins Snow White and her friends, defeat Finn and start the way to the castle to fight against Ravenna and free the country from the evil Queen's power. In this film, Snow White guides her knights and warriors. We can see her talking to those men saying:

We have rested long enough. Frost to fire and fire to frost. Iron will melt. But it will writhe inside of itself! All these years, all I've known is darkness. But I have never seen a brighter light than when my eyes just opened. And I know that light burns in all of you! Those embers must turn to flame. Iron into sword. I will become your weapon! Forged by the fierce fire that I know is in your hearts! For I have seen what she sees. I know what she knows. I can kill her. And I'd rather die today than live another day of this death! Who will ride with me? Who will be my brother? (Snow White and the Huntsman, 2012).

After listening to these words, no one questioned they were said by a woman, on the contrary, they feel they are ready for fighting and bringing light to the country again.

5.1.4 Whale Rider (2002) Nikki Caro

It is a film adaptation from the novel written by Witi Ihimaera. It tells the story of the New Zealander tribe called Whangara, who believe to be Paikea's descendants. He is believed to have escaped death riding to shore on a whale when his canoe overturned, and now, one of the tribe members, Paikea Apirana, an 11-year-old girl is the only child in the line of the chief family. Tradition established the Whangara tribe leader should be the first-born son, a direct patrilineal descendant of Paikea, the Whale Rider who rode from Hawaiki; however, Pai's twin brother died when he was born. Although Pai is interested in the tribe and the leadership, her grandfather Koro, the Chief at that moment, does not support her. Pai wants to become the next Chief although there has never been a woman as the tribe leader and cannot be Koro's heir, but she is decided, and she shows it to his grandfather when she picks the whale tooth from the bottom of the sea and afterwards when she returns the whales to the ocean.

5.2 Relevant elements to study in these films

The principal purpose of this study is to show the students the meaning of gender stereotypes, the consequences of their use and the importance of their elimination from our society. Hence, before the watching of any film or the accomplishment of any activity, they should learn the following terminology:

Empowerment: “The empowerment of a person or group of people is the process of giving them power and status in a particular situation” (Collins Cobuild). It usually refers to people that have been kept out of management and decision-making actions due to race, disability, gender or religion.

Equality: “means the same status, rights, and responsibilities for all the members of a society, group, or family” (Collins Cobuild). Thus, gender equality is the assumption of equal treatment to women and men, although male and female are not biologically identical and both think, act and feel in different ways.

Equity: “is the quality of being fair and reasonable in a way that gives equal treatment to everyone” (Collins Cobuild). In this way, gender equity takes into consideration that women and men are different, and thus, to be balanced and just, we need different procedures.

Gender: “The fact that they are male or female” (Collins Cobuild). It is important not to mistake genre for gender. The meaning of the former is “a particular type of literature, painting, music, film, or other art form which people consider as a class because it has special characteristics” (Collins Cobuild), nothing to do with the second one. Gender is defined by FAO as:

The relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. Gender is often misunderstood as being the promotion of women only. FAO stresses gender issues focus on women and on the relationship between men and women.

Gender analysis: The Global Development Research Center defines gender analysis as the study that

Examines the differences in women's and men's lives, including those which lead to social and economic inequity for women, and applies this understanding to policy development and service delivery. It is concerned with the underlying causes of these inequities and aims to achieve positive change for women.

Gender discrimination: “a situation in which someone is treated less well because of their sex, usually when a woman is treated less well than a man”. (Cambridge dictionary)

It refers to a denial of freedom or any human right to a person on a basis of his or her gender.

Gender role: “is the ‘social definition’ of women and men. They vary among different societies and cultures, classes, ages and during different periods in history. Gender-specific roles and responsibilities are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions” (FAO, 1997). Gender roles are socially accepted and their norms differ between different cultures.

Stereotype: “a fixed general image or set of characteristics that a lot of people believe represent a particular type of person or thing” (Collins Cobuild). They are fixed ideas about people or things that tend to generalize and simplify the object of study.

5.3 Potential students and context of application

I have specially made up a group for this study. It consists of 21 boys and girls of about sixteen year-old who are in their second-to-last year at high school (1^o Bachillerato). Although there are two Peruvian girls and four boys from other cities, they all share the same mother tongue, Spanish. They are all, generally speaking, well integrated in the group. They have an upper-intermediate level of English, having a better skill in grammar and vocabulary. They enjoy speaking, although they are not too competent, due to the little time they invest in practicing this language.

The school is located in a working neighbourhood in a big Spanish city where there is neither insecurity nor financial problems and absenteeism is not common among them.

6. FILM ANALYSIS

Cinema is still controlled by masculine characters that protect, earn money, know all the answers and even save the feminine characters from death. On the contrary, women are sex objects who are worth to look at, acting as the convenient lover to the man. Even in the films where we can find strong, active women, there is one man helping them at any moment of the movie acting as a saviour or as a guide. Gender roles are included in films to present emotional heroines, not too much strong, not to intimidate the spectator.

Now we are going to analyse the proposed films to see how stereotypes are starting to be successfully challenged.

6.1 Dead Poets' Society (1989) Peter Weir

This is a very interesting and useful film because it deals with topics that the pupils find very near to their problems. Although the film is set in 1959, the students at Welton Academy are teenagers who debate between obey their parents and teachers' instructions or follow their own way, just like the students watching the movie.

We can find the following elements in the film:

- Empowerment: Mr. Keating tries to teach his students they have the power over their lives, they should decide over their own acts, but he is expelled from Welton Academy when Neil commits suicide and cannot finish his commitment.
- Gender role: It is very clear in the relationship between Neil's parents. Although his mother does not agree with her husband's decisions, she is relegated to a second place, sit at the back of the scene, where she is not allowed to share her opinion. She looks at her son with tears in her eyes and tries very briefly to alleviate Neil's sorrow saying: "Go and get some sleep".
- Gender discrimination: We find it in the school. It is an Academy only for boys, and it is absolutely banned the entrance of women to the school unless she is a pupil's mother. The film does not deal with gender equality and gender equity because it is based on a group of male students.

- Stereotype: We can see all the students must follow the norms imposed by the academy and should play the obedient, rich and privileged boy role. Two of the female characters, Neil and Todd's mothers, are stereotyped in that they are kind to their sons, but subordinated to their husbands. They do not speak nor rarely appear on screen alone.

6.1.1 *Dead Poets Society activities*

Pre watching activity:

To introduce the topic to the pupils, they should prepare a short debate about the following questions:

What do you think defines you, who you are or what you do?

Do you think it is about your race, sex, age what characterize you, or is it what you do with your life?

Are you a courageous or a coward person? Why do you think so? Do you compare with any model to have this opinion about yourself? Who? Why?

Tell us about a moment when you felt shy and alienated. What did you do?

Afterwards, before starting to watch the film, it will be useful to hand out some new vocabulary the students may not know. For instance, the next idioms and expressions:

OK boys, **settle down!** calm down!

Fervent dedication passionate

"Oh, captain, my captain!"

Let's go, **hustle up!** hurry up

I'll second that! I agree with you

Suit yourself! do what you want

Rip it out! to tear it out

try-outs auditions

Gibberish nonsensical word

Knock it off! be quiet! or stop it!

keep up continue to do

Tell him off to yell at somebody

You have **some big shoes to fill!** to be compared to a family member that did a good job



Figure 6.1 Source: hollywoodreporter.com

Looks like a stiff! slang for an unappealing person

He's born with his foot in his mouth! he's always saying stupid things

Bootlicking a person willing to do anything to please another

Valedictorian student with the best grades.

You should **drop the annual** to drop: to give it up, the annual: the book of the school

I urge you not **to test me on this point!** don't challenge me

"Carpe Diem!" "seize the day" or "live life to the fullest"

We are **food for worms**, lads! we will all die and our dead bodies will feed worms

The world is their oyster! they can do what they want

he's **the spitting image** of his father look just like

Huddle up! come together in a small group

The world is their oyster! they can do what they want

he's **the spitting image** of his father look just like

Huddle up! come together in a small group

Why do you insist on **defying** us? Oppose or resist

we intend to conduct a **thorough inquiry** depth investigation

He's a **fink!** one who tells the authorities about other's misconduct

Mr. Keating **put us up to** it actively encourage us to do it

Mr. Keating was a **hell raiser** sb who causes a lot of trouble and commotion

suck the marrow out of the bones of life! wanted to live life to the fullest

We're not laughing **at you, but near you** not laughing at you, but *with* you

While students are watching the film, they should draw their attention into the answer the following questions:

1. What does "Carpe Diem" means?
2. (Stopping the scene of the flock birds) What does it mean?
3. (Stopping after the reading of the poem) What do you think Henry David Thoreau wants to tell us in this poem?
 "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."
4. Do you think Charlie understands Keating's message?
5. What do you think does the future hold for the students?
6. What are the roles women and men played in the 50's and 60's? What is the role children played?

After watching the film, pupils can prepare the following activities:

To begin with, they can write a brief description about the characters, considering their actions, changes, ideas or what they think it is relevant.

- (a.) Mr. Keating
- (b.) Neil Perry
- (c.) Neil's parents (focus on the father)
- (d.) Mr. McAlister (the Latin teacher)
- (e.) Todd Anderson
- (f.) Charlie Dalton
- (g.) Mr. Nolan
- (h.) Knox Overstreet
- (i.) Chris
- (j.) Cameron

Then, students can write down the answers to the following aspects:

1. Which character is the most transformed in the film? Why?
2. How does fear affect the characters? Explain individually.
3. What would have happened if Mr. Keating would have never taught at Welton?
4. Do you think Keating's boys were brave or coward? Who? Why?
5. . What do you think is the main theme of the film?
6. Which character do you admire? Mr. Keating? Mr. Nolan? Neil? Neil's father?
7. How would you react if you were attending Welton, and Mr. Keating was your poetry teacher?

The next day, the pupils will form groups of four. Each of them will read three of the poems listed below, trying to understand the message the poet wanted to transmit.

She Walks In Beauty - Lord Byron

The Ballad of William Bloat - Raymond Calvert

The Prophet - Abraham Cowley

To the Virgins, Make Much of Time - Robert Herrick

The Road Not Taken - Robert Frost

The Congo - Vachel Lindsay
A Midsummer Night's Dream - William Shakespeare
Sonnet XVIII - William Shakespeare
Excerpt from Ulysses - Alfred Lord Tennyson
Excerpt from Walden - Henry David Thoreau
O Captain My Captain - Walt Whitman
O Me! O Life! - Walt Whitman
Song of Myself XVI - Walt Whitman
Song of Myself Section 52 - Walt Whitman

After that, they will work on a power point presentation using those poems to show other people they should live with passion, they should remember that life is too short to spend their time doing what others want them to do. The rest of the pupils, teachers and personnel from the school will watch the presentation at the end of the school year.

6.2 Million Dollar Baby (2004) Clint Eastwood

The film portrays a girl who fights for self-realization in a violent masculine world. She makes her own decision and chooses to try to become a star in her favorite sport. She could have decided to find a comfortable job in a supermarket, for example, get married and raise her own family, but that is not her dream. She wants to box and that becomes the focus of her life, what she does although she knows it is not an easy issue. Maggie fights until she convinces Frankie to train her. The first thing that struck us is the sport she chooses. Traditionally, boxing is a masculine activity, it is related to violence, strength and the physical damage boxers suffer, and boys are said to be stronger than girls, and thus, more capable of bearing blows. What is more, girls are allowed in the combats to be a sexy object to look at while they walk by the ring. However, the main feminine character is not interested in physical appearance, she just wants to fight and win combats. Thanks to her will power, she reaches her goal. She is a very good fighter, travels a lot and people claim her name. Then, she has an accident and she can fight no more. In this film we do not find *poetic justice*, there is no good end for good characters. We feel dissatisfied at the end of the story. The female character, the one that fights most inside and outside the ring, dies; and the main male character, the one who helps her to reach her goal, disappears. Life is tough and justice is sometimes unfair, but we cannot allow this fact discourage us from fighting for our dreams. What at first sight appears to be a story of a

stubborn girl who wants to be a boxer, it turns out to be the starting point of several discussions about gender stereotypes and assisted suicide.

This film shows stereotypes from the moment we listen to the title. It would be absolutely unthinkable to see the word "*baby*" in a film title if the boxer is a man, so why do producers use a word that connotes tenderness, immaturity and even sexual attraction? Maggie's character is strong and mature enough to deserve a better word than "*baby*". Also worthy of attention is the fact that Maggie has not got a female character to help her in her career or in her decision to die. Both facts depend on Frankie, who becomes the protector that we thought Maggie did not need. It is interesting to note that Frankie is also Scrap's protector, that is the white man cares for the negro man, that is the superior white man leads the inferior negro man. This is an example that, although many things have changed in cinema, a lot of work has to be done in order to erase stereotypes from films.

- Empowerment: Maggie knows she is the owner of her own destiny, that is why she does not care being ignored by her family for being a boxer, she even forgives them and buys a house for her mother.
- Gender equality: a woman is allowed to practise a masculine sport and she is allowed to train in a gym where there are no more women. Men laugh at her for practising boxing, but she does not care what others say as long as she can do what she wants.
- Gender discrimination: Frankie does not want to train Maggie because she is a girl and he tells her so, but Maggie keeps insisting. Frankie changes his mind because he needs more money to run his business, so he permits her in his gym. Then he does not want her to touch his things, but as Scrap teaches her some tricks, Frankie can see she may be a good boxer and accepts to train her. Maggie also suffers discrimination from her family, who does not want her to box.
- Stereotype: Maggie is a waiter since she was 13. It is the typical job characters have in films when they have no experience or studies and they want to earn some money to become something else.

6.2.1 Million Dollar Baby activities

Students can work on these activities to help them understand the film.

Before watching the film

To talk about stereotypes before watching the film, students should talk about gender in sport. Who are better athletes? Girls or boys? Moreover, who are better trainers? Women or men? Should women train women or can she train men? And men?

While watching the film

Write down the differences and similarities between the following characters:

Maggie and Frankie

Similarities:

Differences:

Maggie and Danger.

Similarities:

Differences:

After watching the film, students should write down answer to the following questions.

1. Why does not Maggie's family support her? Do you think families should back any member's decision?
2. If Maggie would have forgotten about boxing, do you think she would have died so young?
3. Do you think it was worth all the effort Maggie does to end her life so young?
4. What do you think about Frankie and Maggie relationship?
5. Why does Frankie reject training Maggie?
6. Why does Frankie change his mind and accepts training Maggie?
7. Why do you think Maggie reaches her goal but Danger, although being a boy, does not?
8. Is it ok for a woman to box?
9. How can a female succeed in boxing?
10. What do you think about euthanasia, should it be legal?

6.3 Snow White and the Huntsman (2012) Rupert Sanders

Snow White and the Huntsman is another twist to the popular fairy tale "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves". The film we are going to study has several differences with the original text that are worth comment. While the conflict for beauty between the two feminine characters is still present, the difference relies on Snow White. In the film, she is beautiful, but she is not interested in her sexy appearance, on the contrary, she appears as a strong, brave woman who does not need Prince Charming or the Dwarves to rescue her, showing that girls can manage their own lives.

In the Brothers Grimm's story of Snow White, she felt asleep by the depravity and selfishness of her stepmother. The only one that can wake her from that sleep is the prince, who will kiss her back to life. As the logic consequence of kissing is getting married, she does so at the end of the tale. This shows how Snow White is perceived to be completely passive. She is the one who is not in control of her own life. The prince controls his and her lives. Nevertheless, we see in the film that Snow White receives a kiss from both, her friend Will and the huntsman, being the last one who awakes her from death, although there is no wedding.

Erasing stereotypes does not mean eliminate male characters from the feminine character's way. On the contrary, to be fair, women and men have to cross paths and help each other. That is the reason why we can hear the decision of who is the fairest in the kingdom coming from a masculine character, the mirror on the wall, so the Evil Queen bases her objective of being the most beautiful woman on a man's opinion. We can find also Snow White asking for the Huntsman's protection to guide her out of the forest to reach duke Hammon's castle. She needs somebody beside her to cross the forest and it is a man's help. Although the female main character in this film is stronger and more independent than the one that appears in the traditional tale, she needs protection; she is just an innocent princess, not a super hero.

We can find the following elements in this film:

- Empowerment: Snow White is the future Queen, although Ravenna will not allow her to access to the throne. She has to fight against the usurper, but as the main character has the support from all her people, she becomes their leader without disagreement.
- Gender discrimination: We can see discrimination in the roles distribution. In one of the scenes, Snow White reaches a village where there live only women because men have gone to the war. Thus, men are the brave, women the coward, men are the saviour, women the family carer.
- Gender equality: People from the village treat Snow White as if she was a man. She can fight, she can exhort the knights to follow her, but the rest women of the village are not in the same situation. They have to take care of the house and of the family.

6.3.1 Snow White and the Huntsman activities

The following activities will help students to work with gender stereotypes in the film as they learn to see a famous female character from another point of view.

Pre watching activity:

In groups of four people, prepare a debate about what do you think it is the woman role in the Brother Grimm's traditional Snow White tale. After answering the following questions, choose a spokesperson to explain your ideas to the rest of the class your ideas.

1. How would you define Snow white's character?
2. Why does she marry the Charming Prince? Does she have another option?
 3. Why does she love cleaning and sweeping the house if she is a princess?
 4. What do you think about her life expectations?
 5. What are the princess and the queen's duties in tales like Snow White if the king is alive?
 6. Does Snow White care about taking control of her own life?



Figure 6.2 Source: Disney.wikia.com

While watching activity:

Fill in the blanks with words from the box while you watch the film. Note that there are more words than necessary.

Once upon a _____, in deep winter, a queen was admiring the falling snow, when she saw a _____ blooming in defiance of the cold. Reaching for it, she pricked her _____ and three drops of blood fell. And because the red seemed so alive against the white she thought, "If only I had a _____ as white as snow, lips as red as _____, hair as black as a raven's wings, and all with the _____ of that rose." Soon after a daughter was born to the queen and was named Snow White. (Narrator at the beginning of the film).

Mirror, mirror on the _____
who is the fairest of them _____?



Figure 6.3 Source: Disney.wikia.com

You deserved better. I once had a wife, Princess. Sara was her name. When I came back from the _____ I carried with me the stench of death and the anger of the lost. I was not worth saving, that is for sure. She did so anyway. And I loved her so much. I loved her more than anyone or anything. Then I let her out of my sight and she was gone. And I became _____ again. A self I never cared for. Until you. See, you remind me of her. Her heart, her spirit. But now you, too, have gone. You both deserved better and I'm so sorry I failed you. I am so sorry. But you will be a _____ in Heaven now and sit among the angels. (Huntsman to Snow White).

all, beauty, blood, child, cry, death, finger, heart, kingdom, love, myself, night, queen, raven, rose, snow, strength, time, wall, wars.

Post watching activity

As you have seen, the end of this film has nothing to do with Brother Grimm's tale. Write a paragraph about 200 words narrating what you think happens next with Snow White, William and the Huntsman.

6.4 Whale Rider (2002) Nikki Caro

Whale Rider's main character is Paikea, an 11-year-old girl who belongs to a patriarchal tribe and who knows since very young she was not wanted, "there was no gladness when I was born. My twin brother died and took my mother with him. Everyone was waiting for the first born boy to lead us, but he died and I didn't", she says at the beginning of the film. Paikea breaks stereotypes and gender roles in her tribe being decided to persevere until she gets what she thinks it is her role: being the tribe leader. In her way, she has to fight against her grandfather since he never accepted Paikea just for being a girl. He longs for a boy to heir his position as the tribe Chief, but Koro does not take her into account, he does not realize the destiny has selected her to lead the tribe, not even when she finds the way to repair the boat rope. He cannot see beyond stereotypes and he is unable to realize Paikea is the next leader until she almost dies saving the whales and thus the tribe.

- Empowerment: Paikea is ignored for being a girl. Anything she does is unimportant and is not taken into account. At the end of the film, she receives the respect of the rest of the boys and the role she was born to: the tribe leader and future Chief.
- Gender role: Her grandmother is a clear example of a character following her gender role. She disapproves her husband, and although she keeps the house, gets out of the room when men have to talk and obey her husband's orders in a very submissive way.
- Stereotype: Paikea is supposed to be a passive and obedient housewife like her grandmother, supporting her future husband, but she shows everybody her destiny is another one. We do not see much about traditions in Paikea's tribe, but girls and boys are not treated in the same way. Although Paikea's grandfather allows her to stay in the leader school he has created, she is separated and must sit at the end.

6.4.1 Whale Rider activities.

Pre watching activities:

As this film is set in New Zealand, it is important that students learn a bit of Maori culture before watching the film.

Who are Maori people?



The Maori are a group of native people who live in New Zealand. They are said to come from the Pacific Islands many years ago. They were very good sailors and in one of their journeys, they found New Zealand. They created a settlement there because the land was fertile.

Figure 6.4 Source: Tamakimaorivillage.co.nz

There are several important things to Maori people. Family, traditions and ancestry are some of them, but also carving, dancing and tattoos.



Figure 6.5 Source: Didactalia.net

Here are some useful vocabulary that will help you understand the film:

Ancestry	Community	Migration	Beliefs
Legends	Traditions	Myth	Prejudice

While watching activities

Write the names of the main characters:

Pai's grandfather _____
Pai's father _____
Pai's grandmother _____
Pai's uncle _____

Answer briefly the following questions:

Why does Pai live with her grandparents?

Why does Porourangi go to Europe?

Why does Koro throw the whalebone into the sea?

Do you think Koro likes Pai?

Does Koro go to the school festival? Why?

Who discovers the whales on the beach?

How do the people try to help the whales?

Post watching activities:

Discuss the following questions in groups and write a short paragraph for each one:

1. Why do you think Koro accepts Paikea as the name for the girl?
2. Do you think Koro is happy accepting a girl as the next Chief? Why?
3. Do you think we should keep traditions as they are or do you think they can be modified and modernised? Explain why and give examples.

7. CONCLUSION

Over the last decade, we have been overflowed by terminology such as gender stereotypes, gender analysis, gender bias, gender equity and equality, gender roles, etc. They all are relatively new terms that have been included in projects, programmes and declarations, but they are not fully understood yet. People hear the expressions but do not control them. Governments and institutions have created plans and projects including compromises to battle against inequalities and gender discrimination, but in spite of all that efforts, there are still social groups that suffer intolerance and injustice based on their sex, race, religion or age. Among all the people that form society, there are a specially trained collective that have the capability and the responsibility to try to change this situation: teachers. They not only train and educate, but also influence their students notably. Thus, they must take advantage of this great opportunity and show their pupils respect as the starting point of personal friendships. One of the tools they can use to show peaceful and equal relations are possible is using films in the classroom, an amusing and motivating way to deal with important topics that can help pupils to have a new point of view and thus, to develop as fulfilled, free individuals.

As we have seen, the selection of the movie to watch is a sensitive issue. It is an undeniable fact that viewing once and again films where male characters are the ones that save the girl and / or the world; and where women are passive, sexual objects are not good examples for children and teenagers to follow. In fact, psychologist Sarah Murnen (2006) recently states, "The promotion of the thin, sexy ideal in our culture has created a

situation where the majority of girls and women don't like their bodies... And body dissatisfaction can lead girls to participate in very unhealthy behaviours to try to control weight." The common image today is the thin model or actor that invades our screen every day and it leads to the wrong idea that they are the beauty cannon to follow. This example presents us the power films and images have over teenagers. Thus, teachers should present movies that show another reality is possible to the students. They have to know that there is not only one ideology, there is not only one social role for each person and, of course, there is not one human being better than another is.

The role women play in films is only a small part in the unfair world of gender stereotypes. Looking around in our daily life, we can see there is much work to do to achieve equality and parity. As Haque (2004:21) states:

It may seem ironic how a society tries to maintain this balance of power by empowering women with equal opportunities, and at the same time – unconsciously and sometimes consciously – suppresses them by taking for granted that the norms of equality will be respected and practiced by everyone.

To sum up, I would like to state clear that gender discrimination is a problem that affects the whole society, since it is the manifestation of people's thoughts. Its appearance seems to take place unconsciously, thus, for its disappearance it requires recognition that inequality still exists and that there is a need for a change. It demands women and men exchange experiences, both women and men need to learn to be understanding about each other ideas, dreams and thoughts, both must look beyond themselves to find there are many people unlike them, but who can be as right as they are. The more opened minded we will be, the more equal society we will build.

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