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A DEFENCE OF POETRY IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Student: Llamas Vacas, Mariola

Tutor: Dr. Cinta Zunino Garrido
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A defence of poetry in foreign language teaching

Abstract

1. Introduction
2. Justification
3. Literature review
4. Theoretical framework: approaches that can be applied
 - 4.1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
 - 4.2. Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)
 - 4.3. Natural Approach
 - 4.4. Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)
 - 4.5. Audiolingualism
 - 4.6. Total Physical Response (TPR)
 - 4.7. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
 - 4.8. Cooperative Learning
5. Difficulties of using poetry in the language classroom
 - 5.1. Learner's perception of poetry
 - 5.2. Teacher's perception of poetry
 - 5.3. The need for instant gratification
 - 5.4. Limited time
 - 5.5. Poem selection
6. How to use poetry in the EFL classroom
 - 6.1. Structure of the lesson
 - 6.2. ICTs
 - 6.3. Transversality
 - 6.4. Authentic material
 - 6.5. Pairing and grouping
 - 6.6. Timing
7. Teaching proposal
 - 7.1. Teaching goals
 - 7.2. Competences
 - 7.2.1. *Linguistic competence*
 - 7.2.2. *Plurilingual competence*
 - 7.2.3. *Digital competence*

7.2.4. Personal, social and learning to learn competence

7.2.5. Cultural awareness and expression

7.2.6. Entrepreneurial competence

7.3. Contents

7.4. Tasks

7.5. Resources

7.6. Assessment

8. Conclusions

9. References

10. Annexes

Resumen

Durante siglos, la poesía ha jugado un papel prominente en la enseñanza y, aunque en la actualidad no se usa con tanta frecuencia, es una forma de literatura versátil que aún puede usarse en las clases de lengua extranjera de hoy en día y a través de metodologías de enseñanza actuales. El propósito de este trabajo es revisar el rol ahora anticuado de la poesía en las aulas de lenguas extranjeras para identificar los beneficios de su incorporación al plan de estudios, para estudiar las dificultades con las que podríamos encontrarnos, y para proponer una unidad didáctica que implemente la poesía en una clase de inglés como lengua extranjera. Durante el desarrollo de este trabajo, vamos a examinar varios enfoques de enseñanza de lenguas para encontrar la metodología que mejor se adapte a las necesidades del grupo de estudiantes para el que se han diseñado las actividades incluidas en la propuesta didáctica.

Abstract

Poetry has played a prominent role in teaching for centuries and, although it is not as frequently used nowadays, it is a versatile form of literature that can still be taught in modern classroom and through modern teaching methodologies. The aim of this paper is to look into the now outdated role of poetry in foreign language classrooms, to identify the benefits of its incorporation to the curriculum, to study the difficulties that might be encountered, and to propose a teaching unit to work with poetry in the English as a foreign language classroom. Throughout this project we are going to examine various approaches to language teaching in order to find the methodology that best fits the needs of the group of students for whom the activities included in the teaching proposal have been designed.

1. Introduction

Globalisation and the need for international relations have promoted foreign language learning for decades now. The widespread use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its role in fields like business, trade or science has fostered the learning of languages so as to access information. In Europe, language learning has been strongly encouraged to the point that The European Commission's White Paper on Teaching and Learning - Towards the Learning Society (1995) stated that proficiency in three languages, including a mother tongue,

should be a common objective for all EU citizens. Bilingual education has, in fact, become the new dominant system in European countries (Lorenzo, 2007, 28). The aim is, in the end, being able to communicate, to give and receive information.

Exchanging information in a globalised society requires the use of a common language. Generally, the language chosen for this type of exchange is English, an international language. But to successfully participate in a communicative event, culture must be also taken into account. Culture had been ignored by traditional teaching methodologies such as the grammar-translation method, however, numerous researchers argue that culture and language are naturally connected and cannot be separated (Erkaya, 2005, 2). Culture entered the curriculum of language teaching and instructors looked for ways to bring culture closer to their students. Collie and Slater (1987, 5) found in literature an authentic material that not only brought culture into the classroom but also gave learners a context for language use.

A great amount of research is carried out every year on the different aspects of language teaching and a myriad of applications and websites offer thousands of resources to incorporate technology into language lessons. Education and language teaching stare at the future often ignoring topics like literature which are commonly considered outdated or even disregarded as being too traditional. Albalawi (2015, 91) claimed that an increase in the use of new technologies had led to a decline in the relevance of literature. Learners are used to working with technology, the curriculum demands that they learn to use it and it is commonly perceived as more motivating and entertaining than books. If learners barely have any contact with literature in general, they have even less experience reading poetry. Spaulding (1999, 148) blames the media which decided to abandon poetry. In his own words: “There may or may not be a popular audience for poetry now, but there certainly cannot be one if the public is not exposed to it”.

According to an article by the Washington Post based on a survey by the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, between 2002 and 2015, the number of poetry readers had reduced by 45% making poetry “less popular than jazz [...] and only about half as popular as knitting”. Poetry has, however, been proven to be beneficial to language learning as it is going to be presented in the following sections of this paper.

2. Justification

Although poetry is now clearly much less popular than it was in the past, it is still a relevant genre that can benefit students throughout their learning process. Even if, as Bloom (2000, 96) states “Only rarely can poetry aid us in communicating with others”, it can enrich our experience of life and “help us to speak to ourselves more clearly and more fully”.

Poetry can, in addition, help us express our feelings providing comfort. Unsurprisingly, it is sometimes used as a form of therapy. This aspect is particularly relevant for children and teenage learners as their emotional intelligence is generally lower and still developing. Adolescence is a period of adaptation and self-discovery and for some teenagers, poetry might be the right tool to talk to themselves and understand their own feelings.

It must not be forgotten that poems were originally used to tell stories, allowing the reader not only to get in touch with other cultures but also to access them from the perspective of the writer, broadening their understanding of other people's feeling and of the world around them.

Rhythm is also important in communication as it carries meaning. English is a stress-timed language whose beat is marked by stressed and unstressed syllables. The use of poetry in language teaching helps learners perceive and reproduce the isochrony of the target language. Isochrony is the term used to describe speech rhythm and it could be compared to the term meter in poetry. The beat of language characterizes a language just as much as its grammar rules and so it should be taught and learnt. In the words of Furniss and Bath (2007, 33):

Rhythm is fundamental to our very existence and to the way we experience life in our bodies. Our bodies work in rhythmic ways: our heartbeat, our breathing, the way we walk, run, dance, swim. We experience time as rhythmical - the rhythms of darkness and light, of work and rest, the phases of the moon, the regular cycle of the seasons, and so on. Rhythm has physical and mental effects upon us which are deeply related to aesthetic experience. [...] Jogging, swimming and even walking become a pleasure only when and if we get into a rhythm.

Poetry can, moreover, serve as a tool to develop some of the key competences included in the Spanish curriculum for compulsory secondary education as it can help learners acquire creative and analytical skills. It could, thus, be used to improve learner's linguistic competence, mathematical competence, personal competence and competence on cultural awareness and expression.

3. Literature review

This section aims at giving a global view of previous research carried out on the field of the use of literature in the foreign language classroom and, specifically, the use of poetry. These fields have been vastly researched and, thus, it would be extremely difficult (if not impossible) to include all of them in this dissertation, therefore, only the most relevant information to the development of this project has been included here.

Karl Bühler proposed a division of language functions which was later revised and expanded by Roman Jakobson. According to this division, six elements can be distinguished in any communicative event: addresser, message, context, code, contact and addressee. Each element will determine a different language function. The one we are concerned about here is the message, that is, the information transmitted by the addresser to the addressee. The language function determined by this element is what Jakobson called the poetic function, also known as the aesthetic function of language. However, as Jakobson explained in his book *Language in Literature* (1969, 43): “a poetic work is not confined to aesthetic function alone, but has in addition many other functions [...] similarly, the aesthetic function is not limited to poetic works”. Thus, poetry is not necessarily a text that aims at being aesthetically pleasant but it can have other functions such as transmitting moral values or denouncing social reality.

Literature has been consistently used in foreign language classrooms since it was considered to be authentic material and an example of real language in context as explained by Brumfit & Carter (2000) in their book *Literature and Language Teaching* in which they provide an in-depth analysis of the use of literature in the classroom and the benefits it might imply. Moreover, Khatib et al. (2011) numbered the advantages of using literature in the classroom including various aspects such as motivation, authenticity, intercultural awareness, pragmatic knowledge, critical skills or grammar and vocabulary knowledge. In the same paper, they included a list of

methodologies and approaches that could be applied in the language classroom to address literature based on previous research by several authors.

The following year, Khatib & Rahimi (2012) summarized the evolution of the use of literature in the language classroom before discussing the advantages and disadvantages that using literature might entail concluding that it has many benefits and that it should be used to teach languages. They also stated that literature allows learners to find effective examples of language in use so that they do not depend on the teacher's perception of a text.

The use of literature has been widely researched in the past and the different advantages provided by the study of literature have been carefully analysed. However, most educators would choose to focus on novels when teaching literature and on narrative texts for language practice. Some teachers would opt for using theatre plays as they allow learners to play a role and interact in the target language. But only a few would think of using poetry. This field has, nevertheless, been extensively researched in past.

Tomlinson (1986) focused on the use of poetry in mixed ability language lessons with learners of various levels of proficiency. He argued that, even though there are multiple factors that need to be taken into account when selecting a poem, poetry can provide individual, educational, affective, and achievement value among others. Individual value refers to the level of analysis that each individual will reach when reading a poem according to their own personal competence. Whereas a weaker learner might only understand the text superficially, a stronger learner will likely be able to read into the poem and gain deeper insight. When describing the educational value of poetry, Tomlinson mentions the fact that language lessons are sometimes reduced to the teaching of linguistic functions but that poetry can enrich the contents of a lesson. Affective value implies that learners are emotionally engaged in the foreign language lesson and feel more motivated and eager to put the linguistic knowledge into practice. Finally, achievement value refers to the versatility of poetry which allows for many correct answers regarding interpretation.

Benton (1990) assessed the importance of using poetry in the early stages of formal education. He claims that poetry proves that both readers and writers can have fun using words to create, spreading a positive view of literature in children's minds. He adds that poetry is a form of storytelling which because of its rhyme and rhythm

is particularly appealing for children, bringing them closer to culture in a fun and entertaining way.

Ahmad (2014) carried out research to find out how Saudi students' linguistic competence was influenced by the use of linguistic analysis to teach poetry to English learners. The results showed that a method based on teaching poetry through stylistic-techniques enabled university students to perform better and achieve better results.

Aladini & Farahbod (2020) defended the use of poetry over other literary genres based on its brevity, which makes it possible to read a whole text within learners' attention span, and on its appeal to emotions and imagination. Their study is supported by their own personal experience and teaching observations of how, thanks to poetry, learners engage more actively, their imagination and creativity are enhanced, and their emotional response can be enriched.

Meresma Durán (2006) delves into the use of poetry in foreign language lessons providing an elaboration of the types of texts that should be used and how to transform a poem into a resource that can be used during a lesson. He includes valuable reasons to incorporate poetry in EFL lessons such as the universality of poetry. Poetry deals with universal themes like friendship, death and love which are present in every culture and might appeal to any individual because, on the whole, they are familiar topics.

4. Theoretical framework: approaches that can be applied

A teaching method is the set of principles and strategies that will guide the teaching process. In this section we are going to analyse the current teaching methods used in language teaching that best fit the use of poetry in the classroom.

There are many different approaches to language teaching that are still being discussed nowadays and, without a doubt, more will appear in the following years. Some professionals used to prefer the silent method while others focused exclusively on a task-based approach. The criteria for choosing a method should be based on the subject we are teaching, the context in which the school is located, classroom demographics, and the teacher's own philosophy.

4.1. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Also known as communicative approach, it perceives interaction as the main vehicle to achieve linguistic competence in the target language. Students learn to do something by doing something, that is, they learn to communicate by communicating. The teacher will promote a relaxed environment where every student feels comfortable to participate.

It emerged in the 1960s, heavily influenced by the raising influence of psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics (Ju, 2013, 1). It was designed, as it is usually the case, to break with previous methods. The focus of language teaching needed to be on the ability to communicate proficiently rather than on language itself. Chomsky's theory of Language Acquisition Device (LAD) was crucial to the development of CLT. Before this theory, it was widely accepted that language was learnt through imitation and repetition. Chomsky, however, claimed that humans are born with an innate ability to learn languages with little instruction, which explained why children are able to learn and understand a language so quickly.

Group discussions, role-playing and interviews are commonly used activities within the communicative language lesson as they focus on interaction, giving learners the opportunity to use the target language to achieve communication in a safe and controlled environment and helping them rehearse and prepare for potential real communicative situations. Writing and reading poetry are also ways of practicing interaction in the classroom and, by discussing the meaning of a poem, we encourage learners to use language to talk about language developing simultaneously their metalinguistic awareness.

4.2. Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)

According to David Nunan (2001, 5), there are two possible ways to understand the concept of task: real-world task and pedagogical task. A real-world task is defined as work done freely or aiming at obtaining a reward. A pedagogical task, on the other hand, is understood as some work done in the classroom using the target language for a communicative goal to produce output. The ideal situation would be adapting real-world situations to our classroom in pedagogical tasks.

This teaching method is generally considered to be motivating as it allows the perception of the language as a useful tool to achieve communication. Learners are

expected to use the language they already know to complete a task. The structure that is generally used in a task-based lesson consists of a pre-task which introduces the topic. Next, learners move on to a task cycle during which they develop the task, they plan a report on it, and they might present and compare the results. Finally, learners focus on language. The language focus is the part in which students analyse the results and specific aspects from the task.

Planning a trip, solving a problem, and organising an event are examples of tasks which can be used in a task-based lesson. Poetry can be easily incorporated to the lesson by designing a task to work with a text. Students could use a poem as a model in order to write their own version of it, or they could complete an analysis sheet of the poem with their teacher's guidance.

4.3. Natural approach

Krashen and Terrell (1983) compared the acquisition of the mother tongue to the learning of foreign languages and found some similarities that, in their view, should be emphasized. They proposed that the situation in which children learn their first language be imitated in the classroom to achieve similar results with a second language. Beginners should be exposed to a flow of comprehensible input and mistakes should not be given much importance since, at first, learners will barely use the language (reducing the risk of making a mistake) and, eventually, they will naturally disappear with time and language exposure.

This theory was originally conceived for new learners so, at first, learners are not expected to use the language to communicate. They undergo a silent period during which other tools such as Total Physical Response are encouraged. Students are not expected to work with written texts until they are familiar with the target language and have achieved a basic level. Poems can, thus, be introduced at an intermediate level as long as they are carefully selected to ensure learners will comprehend them. An example of an activity using poetry following the natural approach would be to read a poem out loud and stopping from time to time to give learners the opportunity to predict the end of a verse. Learners will be able to put into practice their own knowledge of the language and to focus on the information they have already heard to try to predict the content of verse. The use of rhyme can facilitate the choice of words in their predictions.

4.4. Grammar-Translation Method (GTM)

The most traditional language teaching method was the Grammar-Translation Method which was used to teach Latin and Greek during the 18th century. This classical methodology focused on grammar and students were expected to learn vocabulary lists, grammar rules and practice the language through translation. Little or no attention was paid to oral skills but it was considered an effective method. Nowadays, the GTM has become a taboo for being too old-fashioned and, although it is still at least partially present in many foreign language classrooms, it is sometimes considered shameful to use such an outdated method.

Although communication is the main purpose of language learning, we cannot forget the importance of learning about grammar. It is true this method might not be the most motivating way to teach teenagers but that does not mean some ideas cannot be recycled and applied to a modern classroom. Translation can be useful for learners to compare two languages and become aware of their differences and similarities. This awareness will contribute to the development of interculturality in schools. When applied to poetry, translation can be a real challenge that will make learners look for the best possible way to rhyme while preserving the original meaning of a text. Moreover, there are many grammatical aspects that can be taught through poetry and, even if GTM generally opted for deductive grammar practice, the original principles of the method can be modified and adapted to satisfy our pedagogical needs.

4.5. Audiolingualism

After having the Grammar-Translation Method dominate the field of language teaching for centuries, Audiolingualism appeared as a revolutionary approach which became incredibly popular in the 60s. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001, 56), the audio-lingual method was based on behaviourist theories that claimed that learning was based on a series of stimuli and responses.

Whereas GTM had focused almost exclusively on grammar teaching, Audiolingualism gave great importance to phonology and morphology. Pronunciation was commonly taught through repetition and it did not matter if learners did not understand what they were saying as long as they were saying it correctly. The creation of language laboratories was essential for the success of this

method since learners could use taped recordings to improve their oral skills while working independently. The use of audiovisual resources was paramount at this stage when the teacher was not a native speaker. In later stages, students would develop written skills following a textbook to carry out follow-up activities that were meant to reinforce the contents learnt through dialogues.

This method was heavily teacher-centred as the instructor plays an active role in controlling the pace and the structure of the lesson. Learners, on the other hand, have little to no control over their learning process. They are expected to react to the stimulus provided by the teacher which must be varied and relevant to keep learners engaged (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, 62)

It must be borne in mind that poetry was originally written to be read aloud and to be recited. Rhyme was a useful tool that facilitated the memorisation of poems which were repeated year after year. As such, poetry fits the ideas proposed by the audio-lingual method since a teacher might recite a poem and have their students repeat it in order to practice intonation and pronunciation. Students generally repeated stretches of languages until they had learnt them by heart. Poetry can also be used as a stimulus to introduce certain structures that will be accompanied by grammatical explanations and follow-up activities.

4.6. Total Physical Response (TPR)

James J. Asher proposed a stress free tool commonly known as TPR. TPR is based on the theory that memory can be enhanced by means of physical movement. This theory, which became fairly popular in the 70s, follows the learning theories proposed by Krashen and is closely linked to the natural approach as it also imitates first language acquisition, specifically, the interaction adult-child in which the child responds, not by speaking, but through actions and movement. Taylor (1975) as quoted in Krashen (1981, 67) finds that “first language influence may therefore be an indication of low acquisition. If so, it can be eliminated or at least reduced by natural intake and language use”.

Although TPR is more often used in primary education, there are some ideas that could be used with students in secondary education. Movement allows students to feel more active and it reduces anxiety and stress, hence, from time to time, students should be asked to walk around the classroom and to talk to each other so as to

reduce the artificiality of the environment. Moreover, movement could be used in the explanation of contents and the definition of new words and ideas. Regarding the use of poetry, TPR could be used to focus on rhythm and word stress patterns. Learners could be asked to use different movements like clapping or finger snapping as they recite the poem to highlight prosodic features.

4.7. Content and Language Integrated Learning

In 1994, David Marsh coined the term CLIL, which stands for Content and Language Integrated Learning, to refer to a methodology based on language immersion. It refers to the study of a subject through a foreign language integrating both subjects and allowing the learner to acquire knowledge on them both. Nowadays, CLIL is regarded as an umbrella term that covers all the methodologies that allow dual education. It plays an essential role in the curriculum of subjects such as science or history in bilingual schools due to the cross-curricular contents that are developed in each subject.

CLIL is a complex methodology that entails using specific techniques and tasks. Although this methodology has been proven to be effective in certain contexts, research shows that instructors require specific training to fully exploit this approach and the benefits it offers.

Learning about poetry in English is clearly an example of cross-curricular content between the subjects of literature and English. Talking about a poem, analysing its rhyme, and writing a new poem using rhetorical devices are all instances of CLIL tasks that can be carried out in connection with poetry.

4.8. Cooperative learning

Cooperation has been essential for the creation and growth of society. Johnson and Johnson (1999) distinguished two types of cooperative learning: formal and informal.

Formal cooperative learning usually extends from one class period to several weeks. It is used to achieve a shared learning goal and to ensure that all members of the group successfully complete the tasks assigned.

Informal cooperative learning has the same aim but it is used in temporary groups which usually last from a few minutes to one class period. It can be easily

incorporated to any class structure. Informal co-operative learning can be combined with other methods and approaches like task-based learning or the communicative approach.

Among the multiple advantages of co-operative learning it is worth highlighting the concept of positive interdependence and the development of interpersonal skills. Positive interdependence refers to the fact that students feel linked to their classmates as it is impossible to succeed unless they all succeed together. They have to collaborate to achieve a common goal which requires the development of interpersonal skills. This creates the need to form links among students, to teach them how to communicate clearly, and how to accept and help each other.

In order to assess individual responsibility learners could be asked to keep a journal of what each of them does each day or they could be assigned roles. Each member has a title and a set of responsibilities so the timekeeper will have to monitor time and ensure that the task is completed within the established time limits while the group facilitator's function will be helping the group stay on track and facilitation discussions.

Language learning is for learners and should be learner-focused. Meanwhile, teachers should play the role of facilitators that help them access knowledge. However, language lessons should revolve around the learner rather than the teacher. Whenever it is possible, students should be encouraged to discover the language rather than sit and listen. They should be expected to show interest, to be able to work autonomously to find information, and to share it with the rest of the group which is why cooperative learning has become an essential teaching methodology in schools worldwide. The teacher will also have the role of a democratic leader who will encourage students to use the language and who will facilitate the process of learning paying attention to diversity.

Although literature is generally regarded as a private rather than social form of entertainment, there are activities that allow students to interact while learning about literature, or in this case, poetry. An example of a collaborative project would be having students choose a poem and adapting it in order to film a short video to portray the content and their own interpretation of the poem chosen.

5. Difficulties of using poetry in the language classroom

Despite the advantages mentioned in the previous sections, introducing poetry in a secondary school language classroom can be challenging. In this section we are going to anticipate the main difficulties an instructor might encounter when working with poetry, although, evidently, these difficulties will depend on the group of students and their familiarity in working with poetry and literature.

5.1. Learners' perception of poetry

The first problem might be students' attitude towards poetry. Poetry is generally preconceived as old-fashioned and boring. One of the reasons that could explain this phenomenon is that secondary school students are frequently taught to analyse poetry and rhyme. Analysing rhyme can be difficult and it often produces anxiety. Some learners might start to feel anxious just by hearing their teacher say that they are going to work with poetry. If learners' first encounter with poetry in a formal context is presented as a hard task with little practical use in the real world, they are likely to reject it. However, if, as Benton (2000, 7) proposed, learners get familiar with poetry at earlier stages and are not forced to interpret a poem in a specific way, memorise texts, or analyse rhyme, they can enjoy playing with language and they will develop a more positive attitude towards it.

Another common prejudice held against poetry is that it is elitist. The idea that poetry is written for a cultivated or more educated audience makes it less appealing to learners who often feel no connection to the genre. This situation might lead to a deficit in students' motivation which is essential in language learning and even more so among teenagers. Poetry needs to be presented as something useful or at least as something they might enjoy. Connecting poetry to music and using lyrics as an example of poetic language might be a good option since music plays an important role in the lives of teenagers and they often enjoy working with it and even just talking about it.

5.2. Teachers' perception of poetry

We have seen how learners sometimes feel intimidated by poetry as they feel they are not prepared to face it but they are not the only ones to feel this way. We are now going to focus on how teachers might sometimes experience similar feelings

and this will, understandably, prevent them from embracing poetry as a valuable tool in EFL lessons.

In 1990, Wade and Sidaway (as cited in a Stickling et al., 2011) surveyed 40 teachers during their research on the use of poetry in schools and found out that most of the participants felt uneasy when working with poetry. Some teachers do not take kindly to such subjective, debatable, and unpredictable texts. Whether they felt insecure for not being able to look for the correct answer in the textbook or whether they simply do not enjoy reading poetry, their attitude undoubtedly affects their students' perception of the genre.

Maresma Durán (2006, 245) explains that sometimes teachers regard poetry as an elevated form of language, meaning that it is not always accessible and that it might be too difficult for students. This might explain why many teachers have never considered incorporating poetry to their lessons. However, it must be borne in mind that there are many different types of poetry and that not all poems are equally challenging. When working with younger students, teachers could select poetry written specifically for children which is generally shorter, full of rhyme, and deals with everyday topics.

5.3. The need for instant gratification

Social media and ICTs have often been blamed for teenagers' need for instant gratification. Matrix (2014) explains how teenagers grow being able to choose the program they want to watch at any time they want. They no longer need to wait for a weekly episode to come out and, if they like a certain show, they can binge-watch it. They are used to accessing information and entertainment instantly. Similarly, they do not need to wait until they see their friends (or wait to be at home in order to call them) to talk to them, they can text their friends whenever they want to and they generally check their phones often enough to make sure they reply every text immediately. This situation frequently causes frustration when children and teenagers are unable to get what they want right away.

When we combine the need for instant gratification with poetry we get frustrated and dissatisfied teenage learners who are not used to having to re-read a text to understand its meaning or to having to patiently work with a single poem to fully comprehend all its elements. According to Harold Bloom (2000):

Silent intensive re-readings of a shorter poem that truly finds you should be followed by recitations to yourself until you discover that you are in possession of the poem. [...] Committed to memory, the poem will possess you, and you will be able to read it more closely, which great poetry demands and rewards.

Teenagers should be taught to deal with frustration and to work patiently to achieve a goal, learning to enjoy delayed gratification can be hard but it is definitely useful and poetry can be an excellent tool to help them in this process.

5.4. Limited time

The limited number of lessons and the vast amount of contents included in the curriculum for compulsory secondary education in foreign languages force teachers to reduce the number of tasks that are going to be developed in the lessons, and to focus on certain aspects of the language, usually the most practical ones. Educators are often overwhelmed by all the contents they have to teach, the competences that need to be included in their lessons, and all the cross-curricular contents that also need to be taken into account, not to mention the time devoted to assessment. Teachers tend to select the contents and activities that best fit their students' interests and needs and, unfortunately, poetry is rarely considered worthy of such a time investment. This situation explains why most teachers rely on textbooks to ensure they deal with all the contents in the curriculum in an organised and efficient way.

Nevertheless, poetry can be used to deal with many aspects of the curriculum. If teachers co-ordinate and work together, poetry can be studied simultaneously in all the linguistic subjects, thus, encouraging multilingualism. Learning about poetry in several languages will make the curriculum more cohesive and, moreover, the different lessons can complement each other facilitating a more exhaustive analysis of the contents, thus, saving time. In addition, poetry can be used to introduce curricular contents and to present them in context. For instance, if students are learning about the passive voice, we could select a poem in which the passive voice is used. Similarly, poems can be used to introduce new vocabulary or to revise contents that have been previously taught. Furthermore, by listening to poetry, we can improve pronunciation and learn about the internal rhythm of the target language.

5.5. Poem selection

The world of poetry is so big that there are thousands of poems available to teachers and students, which means that, on the one hand, there are many options to choose from and we can always find poems that will meet our requirements regarding grammatical structures and lexical contents. But, on the other hand, having such a wide variety of poems might make choosing one a tough task for the teacher. Some poems use a rather obscure language that might seem unattainable to learners while others are too long to read and re-read during a lesson. Teachers should have a clear idea of what type of poem they need and the criteria that it should meet. It is often best to select shorter poems so that learners do not feel overwhelmed and they can easily find all the key contents that are going to be analysed. It is also important that the themes dealt with in the poems are relevant to learners so that they can see themselves reflected in the poem and feel a connection to it. Poems should, moreover, be appropriate to the age and level of our learners: “[Teachers] cannot just choose any poem from anywhere and then critically discuss it and finish our job without considering its accessibility and appropriateness for the level of students in question” (Khan, 2005, as cited in Alaghbary, 2016). In some cases it might be convenient to opt for an adapted poem whereas with advanced learners we might prefer to maintain the authenticity of the language in an original, non-adapted poem. We must remember that exposure to real language can be very motivating and that simplifying a text might mean losing part of its content, which, in the case of poetry, could mean losing rhyme or readability. Meresma (2006, 243) defends the use of authentic texts arguing that poems are not generally written with a didactic purpose, which means that they reflect real language used by real speakers of the target language. He adds that it might have a motivating effect on students once they feel in control of a poem because it means they are working with real language. Poems are normally written aiming to provide a pleasant experience for readers. If learners are able to read poetry and enjoy doing so, reading habits will be being promoted.

6. How to use poetry in the EFL classroom

In the theoretical framework section, various approaches to language teaching have been presented. However, there is not a perfect method that can magically ensure that learners acquire the language efficiently. Every method has strong and weak points, which explains why so much research is carried out and why new

teaching methods keep being implemented. Educators should take advantage of this wide variety of theories and methods to create an eclectic approach that can cater for their students' needs. Each student is different and so is every group in a language classroom. Not all of them have the same interests, the same context, the same dynamics, or the same motivations. Even the difficulties presented in the previous section will not necessarily be the same for every group. Teaching is a never-ending research project during which instructors need to keep reading about new teaching techniques and trying them out in their classrooms in order to find the resources and ideas that best fit their teaching method and their students' needs.

In this section we are going to explore how an eclectic approach can benefit learners, and which aspects of the methods presented were taken into account in the development of the teaching proposal included in this paper. By combining several methods the efficacy of the teaching programme can be ensured and specific drawbacks can be eliminated by compensating them with aspects taken from other methods.

This project aims at implementing a humanist vision in the tasks and contents included by teaching them from a critical and reflexive approach using interaction and dialogue as tools to achieve social improvement and preparing learners for life. It gives, thus, great importance to interaction between students and with the teacher. Giving learners the opportunity to use the target language in the classroom ensures they develop their linguistic competence while learning to appreciate the value of using English as a vehicle to achieve communication.

The ideas gathered in this plan are always developed from a social affective perspective since self-confidence and emotional health heavily influence the learning process. Teachers need to promote mutual support and empathic relationships between students. Collaborative work plays an essential role in this proposal since, as it has been previously explained, it facilitates oral interaction. In addition, it encourages peer-learning which gives students the chance to ask their partners for help and explain contents and tasks in their own words.

6.1. Structure of the lesson

In the section devoted to the task-based approach, the structure of a task-based lesson has been presented. Lessons should generally be unique to be relevant and

keep learners interested and motivated; however, it might also be beneficial to follow a certain pattern in all lessons so as to achieve a better management of time. Having a routine will save us time and it will help students be more organised. However, we must bear in mind the necessity of leaving some wiggle room in case some extra idea needs to be included, in case an unexpected event comes up or in case students need extra time to finish a task.

At the beginning of each lesson the teacher should explain its aims and structure. This way, students will be prepared to work on the different activities, they will know what to expect of each lesson and what will be expected from them. Having short term goals allows students to feel the satisfaction of achieving a goal while working on the process of achieving a long term one. Moreover, they help them assess their performance and the techniques applied in the classroom. When possible, students should be given the opportunity to choose between different activities so that they feel involved in their own learning process and they get to personalize the lessons. Of course planning alternative lessons is extremely time-consuming but giving students the chance to decide which task they prefer doing first will encourage their active participation.

After this brief introduction, the teacher could present a warm-up activity. Just as we normally prepare our body to do physical activity by doing some light exercise, we can also prepare our students for an English lesson. Warm-up activities are useful to activate previous knowledge. In order to do this, we need to make our students think and talk. Pictures, questions or a piece of news are excellent ways to bring up a specific topic. Warm-up activities will therefore be generally speaking activities. They will normally be based on interaction between students and the teacher.

The rest of the lesson could be organised in pre-task, task and post-task. The aim of the pre-task, just as that of the warm-up, is to activate previous knowledge, although in the pre-task we would be focusing on more specific content than just the topic. The aim of the post-task is to give students the possibility to keep developing and extending the ideas presented in the task.

During the development of these activities, learners could be asked to work in groups and in pairs but there should also be time to work individually and to reflect upon their own learning processes.

6.2. ICTs

Audiolingualism incorporated audio tapes to language lessons in order to improve learners' listening skills. As technology advances, new functions and new tools are applied to language teaching and learning. The use of ICTs has now become essential to the development of learners' digital competence.

ICTs can help create a more real-life environment with the incorporation of podcasts and videos. This facilitates learner exposure to different accents which they would not be able to hear in the classroom otherwise.

Moreover, the use of real websites in the classroom to read articles gives learners a taste of the real world. They can put into practice everything they have learnt with a clear and meaningful purpose. Being able to use the internet in the classroom allows teachers to show learners the importance of language learning to access information. Furthermore, there are many networks where teachers can share their experiences and exchange resources and ideas.

Finally, ICTs can make the lesson more appealing thanks to all the games and interactive resources that are available online. Gamification is now much easier thanks to online platforms that will even allow students to create an avatar and earn points during a lesson.

6.3. Transversality

CLIL methodology aims to promote plurilingualism through teaching contents in foreign languages. It would not be very logical to teach English through another language instead of using the language lesson as an opportunity to expose students to the target language, but the contents that are going to be developed in English lessons could be coordinated with other language subjects to create cohesion in the curriculum. CLIL gives language learning a clear purpose, to acquire knowledge and to access information about other subjects. French and Spanish teachers could be encouraged to use poetry in their lessons either at the same time or right before or after to create common ground among the languages taught at the school and to ensure the continuity of the contents.

6.4. Authentic material

The use of authentic material is paramount to bring the culture of the English speaking countries into the classroom. It will not only motivate students and allow them to understand certain aspects of the culture better, but it will also help create an environment which is closer to reality. By using these authentic resources in a context that imitates real life, we will ensure the comprehension of contents and acquisition of skills.

Adapted material can be useful to facilitate understanding but authentic material should be used as much as possible. To ensure learners understand an authentic text, it might be advisable to reuse texts. For instance, if learners read a poem in class, this same poem could be used in other sessions to focus on a variety of aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, structure, literary devices... Working with the same text to develop several tasks, will allow learners to grow familiar with the structure and the vocabulary, making them feel more comfortable in a, so to speak, known and safe environment. Moreover, focusing on a different aspect each time will allow a deeper understanding of the text.

6.5. Pairing and grouping

Teenagers are naturally drawn to each other and they feel the need to socialise with their classmates in order to feel part of a group. Not only can grouping be a motivating strategy, it can also facilitate classroom management and help in the development of certain competences.

Pair and group work facilitate the development of the communicative competence since learners will need to interact to solve problems and reach agreements. According to Giannotti (2015, 76) pairing up faster and slower learners can help even out the pace of a lesson, and putting together stronger and weaker learners can help stronger learners to consolidate knowledge while weaker learners might benefit from peer teaching.

Diversity must be regarded as something positive, an advantage rather than a problem. By having students with different abilities and different interests we can all benefit and learn. Diversity challenges teachers to use a variety of methods and tasks which will enhance the development of competences.

Organisation must make it possible for students to grow individually, in their own way and with their own peculiarities. In order to make lessons more dynamic, teachers should encourage the use of different groupings in their lessons. Students should be allowed to work in pairs, in groups, and individually so that they may develop different skills and benefit from each grouping scheme. Learners will acquire a sense of initiative as well as the capacity to appreciate and respect the opinion and work of others. By promoting co-operative work, we favour positive interdependence among students. This means that students feel the need to work together and to help and support each other in order to attain a common goal. Consequently, individual success will be linked to the success of the whole team. Pupils will be responsible of their own learning process and of that of their team.

The distribution of the students with whom the proposal was put into practice in the classroom was in pairs. The form teacher had assigned each student a seat according to their needs and taking into account students' preferences. When the plan required that students worked in groups, they would normally work with those students sitting behind or in front of them forming mixed groups of 4-5 students.

Llego (2022) distinguishes between two types of groups that can be formed depending on the contents and the activities that are going to be carried out:

Homogeneous groups are formed by students with similar abilities or characteristics. For instance, teachers might group their students according to their achievement level. These groups can be useful when educators wish to work on reinforcement activities with slower learners. At the same time, high achievers could be working on extension exercises.

However, according to the SAGE encyclopedia of classroom management (2014, 2), "findings indicate that heavy use of ability grouping in schools does not improve average student achievement. Instead, ability grouping tends to be associated with lower achievement overall". Therefore, the use of homogeneous groups should be restricted to occasional learning tasks.

Heterogeneous groups, on the other hand, are formed by students with different abilities or characteristics. In the words of Llego (2022), this type of grouping encourages learners to cooperate and collaborate. Grouping learners according to their strengths and talents, has been widely discussed and debated since it is thought

it might put weaker students under pressure to achieve their classmates' level. Pairing very strong learners with very weak learners might be demotivating for both students as one might feel pulled forward while the other feels pulled back. The ideal combination, depending on the number of students per group, would be having one or two students who are able to help others, one weaker student who needs help, and two or three students with average ability level. Moreover, in the forming of groups, teachers must take into consideration other aspects such as compatibility among learners or their personal interests. The ideal heterogeneous group would therefore be formed by four to six students, including both boys and girls, and it should be a representation of the whole group.

Regarding attention to diversity, pupils can benefit from being in a group with classmates with different abilities, especially slow or weak learners. The teacher should be responsible for the creation of groups to ensure that they are all balanced with regards to general abilities. In the proposal included in this paper, heterogeneous groups are used in the development of the final task whereas homogeneous pairing might be used in everyday classroom tasks.

6.6. Timing

The amount of time available for each of the school subjects is limited and hence it is essential to adjust the teaching-learning process to the number of lessons in a school year. Nevertheless, a certain level of flexibility in teaching plans is required since unexpected events might occur altering the beginning or ending of a unit or task. The well-being of the students and their understanding of the contents will be paramount when establishing a timing scheme. Knowing the contents and activities that are going to be developed in each session is central to the teacher, who needs to prepare materials and avoid improvisation, but also to the students who will learn about time management and the importance of organisation and planning in their lives. The following criteria should be taken into consideration when planning the sessions in a school year:

- a) Determine students' previous knowledge through an initial test so as to know the starting point with regards to the contents.
- b) Co-ordination of contents and tasks with other departments.
- c) The requirement and limitations of the school calendar.

The weekly timetable for students in Compulsory Secondary Education is of six 55-minute lessons a day from Monday to Friday which makes a total of 30 lessons a week. Each subject is assigned a minimum number of compulsory class hours, which must account for a total of 55% of the school timetable in those Autonomous Communities with a co-official language other than Spanish. As Andalusia has no co-official language, the percentage here is of 65% of the school timetable. In the first year of Compulsory Secondary Education, four hours from this total will be devoted to English, which means that the plan proposed in the following section would take approximately two weeks.

7. Teaching proposal

There are many factors that must be taken into consideration when choosing a method. The most important one might be diversity in the classroom. The design of this teaching proposal was carried out with particular a group of students in mind although it can of course be adapted and modified. Students have different interests, different motivations and different learning styles, information that teachers should always take into account when planning classroom activities.

The teaching plan proposed in this section has been designed for and put into practice with a group of 22 students taking their first year of Compulsory Secondary Education in a bilingual school in Andalusia. All of the students are 12-13 years old and the group is formed by 9 boys and 13 girls. Although some of the students are more proficient in English than others, the differences are not particularly relevant and no student requires specific adapted material.

In the design of this proposal, the Spanish Organic Law 3/2020 of December 29 known as LOMLOE was taken as a reference document.

7.1. Teaching goals

- To get to know basic aspects related to poetry and literary devices so as to read and produce brief poems
- To learn to appreciate poetry as part of our cultural heritage
- To express and understand feelings through the use of poetry
- To learn and use mnemonic techniques to memorise contents
- To learn vocabulary related to the weather

7.2. Competences

We are born with capacities that soon turn into abilities and with the help of education they become specific strategies that we use depending on the field and context we are facing. In order to solve complex problems we combine several strategies and that is what makes us competent. The idea of teaching through competences comes from the social demand of functional learning. Following the Organic Law 3/2020 of 29 December, the following competences would be developed in this proposal:

7.2.1. Linguistic competence: This competence entails being able to use a language to organize, understand and communicate information. Learning a foreign language contributes to this competence by giving the students the opportunity to develop different skills (speaking, writing, listening, interaction and reading) so that they can communicate in a different language. Through the tasks included in this paper, learners will practice their reading and listening comprehension skills by reading and listening to a poem and reading about mnemonic techniques. They will also use English to participate in oral classroom activities, discussions, and pair work.

7.2.2. Plurilingual competence: It refers to the use of more than one language to communicate. According to the Organic Law, it also involves developing mediation strategies between languages, and historic and intercultural dimensions. In this proposal, learners will have the opportunity to use the target language and their first language in a translation exercise in which they will have to transfer meaning from one language to the other and try to preserve other linguistic aspects such as rhyme.

7.2.3. Digital competence: The digital competence involves the abilities to search, obtain, process and communicate information. It is related to the search, interpretation and analysis of information using different strategies depending on the format chosen. This competence has become increasingly popular in recent years due to the influence of the internet and the media on our daily lives and it affects directly the process of language learning. Through this proposal learners will develop their digital skills using laptops and the internet to carry out tasks like a translation exercise. Moreover, they will have to use other forms of technology to record and edit a short film about a poem.

7.2.4. Personal, social and learning to learn competence: Learning to learn means having the ability to initiate the learning process and being able to keep on learning in an efficient and autonomous way. Understanding the process of learning is crucial to students as they will have to apply it to different fields and subjects in their academic and professional lives. Being aware of the difficulties of oneself in the process of learning a language can also be highly beneficial. This competence also entails getting to know and accepting oneself as well as collaborating with others. In this unit, learners will often be asked to work in pairs, groups or as a big group, encouraging collaboration and interaction between students. Some of the tasks will demand that learners reflect upon their own perception of a poem and what it means to them, contributing to improve self-knowledge. Furthermore, this proposal also includes some techniques that learners might apply to their learning process and future formative development.

7.2.5. Cultural awareness and expression: This competence refers to getting to know, understand, appreciate, and critically value different cultural and artistic manifestations, using them as source of personal enrichment, and perceiving them as part of the common heritage. It implies using divergent and convergent thinking strategies, finding sources of comprehension and expression, planning, evaluating and adjusting processes to reach a goal whether in a personal or academic range. The teaching plan proposed in this paper teaches students to appreciate literature as part of the culture of a country, to value the expression of culture through the words of the author and to benefit from poetry reading.

7.2.6. Entrepreneurial competence: This competence implies the acquisition of awareness and the application of a series of values and interrelated personal attitudes such as responsibility, perseverance, self-esteem, creativity... But it is also connected with students' ability to choose following their own criteria, to imagine projects, and to develop personal plans. The translation of a poem will require that students work together to plan the task and that they take decisions to achieve the best possible version of their translation. In addition, in the development of the proposed final task, learners will have to imagine, plan, design and edit a short film based on a poem which will require sharing responsibilities with the rest of the members of their group, collaborating, and using their creativity to come up with an idea.

7.3. Contents

The acquisition of contents used to be the main goal of the educational system. However, nowadays, more importance is given to the involvement of students in the learning process and to the development of their skills so that their education is not limited to the acquisition of knowledge. Contents can be defined as tools which are used to achieve the development of competences and skills in learners although the Organic Law (LOMLOE) now focuses on subject specific competences and basic knowledge rather than contents. In this proposal, the following contents are included:

- Being able to understand and use vocabulary related to the weather and seasons.
- Understanding brief and simple written and oral texts.
- Producing simple original texts (poems) following a model.
- Asking and answering questions so as to keep a conversation on simple and known topics such as the weather or classroom activities.
- Using strategies to negotiate meaning and mediate between the first and the target language.
- Using ICTs to find information, to share work and to create a short video.

7.4. Tasks

The tasks included in this section have been sequenced to facilitate the introduction of poetry in the classroom. The different aspects of poetry (rhyme, structure, vocabulary...) are gradually presented throughout the seven sessions that compose this unit proposal.

Session 1 First approach	
Warm-up	1. Students are shown the fun facts picture (annex 1). 2. Students must guess the month we are talking about. 3. Students are asked their opinion about January, what they like and dislike about it.
Pre-task	4. Students are told about John Updike and his poem “January” (annex 2) They are asked to brainstorm words that might appear in the poem. The words are

	written on the board.
Task	5. Students are going to work in pairs. Each pair is given a copy of the poem with gaps (annex 3) and a list of words to complete it. Students are asked to read the poem in order to find if any of the words from the brainstorm is included in the text. 6. Then, they must work together to complete the poem.
Post-task	7. Students are going to watch a short film by Phil Holt featuring the poem January. First, they must check their answers. 8. Then, they are going to discuss the video: Did you like it? Why? How do you feel after watching it? What do you think it represents? How would you improve it? 9. Vocabulary: Which words from the poem are shown in the video?

Session 2 Translation	
Warm-up	1. Students are asked to recall the previous session: what was the name of the poem? What was the name of the author? How many words from the poem can you remember?
Pre-task	2. Students are going to read definitions of words from the poem and the class must guess the word.
Task	3. Using laptops in groups, students are going to translate a stanza from the poem. They will be able to check an online dictionary if they need to do so. 4. They will include their translation on an online shared document and they will read their versions aloud. 5. All together, try to preserve the rhyme of the poem by using online rhyme dictionaries to find synonyms.

Post-task	6. Working in the same groups, students will be assigned a different stanza and they will have to use pictograms to represent some of the words. And share their work online with the rest of the class.
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Session 3 Rhyme and rhythm	
Warm-up	1. Using the pictograms from the previous day, volunteers try to recite the poem.
Pre-task	2. Discuss the following questions as a group: what is rhyme? Do all poems rhyme? What is rhythm?
Task	3. Watch the subtitled version of the video: The Pleasure of Poetic Pattern by David Silverstein. 4. In small groups students discuss what they have heard in the video, then, they share with the class. 5. In pairs, students analyze rhyme and repetition in the poem “Rhyme” by Elizabeth Coatsworth (annex 4) 6. In small groups, students write their own version of the poem. They can use a rhyme dictionary.
Post-task	7. Teacher demonstrated how to mark rhythm and rhyme with sounds (clapping, knocking on the table...) 8. Volunteers read their version of the poem while the rest of the class marks the rhythm of the poem.

Session 4 Memory	
Warm-up	1. Using the pictograms from session 2, volunteers recite the poem. The rest of the class marks the rhythm and rhyme. Do you remember the poem? Which is

	the most difficult part? Why?
Pre-task	2. Class discussion: what do you do when you need to memorise things? 3. Students are given the introduction of a text. They read the title and are asked to guess what it is about.
Task	4. Students are numbered (1-4) and given different paragraphs depending on the number they have been assigned. They read their paragraphs individually. (annex 5) 5. Students form four groups. The first group is formed by all the learners who have read paragraph 1, the second group is formed by the learners who have read paragraph 2 and so on. Each group must discuss what they have read and make sure that all the members have understood the paragraph. 6. Students create new groups formed by one student from each group (1-4). Each student explains the mnemonic technique they have read about. 7. All together, students discuss which the best technique is and share their personal experience using them.
Post-task	8. Each student is going to write a brief text, a random list of objects, or a list of elements (for example the planets in the solar system). 9. The teacher will collect them, hand them out randomly and students will have 2 minutes to memorise it using mnemonic techniques. Then they will have to hand in their paper. 10. Students are going to repeat the information they were given. The author must pay attention to make sure it is correct.

Session 5 Feelings	
Warm-up	1. Students are shown a picture to catch their attention. They are asked to describe it (annex 6). How does the boy feel? What do you think happened?
Pre-task	2. They are shown four more pictures and, for each of them they are asked:

	“What do you feel when you look at this picture?” (annex 7). 3. In pairs students discuss the similarities and differences between the pictures. 4. They are read the poem “Poem” by Ron Padgett and they have to decide which picture describes the poem best (annex 8).
Task	5. Students listen again and write the poem (annex 8). 6. They match the vocabulary words to the pictures (annex 9). 7. In groups they choose and feeling and the type of weather that goes with it. They must write a short poem about it.
Post-task	8. Volunteers read their poems. The rest of the class marks the rhythm. 9. If there is extra time, students play mimics with weather vocabulary.

Session 6 Short film	
Warm-up	1. Students are shown the calligram “Il Pleut” by Guillaume Apollinaire (annex 10). What language is in written in? What do you think the poem is about?
Pre-task	2. Students watch the video “Il Pleut Guillaume Appolinaire” by Mariana Santos. How does the video portray the poem? Brainstorm the aspects that a short video about a poem should include.
Task	3. All together, create a rubric to assess the project. 4. Students work in groups to plan a short film for a poem. They might use one of the poems seen throughout the unit, the one they created on session 5 or a new poem of their choosing. 5. Each student is assigned a role: leader, monitor, notetaker, participation tracker... and they will have to decide the role they will play in their video project: voiceover artist, editor, performer... 6. Students brainstorm ideas and write down a video proposal.

Post-task	7. Each group is going to tell the class the poem they have chosen and summarise the work they have done so far.
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Session 7 Video projection	
Warm-up	1. Recall the videos on poems that have been projected in the classroom: “Il Pleut Guillaume Appolinaire” by Mariana Santos and Phil Holt’s “January”
Pre-task	2. As a group, students use the rubric designed in the previous session to assess these two videos commenting the different criteria.
Task	3. Students are handed out assessment sheets. 4. The videos made by the different groups are presented by the group and then projected. Students are asked to individually assess each of the videos using their copy of the rubric. 5. After watching each video, students are given the opportunity to ask questions that the authors must answer. They are also encouraged to say what they have liked about each video.
Post-task	6. The assessment sheets are collected and both teacher and students give feedback on the project. What did you enjoy the most? What have you learnt from this project?

7.5. Resources

The resources required in the development of this teaching unit include ICTs, worksheets, blackboard and other common items found in the classroom.

Within ICTs are included tools such as a digital whiteboard to project images, texts, and visualise videos in the classroom. Laptops will occasionally be used for students to research, carry out task on digital format and share their work with the class. Students will use various websites like Google Classroom to share findings, Google Documents, or the rhyme dictionary on RhymeZone.com. Moreover,

students will have to create a short film using any technological resources they need to develop their project idea.

All the images, texts and exercises that will be used through the development of the unit can be found in the annex section at the end of this paper. The images have been taken from FreePik.com and all the texts are credited in the annex.

7.6. Assessment

Spanish Organic Law 3/2020, describes evaluation as continuous, formative and integrative so as to ensure that students' efforts and progress throughout the school year are taken into consideration. In the case of detecting irregular or inadequate progress, the teacher should adopt measures to help said student develop his/her competences. The relation between competences, knowledge and evaluation criteria specifies that these criteria should be characterised by the concern on the level of achievement of the key competences as included in Royal Decree 217/2022, of March 29th which, in addition, states that the assessment of competence achievement must be integrated in the evaluation of contents.

Evaluation is usually regarded as something negative and fearsome by students. Teachers should help them understand the real nature of evaluation and to use it in their own benefit to improve their abilities. Students should be given the opportunity to assess their own knowledge before being externally assessed, for this reason, at the end of this teaching proposal, learners will be asked to take a self-evaluation test and they will then have the opportunity to ask questions and work individually on those aspects they need to revise or improve. It might also be advisable to have students participate in the evaluation process by having them help in the design of a rubric.

Assessment can be divided in stages. The initial assessment is a tool to get to know students better at the beginning of the school year and to adapt the teaching process to their capacities and needs. This initial stage will not only assess students' previous knowledge but it can be used to find out what type of learners (visual, kinaesthetic...) are present in the classroom.

Ordinary assessment refers to everyday observation of students' progress as well as tasks and exams. In these exams students normally have to prove their knowledge of the language through listening, writing, reading, speaking and use of English exercises and they will be empirical evidence of the evolution of the students.

Observation of daily work will be essential to detect potential problems or difficulties that learners might have. The assessment of tasks will provide information on the level of acquisition of the key competences.

Traditional evaluation is extremely teacher-centred, which might explain why some students condemn it and feel utter rejection towards any form of assessment. Sometimes this feeling is caused by mere lack of information. If a student does not understand a process or a concept, he/she would rarely like it or even tolerate it. The fear of the unknown is inherent to humans. Peer evaluation shifts the focus of assessment giving learners the tools to assess the work of others while giving them the opportunity to critically assess their own work. According to Asaba & Marlowe (2011, 29) “having multiple sources of observation from peers enables students to receive a more impartial grade than one given by a sole evaluator. It can also offer a complementary or alternative way of rewarding those students who assume a larger role in collaborative tasks”. In addition, peer evaluation engages students to actively participate in the evaluation process giving them a greater sense of responsibility which might be very motivating. In this paper’s proposal, peer assessment is used to evaluate the final project. As Asaba & Marlowe stated, using peer evaluation during oral presentations (or in this case video projection), not only are teachers freed from the role of the evaluator giving them the time to focus on classroom management, but it also “helps keep the audience members engaged and attentive”.

The assessment of the teaching unit proposed focuses on the personal evolution of the students as well as on their involvement in classroom activities and projects. This evaluation process aims at being qualitative and quantitative; it will be carried out through observation, and continuous teacher-student interaction. The following tasks will be assessed:

- Poem understanding and translation
- Writing new poems and stanzas
- Reading and discussing written texts
- Using English to interact with classmates
- Oral comprehension of poems
- Collaboration in pair and group work to complete tasks

- Creation and development of the final task

8. Conclusions

Poetry has existed for centuries and, even if its popularity is in decay, there are still thousands of people who write and read poems, who have found in poetry a way to express their feelings and to transmit their own understanding of the world.

We have seen how poetry can be used for self-exploration, to access culture, to learn pronunciation, or to improve memory. There are many applications and there are countless poems guaranteeing that teachers will find numerous texts that will meet their expectations and their teaching necessities. Poetry is adaptable and can be used and taught through multiple methods. It can be used in almost any teaching context and at every teaching level.

In my own experience, this proposal serves as an interesting and motivating method to bring poetry closer to learners. My students claim they particularly enjoyed the creative process of writing their own poems and of developing the final task. I believe this proposal gave them the opportunity to play with the language and with poetry, making it feel more accessible. My intention was to wake their curiosity for poetry and to help them value it and understand it better.

In this paper we have briefly revised some previous research on the use of literature and poetry in the classroom. We have also explored the difficulties that teachers might encounter when using poetry in their language lessons, and possible solutions to these issues. Relevant aspects regarding the use of poetry in the classroom have also been presented and, finally, a teaching plan to incorporate poems in a secondary school language classroom has been proposed.

Throughout this paper I hope to have proven the value and importance of poetry and why I believe it is worth preserving. The best way to preserve cultural heritage is to teach the new generations to understand and value it. By including poetry in our lessons, we can promote interculturality, work on grammatical and lexical contents, develop linguistic and cultural competences, help students express their feelings and even teach them some mnemonic techniques.

As Percy B. Shelley wrote in his essay *A Defence of Poetry*, “Poetry, in a general sense, might be defined to be ‘the expression of the imagination’”, it comes from the mind of the poet who shows reality through his/her own eyes allowing

readers (and listeners) to perceive the world in that exact way. Shelley talks of poetry's ability to change things although he does not mean that poetry can physically change the world, rather that it can change the way we perceive it:

Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; [...] It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes; its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life.

In a time when science and technology hold positions of power, a time when logic prevails and the arts are sometimes forgotten, it is necessary to stop, to look back at history and everything we have learnt from it; to feed the spirit with beauty, creativity and imagination. It is necessary to defend poetry and everything it can do for us and for our students. As Shelley put it, "poetry is indeed something divine".

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10. Annexes

Annex 1



Edited version of the image by Alli Ward on Madewithhappy.com

Annex 2

January by John Updike

The days are short,
The sun a spark,
Hung thin between
The dark and dark.

Fat snowy footsteps
Track the floor.
Milk bottles burst
Outside the door.

The river is
A frozen place
Held still beneath
The trees of lace.

The sky is low.
The wind is gray.
The radiator
Purrs all day.

Annex 3

Floor	Place	Spark	Gray	Lace	Door	Day	Dark
-------	-------	-------	------	------	------	-----	------

The days are short,
The sun a _____,
Hung thin between
The dark and _____.

Fat snowy footsteps
Track the _____.
Milk bottles burst
Outside the _____.

The river is
A frozen _____
Held still beneath
The trees of _____.

The sky is low.
The wind is _____.
The radiator
Purrs all _____.

Annex 4

Rhyme by Elizabeth Coatsworth

I like to see a thunderstorm,
A dunder storm,
A blunder storm,
I like to see it, black and slow,
Come stumbling down the hill.

I like to hear a thunderstorm,
A plunder storm,
A wonder storm,
Roar loudly at our little house
And shake the window sills!

Annex 5



Based on the text *9 Types of Mnemonics for Better Memory* by Dennis Congos, University of Central Florida.

Annex 6



Picture taken from Freepik.com

Annex 7



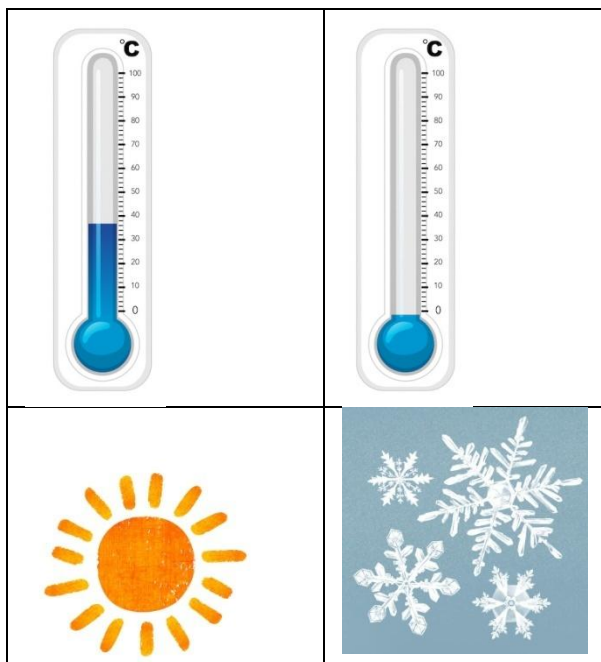
Pictures taken from Freepik.com

Annex 8

Poem by Ron Padgett

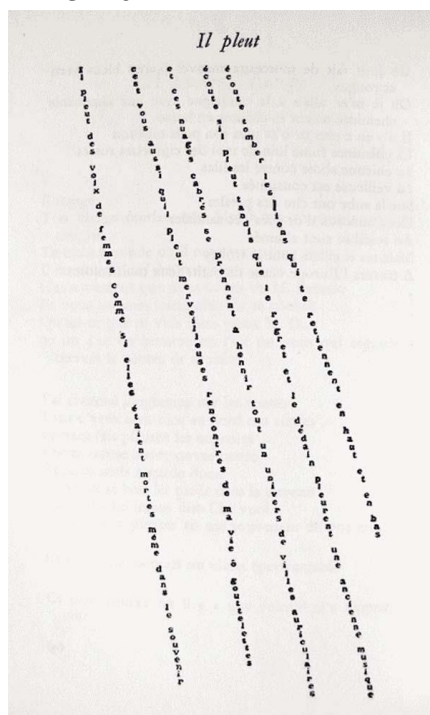
I'm in the house.
It's nice out: warm
sun on cold snow.
First day of spring
or last of winter.
My legs run down
the stairs and out
the door, my top
half here typing

Annex 9



Pictures taken from freepik.com

Annex 10



Il Pleut by G. Apollinaire