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Literature in the teaching of English

A proposal for innovation using haikus

Modalidad de investigación o innovación educativa

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Abstract

The following paper was born from its author's personal perception that literature is seldom used in "English as a Second Language" classrooms (ESL) in the Canary Islands, as evidenced by his own journey through the educative system; as well as from the necessity to further publicise the current situation of creativity in the educational system. The research carried out in this paper shows that as students progress through the educational system their creative capability steadily decreases, and even continues to diminish during adulthood. Approximately, only 2% of the adult population can be categorised as highly creative, whereas in infants this number can reach numbers well over 90%.

This paper cites sources that confirm that creativity is a desirable trait, ability, or capacity, that can positively affect our lives. And yet, it also proves that the educational system not only does not encourage creativity, but sometimes even suppresses it. Given the scarcity of literary models in ESL classrooms, as well as the lack of activities encouraging creativity, this paper proposes a project that attempts to offer a partial solution to these problems.

Understanding poetry as a type of literature, this paper works with haiku poems, a type of poetry originated in Japan characterised by its short, concise, and yet highly visual three lines. Given their reduced length and evocative imagery, this paper contends that the creation of haiku poems by the students can be a great activity for them to learn new vocabulary, practice known vocabulary, while also encouraging creativity. A proposal for a semester-long project using haiku for these purposes is presented but, given the research and innovation nature of this paper, it has not been put into practice in a real context high-school classroom. This ultimately means that there are no observable results produced by this project that can be studied. Because of that, the results section of this paper will instead focus on the expected outcome predicted for the future implementation of this proposal.

Keywords: creativity, education, English, haiku, literature.

Resumen

Este trabajo nace, por un lado, de la perspectiva personal de su autor de que la literatura rara vez se usa en las clases de “Lengua Extranjera: Inglés” en las Islas Canarias, rasgo este que se evidencia asimismo en el propio sistema educativo en su conjunto; y por otro, nace de la necesidad de dar a conocer la situación en que se halla el principio de la creatividad en el sistema educativo actual. Las investigaciones estudiadas en este trabajo muestran que, a medida que los estudiantes progresan en el sistema educativo, su capacidad creativa va disminuyendo, e incluso continúa decreciendo durante la vida adulta. Aproximadamente solo el 2% de la población adulta puede categorizarse como altamente creativa, mientras que en la infancia este porcentaje puede alcanzar cifras superiores al 90%.

Este trabajo cita fuentes que confirman que la creatividad es un rasgo, habilidad, o capacidad deseable, que puede afectar nuestras vidas de forma positiva, si bien demuestra igualmente que el sistema educativo no solo no fomenta la creatividad, sino que a veces incluso la suprime. Uniendo estos dos problemas: la casi inexistente presencia de la literatura en las clases de “Lengua Extranjera: Inglés”, y la carencia de actividades que fomenten la creatividad, este trabajo propone un proyecto que contribuya parcialmente a resolver dichos problemas.

Reconociendo la poesía como uno de los modos de expresión de la literatura, este trabajo utiliza poemas *haiku*, un tipo de poesía originaria de Japón caracterizada por sus cortos, concisos, y aun así altamente imaginarios, tres versos. Considerando su reducida longitud y alta capacidad de evocar imágenes, este trabajo defiende que la creación de poemas *haiku* por parte del alumnado puede ser una gran actividad para el aprendizaje de nuevo vocabulario y la práctica de vocabulario ya aprendido, al mismo tiempo que también fomenta la creatividad. Se presenta una propuesta para un proyecto de duración trimestral en el cual se utilizan *haikus* por las razones previamente mencionadas. Sin embargo, considerando la naturaleza de investigación e innovación de este trabajo, ello no ha sido llevado a la práctica en un aula de instituto en un contexto real. Esto significa que en, en última instancia, no existen resultados observables que puedan ser estudiados como producto de este proyecto. Por ello, el apartado de

resultados se centrará en los las consecuencias que se esperan resulten de la aplicación de estos fundamentos en un futuro próximo.

Palabras clave: creatividad, educación, haiku, Inglés, literatura.

1. Introduction

If we were to compare some of the many different existing textbooks designed for the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL), we would find that the vast majority of them share the same structure: the book is divided into several units, each one dealing with a different topic but, ultimately, they all teaching vocabulary, grammar, and including small sections for a listening activity or two, and a writing proposal; and sometimes they might also offer a speaking activity.

This approach seems to be producing questionable results, as evidenced by the difficulties high-school students encounter when tackling this ESL subject. In Spain, students that graduate from *Bachillerato* are expected to have achieved a B1 level of English as per The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, or CEFR, according to the Organic Law for Improvement of the Education Quality or *Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (LOMCE)*. Nevertheless, most teachers would agree that the majority of their students do not manage to reach the aforementioned level of English proficiency. Some new teaching strategies have begun to be implemented, most notably the teaching through learning situations, whereby teachers create their own activities and exercises, and develop and plan their classes themselves instead of relying on a textbook. Many examples of these can be found on *Revista Digital de Situaciones de Aprendizaje* or *Sitúate*. And while this approach to teaching allows for better adaptability to the context of every classroom, few of those learning situations utilise literature as a tool to teach ESL. Even though these learning situations are, most, incredibly creative, many forget to encourage students into developing their own creativity.

In this paper, we are going to learn about the study of creativity in the academic realm as a field of study that was born around 1950 but that only recently has received the importance and recognition it deserves. We shall cite several sources that defend creativity as something positive, a good and rewarding quality to have. Afterwards, we shall attempt to delimit the broad concept of “literature”, and present one of its main expressive modes: poetry. Within poetry, our focus will be on haiku poems, a type of poetry originated in Japan. After this introductory theoretical background, we shall

present a proposal for a project that uses haikus as a way to create a high-school classroom approach to the use of literature to teach ESL, with a focus on vocabulary acquisition and practice, while encouraging the students to think creatively by allowing them considerable freedom on the topic of their writings.

To close this paper, a few proposals for improvement and other considerations are listed, together with some general comments on how to continue or further develop this study and its project, intended to be written after taking into consideration the results obtained from putting this project into practice in a real high-school classroom.

2. Theoretical background

Educational systems are fundamental pieces in any modern society. By means of the educational system we shape our youth and mould them into the society of tomorrow. Throughout this period, which encompasses the early years of all individuals, it attempts to provide all children with the appropriate environment for them to develop physically, mentally, and socially. Trained professionals guide these children and teenagers through this process and provide them with all the academic knowledge that the government has deemed appropriate to ensure they will become productive members of tomorrow's society.

Unfortunately, this system is far from perfect. Research such as the PISA reports¹, which attempts to measure students' performance, show questionable variance among tested countries, as well as variation of each countries' results over the years, denoting instability and lack of progress and improvement.

Additionally, over the last few years we have seen the rise of a new concern: some voices have begun to express their interest in a topic that has been studied for decades but has only recently been granted due attention: creativity. But what does this term mean? Creativity can be defined as:

A product or process that shows a balance of originality and value. It implies the ability to make unforeseen connections and to generate new and appropriate ideas. It is understood as a transversal skill which could be developed in everybody. A distinction is highlighted between "big C" and "little c" creativity (Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001), the first one referring to the creativity of the genius, such as Mozart and Einstein, the second one

¹ The Programme for International Student Assessment, or PISA, measures the academic competence in mathematics, science, and reading, in students in countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, and other "partner" countries. www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA-2015-Spain.pdf

pertaining to the everyday life being the ability of common people to solve daily problems in an unexpected way, or to see things with a fresh perspective. (Cachia & Ferrari 17)

While the online dictionary Merriam-Webster proposes the following definition:

Creativity: the quality of being creative.

Marked by the ability or power to create

Having the quality of something created rather than imitated

As for synonyms of this word, the same dictionary offers: *clever, imaginative, ingenious, innovational, innovative, innovatory, inventive, original, originative, Promethean*.

All these terms express an ability to create something new, to invent, to be original, clever, even a genius. Undoubtedly, most people would consider these qualities as positive and desirable, and yet some critics express their belief that the educational system, which we so trust to raise the society of tomorrow, is not educating children to be creative, to say the least.

2.1. Measuring creativity

E. Paul Torrance was an American psychologist with over 1800 publications who specialised in the field of education and creativity (Raina 6). Born in a rural area of Georgia, Torrance was encouraged by his father to pursue an academic career after his learning disability made him unable to complete various farming tasks (Neumeister and Cramond 1). He developed an interest in the psychology of teaching and obtained a doctoral degree on the field by the University of Michigan. After working as a psychiatrist for the Air Force of the United States Army, he became a professor at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Educational Psychology. Torrance helped to “reframe how giftedness is defined” and “directly confronted narrow conceptions of intelligence that marginalized Black students’ gifts and talents” (Grantham) helping to reduce segregation and promote equity in American schools. The bulk of his work,

however, would be devoted to studying creativity. His primary interest was to “identify and develop the qualities that allow individuals to express themselves creatively” (Neumeister and Cramond 1), but in order to do so, he first had to develop a tool for measuring creativity, and he created the TTCT or Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. These were two different tests —Thinking Creatively with Pictures, & Thinking Creatively with Words— and are the two most widely used tests of the many that Torrance created (Cramond 1). According to Torrance (2), creative children are often seen as “wild colts”, which Cramond (1) sees as “misspent energies” that could be redirected towards more positive activities by discovering and nurturing these children’s creativity.

We can consider Torrance as the first critic to study the field of creativity in schools. Since 1990, there has been a significant decline in the scores of Torrance tests for measuring creativity, and public schools have rarely been associated with a strong ability to foster it: “Creativity is generally characterized as a natural human trait that is strongly developed in young kids. However, over time natural creativity can be eroded through the public school processes, due to the restrictive structure of the public school system”. (Bennett et al. 183).

Torrance’s work helped build the foundations of many more studies. The Torrance tests are, however, not widely used anymore, and now different studies tend to have different ways of measuring creativity. Interestingly, many of these tests, some of which are online surveys, are aimed at teachers and collect little, if any, data from the students themselves, which raises the question of whether measuring a person’s creativity through another person produces reliable data. One of such studies was conducted by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission on September-October 2009, which launched a questionnaire by European Schoolnet on the eTwinning platform, a web page where teachers from all over Europe can talk to each other, share resources, form communities, etc. Over 6000 teachers participated, 891 being teachers in Spain. Of all the participants, 29% were teachers of a foreign language. Nevertheless, the results of such study were deemed incongruent due to the online-only and fully optional nature of the study, which produced answers only from teachers comfortable with the usage of ICT who were interested in the topic of creativity. Yet it was the biggest study in this field to be conducted in the European

education, which raises the question of why is there such a low interest in the teaching of creativity since, as we are about to see, it has such positive effects.

Fortunately, there have been other, more credible, studies carried out on this issue. In this work, we shall comment briefly on a study developed by professor George Land, and learn about the work of professor emeritus Sir Ken Robinson. But first, we shall provide the necessary research as background for their work.

2.2. The effects of creativity

The importance of creativity for education and society has been emphasised from many sources. Already 10 years ago, the OECD recognised creativity as the core of the knowledge society (OECD, 2000). Creativity is viewed as a resource for economic development (Florida, 2002) and a means for social regeneration (Banaji, Burn, & Buckingham, 2006). Academics and educationists, from Vygotsky (2004) to Sawyer (2006a), Amabile (1989) and Robinson (2001) argue for the immense benefits of creativity for learning. In Europe, creativity is seen as the centre of the knowledge triangle: education-research-innovation (European Council, 2009). This strategic framework for European cooperation in Education and Training emphasises the need to address the enhancement of creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training. Creativity is seen as the sparkle for innovation, which is in turn acknowledged as one of the key drivers of sustainable economic development. (Cachia & Ferrari 15)

Some studies (Shouse and Ma) have also shown a connection between creativity and leadership. They defend that “both involve envisioning and constructing novel ideas, goods, or actions whose value is undetermined at the time of inception and whose acceptance depends on a suspension of collective judgment and gradual mobilization of collective volition”. “Both involve the changing of hearts and minds as communities gradually accept ideas, goods, or actions they had not previously considered relevant or valuable”. Or, in other words, creative people are capable of creating new ideas and of

opening other people's minds to their ideas. These, Shouse and Ma argue, are qualities that can often be found on people that have successfully established themselves in positions of leadership. In their research they conclude that students with these qualities can be capable of 'dynamic subordinacy', a term coined by Crockett (155) to express situations in which a person in a lower position of power can influence the decisions of someone above their position of power, which Shouse and Ma apply to a student being capable of introducing new ideas and practices in a classroom, which the teacher could then share with the principal who would apply these ideas in the entire school.

Further research (Luria and Kaufman) has shown that creativity can also be related to equitable thinking, that is, creative individuals have been found to be less likely to participate in stereotyping. Schools that have been struggling with segregation and stereotyping among their students would do wise to teach creativity: "Creativity or creative ability is related to equitable thinking, which would suggest that teaching creativity in schools (by embedding creative skills, strategies, and problem-solving in curricula) may increase equitable thinking on a broader scale" (Luria and Kaufman Implications).

Other studies have also proven the existence of a link between team performance and organizational creativity (Eryigit and Uslu), concluding that both creativity and innovation are necessary to achieve successful performance in the small business and private enterprises context. A creative team has been shown to have a better organizational capacity which translates into better overall performance.

Creativity can also be defined as the ability to produce new and efficient ways to tackle a problem or carry out a project. It opposes to routine, repetition, and inefficiency. It is also one of the foundations of developed countries' economy, together with knowledge (Tapias et al. 102). In the United States, the creative sector of the economy accounts for 30% of the jobs in the field. That is, of all the staff working on the economic sector, 30% are tasked coming up with new ideas and solutions to existing problems (Florida 323)

2.3. “Do schools kill creativity?”²

We have so far provided several sources to support our claim that creativity is a desirable trait as it can have various positive impacts in our life, and how there even are some jobs that revolve mainly around it. Nevertheless, as previously commented, not only does the educational system not develop this trait, but it even goes as far as to neglect and suppress it. Various critics (Isenberg and Jalongo, Eason et al.) consider that the educational system these days is over-pressured by the high amount of evaluations to test overall student performance, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests in Europe, and as such feel “obligated to engage youngsters in monotonous drills which will, in theory, prepare the students for the tests” (Eason et al. *Creativity in the Classroom*), but none of that work is catered towards the developing and nurturing of creativity. Some authors (Schurig) claim that teachers are not encouraged to work and value creativity, which others (Isenberg and Jalongo) believe to be due to the fact that a creative activity may not always offer a product that could be easily assessed, evaluated, graded based on curriculum evaluation criteria.

One of the most shocking studies in this field is that by Professor George Land, who was contacted by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to create a test capable of measuring people’s creative capability intended for those applying for a position at NASA. Land created the test, and thought it to be simple enough to be completed by children as well and, together with Beth Jarman, carried out the same test on 1600 children from ages three to five; then repeated the same test to the same children at age ten, at age fifteen, and finally he conducted the same study with 280,000 adults with an average age of thirty-one. The results showed that 98% of the children of 3 to 5 years of age scored a mark in the highest ranking “genius level”, but when tested again at age 10 only 30% scored genius level, and when tested at age 15 only 12% did. This alarming result pales in comparison with the results of the tests they performed on adults, in which only 2% of the test subjects scored a mark in the genius level. On his book, *Breakpoint and Beyond: Mastering the Future Today*, Land analyses

² The title of this segment is in honour of Sir Ken Robinson’s TED speech by the same title.

these results. According to him, there are two different kinds of thinking: divergent and convergent. Divergent thinking involves imagining new ideas, original ideas, while convergent thinking involves judging ideas, criticising, refining, combining and improving them. On his TEDx talk in 2011, he compares divergent thinking to an accelerator and the convergent type to a brake, and says that the educational system teaches people to use both kinds of thinking at the same time. That means that when we try to come up with new ideas, we are at the same time criticising those ideas and discarding them, and so we do not actually produce any idea. We judge, criticise, and censor our own ideas before we even finish thinking them. A series of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) showed that brains that try to combine convergent and divergent thinking “illuminate” less —meaning they have less activity— than brains that only think divergently. And when thinking under the effects of fear or stress, we use even a lesser part of our brain:

The question we face for the future is “are we going to be on a culture that depends on right answers, that are repeatable, that are always predictable?”. Or, “are we going to have a culture where, whatever it is we are thinking about, [...] we think of all the possibilities? Can we create a new future that solves the new problems that we have never seen before?” (Land The failure of success)

What Land proposes is to use both types of thinking, but never at the same time. He says that we should first think of all the ideas and solutions that we can come up with, and judge them later (The failure of success).

Another brilliant mind in this field is that of Sir Ken Robinson³, best known for his TED speech “Do skills kill creativity?”, in 2006, that is estimated to have been watched by over 350 million people in 160 countries (Résumé sirkenrobinson.com). Robinson was a professor of arts education at the University of Warwick, in the United Kingdom, where he is now a professor *emeritus*. His work on this issue began in 1999

³ He received knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II in 2003 for his services to the arts.

when he led a commission on creativity, education, and economy for the UK government and wrote the report *All our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*. Both George Land and Sir Ken Robinson (2006) agree on the idea that the educational system was born from the industrial revolution and its need of capable workers for its factories. “We had to build factories for human beings too, called ‘schools’, so we could manufacture people that could work well on the factories” (Land The failure of Success). The requisites for working on such factories did certainly not include the creative capability. Sir Robinson believes that:

Current systems of education are based on the manufacturing principles of linearity, conformity and standardization. The evidence is everywhere that they are failing too many students and teachers alike. A primary reason is that human development is not linear and standardized, it is organic and diverse. People, as opposed to products, have hopes and aspirations, feelings and purposes. (Robinson Bring on the learning revolution)

This raises the question of whether the educational system is actually educating children or merely having them memorise the contents of the subject. Even subjects whose core is that of creativity, such as music, have been proven to “not allow space for creative activities” (Michael 51). When playing on the school band, students are discouraged from creating their own music pieces and instead have to always perform existing music compositions. Another example is that of the subject ‘Design and Technology’ a subject in the United Kingdom. McLellan and Nicholl conducted a research to find what was causing low creativity in this course, in a subject in which “creativity is acknowledged to be crucial for the design process but has been found to be lacking in student work” (Abstract), and concluded that there were three main causes. Students feel that they are not being challenged by the work that is assigned to them, they suffer from limited freedom in the ideas that they could apply, and they do not receive support when trying to make their ideas come true, in summary, “students do not perceive the climate in their classrooms as conducive for creativity” (Conclusions). It is worrisome to find such lack of creativity in this subject whose curriculum states

that “In design and technology pupils combine practical and technological skills with creative thinking to design and make products [...]They learn to think creatively and intervene to improve the quality of life [...]They apply their creative thinking and learn to innovate” (Design and Technology curriculum). The educational system does kill creativity. Three different researchers (Land 1992, Land 2011, Robinson 2006, Eason et al. 2009) have successfully proven what can be summarised in the following statement:

The information obtained in this study suggests that the more years students spend in school, the less creative they become. This is probably due to the fact that they have fewer opportunities to be creative or use creative thinking skills as they proceed through the grades (Eason et al. Conclusion)

The problem, as Sir Robinson sees it, is not only that the educational system does not foster creativity, but also that it overfixates on judging the quality of everything that is attempted:

All kids have tremendous talents, and we squander them, pretty ruthlessly. Creativity now is as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status. [...] We're now running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can make. And the result is that we are educating people out of their creative capacities. [...] Picasso once said this, he said that all children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up. I believe this passionately, that we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it. (Robinson, Do schools kill creativity?)

2.4. “Bring on the learning revolution”.⁴

Sir Ken Robinson is a very prolific writer. His bestselling book is *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*, published in 2001, which received a second edition in 2011. In 2010 he spoke for a second time in TED in an attempt to explain why, according to him, the current educational system is “failing too many students and teachers alike” (Bring on the Learning Revolution sirkenrobinson.com). On this second speech, he compares the educational system to the catering business. In his metaphor, he states that there are two ways for restaurants to assure their quality: fast food restaurants do so by standardisation: there are multiple restaurants by the same company and they all look the same and serve the same food. The other way is setting criteria for excellence and letting each restaurant meet them in their own way, such as the Michelin star rating. These ratings do not force the restaurant to meet set standards and this allows each restaurant to customise to its context, its surroundings, and the people that eat there. The critique that Sir Robinson is making here is that the educational system is trying to standardise all children, this can also be seen on Eason *et al.*'s research where teachers answered negatively a question about students being able to come up with several solutions to a problem. The study revealed that many of the teachers who answered that question negatively would actually only ask the class questions that would accept one valid answer. This is known as “convergent thinking” and, while useful in certain scenarios, it does not prepare students for the “ill-structured” problems of our everyday life that require “a different type of thinking known as divergent thought” (Eason et al. ECCRS Question 11).

According to Sir Robinson (Bring on the Learning Revolution sirkenrobinson.com), what the educational system needs is a reform based “on the principles of personalized learning for every child and of schools customizing their cultures to meet local circumstances.” On this master’s degree thesis, we are only going to talk about one of the several aspects that, according to Sir Robinson, requires such reform: creativity; and the instrument that I intend to use to such end is literature.

⁴ The title of this segment is a reference to a blog entry by the same name by Sir Ken Robinson in June 2010.

When it comes to literature, there is one thing that becomes apparent very quickly: we seem to not be able to agree on what it is. Rivers of ink have been written about the nature and goal of literature, each author providing his/her own interpretation. This paper is not going to focus on defining literature, but the current situation of literature in education, the stigma that surrounds it, and how it could be used as a tool to encourage students to think creatively.

2.5. A brief history of literature

It is impossible to give literature a precise date of birth. On the one hand, because of its very definition, literature does not equal language. The ancient Sumerian cuneiform and the Egyptian hieroglyphs are considered to be the earliest writing systems to exist, dating from shortly before 3000 BCE. The records that survived seem to indicate that these writing systems arose from the need for accounting (Mattessich). But accounting records are not “literature”. On the other hand, we cannot limit ourselves by the existence of physical evidence. Before the ancient Sumerian cuneiforms, before the hieroglyphs, before the proto-writing systems, literature undoubtedly already existed: hunters sharing their stories by the fire, a mother telling a tale to her child for bedtime, and many other examples could be considered to be the earliest examples of literature. Depending on how much we are to broaden the concept, we could argue that carvings or paintings on walls inside caves of stone accounting for the lives of their prehistoric creators are literature. The German historian August Nitschke defends that some fairy tales can be traced back to the Ice Age or Last Glacial Period *circa* 115.000-11.700 years ago (qtd. in Karimi) making them the earliest examples of known oral literature.

As for written literature, the general consensus is that the earliest records are the Mesopotamian “Kesh Temple Hymn” and the “Instructions of Shuruppak” dating from 2500 BCE (Andrews). “Early literary works were usually didactic in approach and had an underlying (or often overt) religious purpose,” says J. Mark, and he is correct: the hymn is an ode to the temple and the deities that inhabited it, and the second is considered as wisdom literature in which the king gives advice to his son (Andrews).

The first known author is “the high-priestess of Ur, Enheduanna (2285-2250 BCE) who wrote hymns in praise of the Sumerian goddess Inanna” (J. Mark), whereas the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is considered to be the oldest known fictional story, an epic dating from 2100 BCE, believed to be lost to history around 600 BCE until another copy was unearthed in Iraq in the mid-19th century.

We said before that accounting records do not constitute literature. What is literature, then? What do these aforementioned fairy tales or the *Epic of Gilgamesh* have that make them literature?

Eagleton analyses one of the most basic proposed distinctions for differentiating between literature and common language used in everyday conversation: that of fact versus fiction. He defends that this distinction cannot be considered a determining factor because this very distinction is in itself neither certain nor concrete. He argues that what an author can consider to be fact, another can see as fiction, giving the reader the example of “Genesis”. Another proposal for defining literature is that of the formalists, inspired by the work of the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson, one of the members of the Prague Linguistic Circle: “Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language, deviates systematically from everyday speech [...] there is a disproportion between the signifiers and the signifieds. Language draws attention to itself”, (Eagleton 2). For the formalists, literature was reduced to the language that was modified by literary devices, such as sound, imagery, rhythm, syntax, metre, rhyme, etc. The formalists defended that everyday language lacked these modifications and so it could alter our perception of reality, make it stale, automatised. But literature, since it modifies the language it uses, becomes more real, more perceptible, because of how we realise that the language being used is different from ordinary language (Eagleton 3). The problem with this approach is that there is not really a common or ordinary language, and so what one person considers as ordinary language might be very different from what another one does. Eagleton (4) attributes these differences to class, region, gender, social status, and so on. Furthermore, this definition of literature would consider all literature to be poetry or, by extension, that only poetry is literature.

Moreover, non-poetic texts can be read as if they were poetic, or a text an author thought to be literature might not be considered as such by a reader. There is no fixed definition of literature: literature is not literature in itself, it is literature because

someone considers it to be so, when someone else might think differently. In a sense, Eagleton defends (11), when we read a text we are actually re-writing it, seeing the text from our own perspective. He believes that even though we consider Shakespeare's work as literature today, perhaps in the future our society might have changed so much that it would no longer hold to that label. We define literature through value judgements, which are subjective, and not by facts, which are empirical.

Many more approaches to the topic of literary theory have risen, such as psychoanalysis, feminist, Marxism, etc. but we are not going to comment on them. Our focus is not defining literature, nor to teach literature in itself, but to use it in a high-school classroom as a means to teach English as a second language (ESL) while fostering creativity; and to that end, we are going to use poetry, more specifically haikus.

2.6. Poetry

Poetry is one of the basic essential principles of literature, together with narrative. One of the main differences between narrative and poetry is in description: in a way, poetry cares more about the way in which the message is being presented or transmitted, than about the message itself. Poetry is one of the most ancient types of literature, since oral literature depends on poetic rhythm; also the earliest record is that of the hymns of the Sumerian priestess Enheduanna, as previously pointed out.

In the field of literary theory, it is often the simplest questions that are the hardest to answer. When faced with the 'what is poetry?' question, one may resort to looking the word up in a dictionary, but much like poets and critics, dictionaries cannot agree on one single definition of the term. Strachan and Terry attempt to define it by its pattern. "Poetry is a cultural form where the placing of the words is driven by their sound as well as by their sense or meaning."(9) When writing narrative we mostly justify our choice of words based on their meaning, their definition; but in poetry oftentimes we also pay attention to the sound of the word. By creating a recurring pattern, based on the sounds of the words, we create a rhythm. It is this rhythm, or metre, that distinguishes poetry from other usages of the language. "Poetry is but a

specialised form of language, and all language has rhythm; the key distinction is that poetry has a discernible rhythmic regularity”(9). There is, however, one variant of poetry that escapes this definition, free verse poetry. This leads to what is probably its most discerning factor: its presentation. Poetry is, more often than not, written in verse, as opposed to narrative which is often written in prose. On this paper, we are going to focus on one specific type, or form, of poetry: haiku poems, which do have a set structure and are easily identifiable.

2.7. Haiku

Haikus originated in Japan during the 17th century, although they received a different name at the time. They evolved from the *renga*, meaning collaborative poetry. *Renga* were *tanka* poems, a 5 line poem of 31 syllables total, composed by two different authors. The first author would write the first three lines—the first line having 5 syllables, the second 7, and the third 5—, while the second poet would write the remaining two lines—of 7 syllables each—.⁵ These first examples of *renga* are known as *tan renga*: they were short and simple, although it was common for the first author to try to make the work of the second author harder by providing obscure or contradictory details (Renga Britannica Academic). *Tan renga* developed during the 15th century, when the genre was divided into *ushin renga* —renga of serious topic which closely followed the conventions of Japanese court poetry— and *mushin renga* —renga of comic topic that deliberately broke the conventions of poetry—. The first three verses of *renga* were known as *hokku*, the ones that would set the mood of the poem. The comic *renga*, the *mushin renga*, became very different from the serious *renga*, the *ushin renga*, so much so that the comic *renga* became its own type of poem known as *haikai no renga*.

⁵ Hernández (2012) defends that Japanese presents a different syllabic structure from English and Spanish, when we say that a line in a Japanese poem has 5 syllables we actually mean that it has 5 *moras*. A mora measures the syllabic weight. For example, a long vowel is counted as one syllable, but two *moras*. Nevertheless, when writing haiku in English or Spanish we do not use *moras*, since these languages do not have this unit of syllabic measure, and instead we count syllables.

The first three lines, *hokku*, of a comic *renga*, *haikai no renga*, were very different from the *hokku* of serious *renga*. Eventually, the term *hokku* was used only to refer to the first three lines of the comic *renga* and not those of the serious *renga*. The comic *renga* became almost a critic to the serious *renga* and its restrictive rules. The serious poems were very complex, the comic ones being much simpler (Haiku Britannica Academia) although it is also true that haikus have some restrictions in the number of syllables per line.

The *hokku* was mastered during the 17th century by Matsuo Bashō, one of the most highly regarded Japanese poets of all time (Bashō Bashō's Haiku). He began writing just the *hokku* of the *haikai no renga*, never actually writing the remaining two lines of the poem, and it became a popular practice. Bashō wrote what has become the most best known Japanese haiku, so much so that Hiroaki Satō managed to include 100 translations of it in his book *One Hundred Frogs: From Renga to Haiku to English*. The haiku goes as follows:

An old pond	Fu-ru-i-ke ya	古池や
a frog jumps in	ka-wa-zu to-bi-ko-mu	蛙飛込む
the sound of water	mi-zu no o-to	水の音

During the Meiji era, 19th century, the Japanese poet Masaoka Shiki, after carefully studying the work of Matsuo Bashō and Yosa Buson, thought that the *hokku* had become the new *haikai no renga* and proposed the term “haiku” to refer to these three-line-poems: “The word haiku means, literally, ‘phrase or sentence of an actor’ and the Chinese ideograms that conform such term transmit the idea that, in the phrase or sentence in question, exists a certain sense of the theatrical”⁶ (Hernández, “tradición poética” 75). Masaoka Shi was a defender of the haiku as its own type of literature, worthy of the same respect as novel or drama (Beichman).

Haikus are a highly descriptive or visual type of poem. According to Hernández, they create a juxtaposition of images and ideas that refer to one of the seasons

⁶ My translation.

(“Tradición poética” 76). Inside the haiku there is one word or phrase that symbolises the season, this is known as *kigo*, a device older than haikus that represents the Japanese appreciation for the coming of seasons. It is important to know that despite this elusive representation of a season within traditional haikus, they do not necessarily need to be about nature or the seasons.

Finally, Hernández (“Tradición poética” 78) remarks that the essence of haiku is not on its metric or its topic, but on its *poiesis* —from the Greek, “the activity in which a person brings something into being that did not exist before” (Polkinghorne 115):

The Japanese artists that wrote haiku [...] built images in which they were able to express the inexpressible, by means of small texts in which they were pleased or surprised of the everyday life, deep thoughts that allowed them to look, and recognise, themselves, ideas that allowed them to have moments of awakening, illumination, or self-knowledge [...]. That is the ultimate goal of haiku: to transcend the human nature. (Hernández, “tradición poética” 78)⁷

Furthermore, haikus are also related to having a Zen life. Both the Buddhist monks and the artists devoted to haiku known as *haijin* —men of the haiku— secluded from society —the former by choice, the latter forced by poverty and the lack of a family— and sought the *honsho* or original nature. The *haijin* would go on a journey writing poems about nature while also trying to find in it their own human essence, a journey both external and internal (Hernández, “El haiku en el zen” 76).

Haiku poems were introduced in English literature around the 20th century through the work of Ezra Pound. The poems he wrote, however, had less restrictive rules than the original Japanese haiku, and appear more as short poems that were inspired by the short yet vivid descriptions of haiku poems. Pound also did not respect the traditional structure of 3 lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively. His most famous

⁷ My translation.

poem in this style, considered to be the first haiku in the English language, is “In a station of Metro”:

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:

Petals on a wet, black bough.

Nowadays, the haiku form of poetry in English is preserved by the Haiku Society of America and the British Haiku Society. Anecdotally, the dictionary Merriam-Webster is currently accepting haiku submissions for a contest where the winner can win \$1000.

2.8. Benefits of using poetry to teach ESL

In the curriculum of secondary education in the Canary Islands, for both ESO and Bachillerato, literature is listed as one of the tools that can be used for the successful implementation of the fifth *bloque de aprendizaje* (learning block), that of sociolinguistic, sociocultural, and emotional aspects of the teaching of English as a second language (ESL). There is only one evaluation criterion in this learning block, the tenth:

Aplicar a la comprensión y producción del texto los conocimientos socioculturales y sociolingüísticos concretos y significativos de los países donde se habla la lengua extranjera, adaptando estos al contexto en que se desarrollan, respetar las convenciones comunicativas, mostrando un enfoque intercultural y una actitud de empatía hacia las personas con cultura y lengua igual o distinta, y desarrollar una visión creativa y emocional del aprendizaje propiciadora de la motivación y del pensamiento efectivo y divergente, con el fin de identificar la lengua extranjera como vehículo para el entendimiento entre los pueblos y de contribuir al pleno desarrollo personal, creativo y emocional del individuo. (Currículo de las materias troncales y específicas para la etapa de Bachillerato)

In this criterion I would like to highlight the following terms: creative vision, divergent thinking, and creative development. The description of the criterion states:

Por último, este criterio pretende que el alumnado como sujeto emocional y creativo, desde sus centros de interés, demuestre motivación y sentimientos positivos que permitan un desarrollo creativo y emocional favorable, a través de diferentes experiencias, recursos (tradicionales y tecnológicos), contextos, representaciones artísticas y culturales en todas sus dimensiones (el cine, el teatro, la música, la danza, la literatura, la pintura...) gestionando su estado de ánimo y participando activamente en situaciones de aprendizaje, con el fin de favorecer su pleno desarrollo en los ámbitos personal, social, educativo y laboral. (Currículo de las materias troncales y específicas para la etapa de Bachillerato)

The description refers to students as emotional and creative subjects, and intends to provide them with a creative and emotionally favourable environment in which to foster their social, educational, and occupational development. One of the methods listed for allowing students to develop their creativity is that of artistic and cultural representations, including literature, but, as can be seen, the presence of literature in the ESL curriculum is rather slim. On top of that, it is only mentioned on the tenth criterion, the only one in the fifth learning block, notorious for being the only block with just one evaluation criterion. The other four blocks —oral reception, oral production, written reception, and written production— feature two evaluation criteria (the second block, oral production, has 3 criteria). These criteria are one from the perspective of the student as an autonomous learner, and the other from the perspective of the student as a social agent. All evaluation criteria from the perspective of the student as an autonomous learner aim to make the student aware of his/her own learning process, develop their autonomy, and themselves. All those criteria end in the same way: “[...] con el fin de responsabilizarse gradualmente de su propio aprendizaje, consolidar su autonomía y como medio de desarrollo personal y social. (Currículo de las materias troncales y específicas para la etapa de Bachillerato). The fifth block, however, is focused on the

perspective of the student as an intercultural, emotional, and creative speaker. It is the only block that speaks of creativity, just another proof of how little attention is given to creativity in high-schools. It is the only block that refers to the students as more than students, but as humans that use a language to communicate and who are at an age of personal discovery and development; the only block that looks beyond the ability to use a language for communication and sees a language as a way to learn about a different cultures and a possible means of personal development. This tenth criterion intends to convey to students that English is a vehicle for communication employed by many people around the world, people that have a different culture from theirs. Through this criterion we intend to teach students to identify relevant details of these cultures by means of tools such as literature. The purpose is for the students to acquire strategies and knowledge that would be of use for their personal, emotional, academic, and occupational development, while also allowing for a creative and emotionally favourable development.

However, this fifth block and its tenth criteria are seldom given the attention that they deserve, based on my personal findings through secondary education both as a student and as a teacher in practice. The other blocks -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing-- have a significantly more prominent appearance in ESL classrooms⁸. Even then, it is not uncommon for these language skills to be overshadowed by grammar, particularly in those schools where ESL classes are dictated by the usage of textbooks, known as student's book and workbook. Nevertheless, and especially over the last few years, another model of teaching in ESL classrooms has appeared and struggles to become the most used one despite its clear advantages over the traditional textbook approach. We are talking about teaching by using learning situations.

Moreover, these four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are still being taught, more often than not, through means of artificial language. We must make a distinction between language in use, with its context, and what we are going to denote as artificial language. When teachers set to practice listening skills they

⁸ While the first, second, third, and fourth criteria are actively worked on in ESL classrooms, the fifth block is, more often than not, not worked on directly but on second hand, diluted in other exercises.

often resort to audio clips provided by the textbook, or other sources, but these are perfect examples of artificial language: they have been recorded in a studio, following a script, and are, in essence, custom-made to be played in an ESL classroom for the students to listen to. I am not advocating against the usage of these audio clips, since they certainly have their uses, especially in classrooms of a lower level of English proficiency. But in secondary education, and specially *Bachillerato*, it should not be the norm to use these audio clips exclusively. With this example, I intend to introduce the topic of literature, which I argue would categorise as language in use, with context.

When we think of literature we might think of some of the more prototypical examples of it such as Shakespeare's sonnets or plays, which would be of questionable use in the teaching of ESL, unless adapted. But the truth is that literature is much more than that, and it can most certainly be another tool to teach English. Literature is often regarded as too complex for students of ESL to work with, and while in certain high-schools adapted literature can be seen in the classroom, as per my personal experience, it is often merely used to practice general reading comprehension, and students are seldom encouraged to create their own literary pieces.

3. Method and procedure

In this section we are going to justify our proposal as one of the many possible activities that the educational system could employ as a means to devote time and resources to encourage creativity among the students. This paper joins together creative writing and vocabulary acquisition through haiku poetry, one example of how to use literature to teach ESL.

We must, however, bear in mind that this is a paper on investigation and educative innovation; there will be no actual data gathering from these activities, they will not be put into practice. Our goal is to prove it possible to use literature to teach ESL, but the efficacy of the methods here proposed is not going to be tested.

3.1. Justification of the proposal

We have already presented in this paper a sizeable amount of data and research that proves that creativity is a desirable trait or ability with various positive effects in our lives, and that the educative system does not encourage the developing of this capacity. Ample research shows that the need for a change is evident, we must provide opportunities for the students to develop their creative capabilities.

The second factor to take into account is the current situation of literature in ESL classrooms. While it is true that Spanish high-schools offer students an optional subject called *Literatura Universal*, literature is seldom used for the purposes of learning a language. Most textbooks do not employ literature as a tool for learning English and, on the rare occasions that they do, it is employed only as a means to practice reading comprehension.

In this paper we propose the use of haiku poetry as a way to increase the presence of literature in ESL classrooms, encourage the students to apply their creative capability to learn and practice vocabulary, learn about semantic fields, and practice English as a language in use, with a context, instead of small scraps of it scattered through a textbook. We highlight the use of language not only for communication but

also for understanding and expressing oneself, thus also generating a favourable environment for the adequate personal, social, and emotional development of the students.

Clabough believes that poems “tend to suggest things beyond what they usually say. Often what causes the strongest emotions is not what the poem describes, but what it makes the reader imagine”. (Chapter 13 “The Arresting Poem”). It is beyond doubt that haikus are essentially imaginative poems, or better said, they feature a prominent usage of imagery. If we recall Bashō’s frog poem, or *Fuika ya*⁹, it was appealing to the senses of the reader to help them recreate the image being described in their mind.

Imagery and metaphor are commonly used in poetry to enhance author’s descriptions. [...] imagery is used to describe and illuminate so readers can more easily form mental images about what they’re reading. Imagery relies on sensory cues from all five senses to inform readers. A line about a dog as “large, mean-looking and loudly barking” uses the senses of sight and sound, and imagery that refers to nasty ocean water as “cold, salty, and putrid” employs touch, taste, and smell. (Clabough Chapter 13 “The Arresting Poem”)

Bashō mainly uses the sense of sound, “an old pond//a frog jumps in//the sound of water” (Bashō), but these three lines are enough for us to picture the situation in our head. Other types of poems place a bigger emphasis on feelings, but haikus are mostly visual and impressionistic, they are descriptive in a subjective way in a really short format, which is why on this paper we defend them as a plausible resource for learning new vocabulary. The evocative imagery of haikus encourages students to look for new words that express what they are thinking about, and its short length ensures both that the student does not get tired or excessively frustrated by the creative process, and that the choice of words will be more meaningful.

⁹ The haiku is untitled, as usual. Thus the first line is used as a pseudo-title for identification purposes.

3.2. Activities proposed

The activities here proposed are aimed at students of *Bachillerato*. The curriculum of *Bachillerato* states that students should start with a B1 level of English proficiency as per the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and finish this educative cycle with a B2 level of English proficiency. The activities that we propose are not aimed at developing one exclusive learning situation, mainly because of two reasons: on the one hand, we have already proven how creativity is a desirable trait or quality and how it should be further encouraged in high-schools. Focusing on the topic for the duration of one month does not constitute a successful strategy, we should be looking at a semester-long-plan of encouraging creative thinking and writing using a series of activities for continued work. The interval that we suggest is to do these activities once a week which would, in turn, give students an entire week to use their creativity to do the pertinent homework. On the other hand, we must also consider how students will likely not be acquainted with the concept of creative writing, or how they might have developed certain stigma or distrust towards literature as a tool for learning English, or just literature in general, over the course of their school years.

A peculiarity to bear in mind when teaching in the first year of *Bachillerato* is the diverse background of the students. Some of them might have been in that high-school since the first year of secondary education or ESO, and are likely to have already made lasting bonds with some of their mates, whereas other students will be newcomers to the high-school and will not have such bonds. For that reason, doing a creative writing activity on one of the first sessions of the school year can be a good idea. First, because it will provide us with valuable information for us to get to know our students better, as well as a glimpse at their creative capability. And second, because it encourages them to work on their own for a while instead of always relying on their partners. Working in collaborative groups has many advantages, but it is not a bad idea to allow students to work individually from time to time, especially when it comes to activities in which every student is encouraged to produce their own writing, without being too influenced by what their classmates might be writing about. It is also important to let students know that this writing is not going to be assessed: not everything that they produce is going to be evaluated, especially when it comes to rating something so incredibly subjective as the quality of creative writing. Our purpose with

this activity is for students to produce a piece of writing. They will be given complete freedom about all its aspects: length, topic, type of writing, style, etc. We shall make no mention of the fact that this freedom enables them to write poetry instead of prose: should they want to, it would just have to be theirs and in English. Once they are finished, they will be asked to express what they felt when writing their creations, making an emphasis on inspiration, on whether they had too much difficulty deciding what to write about. Our hope is that it is the students themselves who will introduce the topic of creativity. Whether they do talk about creativity or not, our next step is asking them what do they think creativity is, how would they define it, and if they would consider themselves to be creative.

There is one important factor that we need to take care of at this point, and that is the alarming results of the various researches done when studying the creativity of students as they progress through the educational system. It is possible that the students, some of them at least, might be aware of these studies, as they were relatively in vogue over the last year, particularly the two TED talks given by Sir Ken Robinson. I leave it to each teacher to decide whether to share the results of these studies with the student or not. It should be each teacher, obviously taking into consideration the attitude and personality of the group of students, the one deciding if sharing this information is going to have a positive effect on the developing of this year-long activity. I would personally advise against doing it, in favour of commenting these results on the last couple of sessions, at the end of the school year, when the students are expected to be more acquainted with the topic of creativity and likely to have a stronger opinion about it. Furthermore, it would also allow them to compare the results of the said studies with their own perception of their development throughout the course, acting as a way for the students to become aware of their own learning and progress. Whereas providing this information at the beginning could have unforeseen consequences on the students and encourage a negative perspective of the activity as they could perhaps consider it a waste of time because of what the different studies have concluded. I argue that it could favour the settling of a deterministic mood and a lack of motivation and interest towards the activity, while discouraging the students from trying to develop their creative capabilities. Nevertheless, it could also be argued that knowing this information could set the students on a challenging mood and encourage them to actively participate in our activities and develop their creativity as a means to prove those studies wrong. It is for

that reason that I leave it to each teacher to assess their situation, their context, their students, and do their best to predict what the best outcome would be.

Having let the students define creativity and argue whether they would consider themselves creative, we would then encourage them to read aloud their creations, to take pride in knowing that their writings are theirs only, of their very own creation, to say “I did this”. We are not judging the quality of the creation, but merely proving the existence of the ability to create something new. They have used their knowledge of the English language to produce a unique piece of writing and, likely, most of them will have made a text that can be categorised as literature. This simple activity acts as a way to introduce them to what will be the topic of these weekly sessions: using creative writing as a means to learn English.

After this first session, the next step would be to introduce literature. The process here suggested would be asking them what they think literature is and provide examples, letting them, once more, be the ones to introduce the topic of the session, in this case: poetry, more specifically, haikus. If literature is seldom used in ESL classrooms, then poetry is nowhere to be seen. Poetry can be very complex, and students may not be acquainted with rhetorical figures or metric, but the type of poetry that we shall use in our classroom is much more accessible to new writers. Moreover, and especially in the earliest sessions, it would be advisable to further simplify the structure of the haiku and be less restrictive about the number of syllables expected in each line. The teacher should then make sure that all the students are familiar with this type of poetry. The best way to do what would be by means of examples, by showing the students diverse types of poems such as epics and sonnets together with haikus, and have them recognise which ones are the haikus. It is suggested to present them with the most famous haiku poem, the frog haiku by Bashō, and also with Ezra Pound’s poem “In a Station of the Metro”, widely regarded as the first haiku written in English. Despite its apparent different structure, I argue that Pound’s poem might be a very good example for the students, as he adapted the haiku style to describe the faces of the people he saw as he walked on a metro station. Indeed our focus with this activity is not for the students to write perfect traditional haikus of exactly 17 syllables, but to express themselves applying new vocabulary.

Using both these poems, we would ask students to reproduce the settings in their minds, to recreate the poem, to visualise Pound seeing faces in the crowd and Bashō relaxing hearing the frogs swim. Our purpose is to convey to the students the imagery of haiku poems, to have them realise how in only three lines the author is capable of such vivid descriptions. Following on that, we would encourage the students to write their own adaptation of a haiku poem, a short poem of three lines, the second being slightly longer than the other two, but to not focus on writing exactly 31 syllables. They can describe a place, a feeling, a memory, a person, etc. it is up to them to choose. It is important that we give the students the freedom to choose the topic of their creations. After all, we are already constraining them by limiting the length of their poems. To further increase the students' interest towards this style of poetry, the teacher may direct them towards some introductory sources about the story of haikus, some of the sources used in this paper could be considered. The intention would be for them to realise that learning is not limited to the classroom, and that they can also learn on their own provided they use reliable sources of information. With this course of action we would, as well, be working on the perspective of the student as an autonomous learner presented in the curriculum. We would be encouraging them to continue their learning process, or even go deeper than what they have seen in the classroom, on their own.

The first attempts at writing haiku may be unfruitful. It is one thing to learn the structure of a poem, and another completely different to use our creativity to write a particular kind of poem. In the session after the students get their time to write their first haiku, teachers should note not to pressure the students into sharing the creations but, instead, they should focus on having them describe their creative process, focusing on the difficulties that they faced. This leads us, once more, into the topic of creativity. It would be a good scenario to make them remember that the most prolific writers of haiku, the *haijin* or men of the haiku, would seclude themselves and live in direct contact with nature, they would physically go towards their inspiration. Some critics (Hiroaki) theorise that Bashō's frog haiku has an autobiographical component, what Bashō is describing is something that happened to him: he was resting in a garden near an old fountain hearing the frogs swim. This author defends that Bashō would have liked to share this peaceful scene with others, and that is what inspired him to write.

Creativity and inspiration are similar concepts. In fact, we could describe creativity as the ability to use our inspiration. It is one thing to come up with an idea and wanting to write a haiku about it, and another to actually mould that idea into the shape of a poem. It would be wise to share with the students this notion of creativity and creative writing: that it cannot be rushed. Creative writing is completely different from a mathematical problem. In mathematics, when you are faced with an equation you use your algebra knowledge and apply the required steps for arriving at the solution. In literature, the path to inspiration might not be that straightforward.

The inspiration for writing a haiku can come from wanting to describe a setting that made us feel in peace, like Bashō and the swimming frogs, or describing an image that shocked us, like Pound upon seeing so many people on the metro station, or simply wanting to praise the coming of seasons, like on traditional haikus. Nevertheless, our goal is not for the students to become prolific haiku writers—although that would be a positive outcome of these activities—but to provide them with a tool in which they can use the vocabulary they have learnt. Instead of learning a list of vocabulary with a column in English and a column with the translation to Spanish, completely out of context, students would learn new vocabulary by associating it with the images that the haikus that they are writing create in their minds. These activities can, thus, be adapted to the topic of the learning situation that we would be working on our sessions not dedicated to these activities. If we have created a learning situation about nature and pollution, we can encourage students to write haikus about this same topic. For example:

The blue ocean waves
with white foamy crests made of
plastic pollution.

With this haiku we are creating the image of blue waves in the ocean, with white foam, but in the end, we discover that the white is not foam from the waves but plastic floating in the ocean. We would be using the strong imagery of the haiku, calling upon colour: blue and white; sound: the waves crashing; to create an image that has been ruined by plastic, which would help the students learn the word “pollution”.

That way, when first learning the vocabulary, we can task the class with participating together in coming up with a haiku to create an image to relate to the vocabulary. It is a slow process, but with a correct use, for example using it only for the more complex words of the vocabulary, it can have very positive effects, since it has been proven that we retain new information better when we can link it to pre-existing knowledge or an image, something known as “mental maps” (Ocaña). These weekly activities related to writing haikus would, thus, be part of the learning situation, working as additional activities to work on the contents of the aforementioned. If we don’t relate these haiku sessions with our normal sessions, we would create a sense of disconnection, which would go against our objective of using literature as a way to teach in ESL classrooms.

As mentioned, it would be wise not to enforce the traditional haiku structure of 17 syllables. It limits their creativity by setting artificial boundaries and can lead to frustration and lack of motivation. Nevertheless, haikus can also be used as a tool for learning how to divide words in syllables in the English language, known as syllabication. If we were to practice that skill, we could then use traditional haikus, written following the 12 syllables structure, and task students with dividing the words into their syllables to visualise the structure of 5 syllables in the first line, 7 in the second, and 5 in the third. To that end, we can prepare an activity similar to the one in Annex 1. With this type of activity, we would both be working on improving the students’ ability of syllabication, and their rhythm when speaking, which leads to their spoken English being easier to understand. It also gives the students some ideas on how to structure their own haikus should they attempt to write exactly 17 syllables.

Haiku poems can also be used as a means to learn vocabulary through semantic fields. Semantic fields allow us to group together words that define similar concepts. For example, in the semantic field of the word “colour” we will find the words “yellow” and “brown”, both words being hyponyms of the word colour, the hyperonym. We can create semantic fields for learning vocabulary, although they would be broader than what a normal semantic field is used for. A prototypical semantic field for the word “blue” would have “cyan” as a hyponym, and “colour” as a hyperonym. But if we create broader semantic fields we can use them to learn vocabulary from our haikus. For example, using the haikus from Annex 1 we can create a broader semantic field for the

word “autumn”, which would list “scarves”, “sweaters”, and even “Halloween” as hyponyms. This allows us to group words under a parent word or concept, which in turn would favour our learning process as we would be learning these words by relating them to another concept, once more activating our mental maps which Ocaña defends as a successful learning strategy. Returning to our previous example of a learning situation about nature and pollution and our haiku about ocean waves, we can create a broad semantic field about the ocean. Using “ocean” as a hyperonym, we can list “wave” as a hyponym, and “crest” as a hyponym of “wave”. Within the ocean we have waves, and within the waves we have crests. It is important to highlight the adjective ‘broad’ when describing these semantic fields, as they are not prototypical examples of them.

If we were to use haikus as a way of learning new vocabulary, which is what we have been doing so far, we advise to place these haiku sections at the beginning of the learning situation. That way, we would use one session dedicated to haikus and learning vocabulary, and the other three sessions of the week for the practice of vocabulary. This strategy is encouraged when working with learning situations in which students are expected to already know a fair amount of related vocabulary, and would only encounter a few words that are entirely new to them. But we can also switch things around and use our normal sessions to introduce the vocabulary, and the haiku sessions as a means to practice such vocabulary. This second approach is recommended when working with learning situations that present the students with a considerable amount of new vocabulary, which would require more time and sessions; and then using the haiku sessions as a means to cement that knowledge by using it to write poetry. This approach has the advantage of leaving the students more creative room, as they would be the ones to choose which vocabulary words to use for their haikus. Whereas with the first approach the task would be creating a haiku revolving around a word, for example our haiku about the ocean waves revolves around pollution. On the second approach, the students have the freedom to choose any of the words that they have already learned and create a haiku that includes them, be it a haiku that revolves around said word, or a haiku that simply includes that word. That way, students can personalise their learning process and develop their creativity, while the teacher makes sure that the students did actually understand the meaning of the word and are capable of utilising it in a real context, in this case, writing a haiku. The vocabulary words would serve as inspiration

to the students, but it is still up to them and their creative capabilities to choose which words to use in their haikus, and to what end.

So far we have only talked about haikus as means to learn and practice vocabulary while encouraging creativity, but there are other activities that we can use with haikus to help develop a class environment that supports positive personal, social, and academic growth. Once students become acquainted with writing haikus, they are bound to have an easier time creating their poems, they will become more confident in their writing skills and will, overall, find it easier to express themselves through these highly visual poems. To help make apparent to the students their progress, which works as a motivational tool as they can see how far they have come and how much they have progressed, the teacher can introduce, in due time, recitals or small competitions in the class. Nevertheless, we should always remember that our goal is to use haikus to learn English and encourage creativity, not teaching the students to become haiku writers. These recitals and competitions should retain a fun mood while encouraging healthy competition, working on learning to learn values by both listening to all the students read their haikus and by reflecting on their own work, while learning from our mistakes. Doing so would, as well, allow the teacher to work in the class the ability of giving and receiving feedback, teaching the students how to convey their opinions while also offering constructive criticism, learning how to improve our work based on this feedback and constructive criticism. The students would thus be, in a sense, assessing their classmates and offering peer review. We would be teaching them the value of teamwork not just a tool for working faster by sharing the workload—which is how, more often than not, learning situations that use cooperative groups tend to use these—, but also as a means to review each other's work, to learn both by writing the haiku and by assessing or reviewing our classmates' haikus.

Haikus are flexible; as we would start and finish other learning situations, our task of using literature as a tool for learning English is able to adapt to the new themes and vocabulary of these learning situations, staying always relevant to the context of the class. We should not view this project as a side task, or a secondary activity, but as one parallel to the lessons working with the learning situation. In fact, we should consider this project as part of the learning situation since it is, after all, pursuing the same goal, to teach English. Incorporating this project to our learning situations also allows us to

organise and plan our long term goals more accurately. Not only that. If we, as teachers, do not consider this project as “important enough” or part of our lessons, but a mere side activity, the students are bound to disregard it and focus on the lessons dealing with the learning situation. Some options that can be considered to solidify this project’s union with the learning situations could be to use haikus, written by experienced haiku authors, to work on writing exercises. The main approach to this task is to have the students write the haikus themselves, but presenting them with haikus written by experienced haiku authors and having them write about their impression of the haiku, the image that it evokes to them, is also an approach to consider. Successful implementation of this task will demonstrate to the students that the learning of English is not reduced to textbooks or learning situations, it can come from many different sources, in this case: literature.

As the semester progresses and our students become more proficient in their writing skills, we would start preparations for the next step: asking them to share their creations with an external public, that is, with other students not from their class. This task should be held until the students are comfortable with their haikus. A highly motivating and innovative idea to approach this next step would be for the teacher to contact another ESL teacher from a different high-school and create a sort of exchange program. Nowadays, with the facilities that technology provides, it would be feasible for the teacher to find another school that is working on a similar project, or even just publicise this project online to inspire other teachers. A platform that was, in fact, designed for such effect is eTwinning, which we previously commented on in our theoretical background section. Provided the teacher can contact another institution carrying out a similar project, both teachers could then coordinate to share each classes’ haikus with the other, giving access to both groups of students to completely new haikus for them to read which would, in turn, offer both classes new material for them to use to learn and practice vocabulary. Of course, it is always possible to keep things internal and coordinate with another ESL teacher from the same high-school, a task much simpler than the aforementioned one, especially on big high-schools that employ more than one ESL teacher. This approach has the advance of being significantly easier to coordinate, and simpler to adapt to unforeseen situations that might jeopardise the stability of the exchange. Nevertheless, harder work usually brings better rewards, and

in this context I argue that coordinating with an external educative system would be seen by the students as far more innovative and would prove to be more motivational.

Whichever exchange or coordination strategy the teacher employs, it is unarguable that it would result in creating a positive and friendly environment for the students that would encourage them to develop socially and personally, while facilitating the creation of new friendships with lasting bonds. Furthermore, this exchange or coordination program would also provide the teacher with an enjoyable and memorable final task for this haiku project. By coordinating with each other, it would be possible for both teachers to arrange a final activity or conclusion to this task. Honouring the birth of the haiku, it could be proposed to write a *renga*. The students would be divided into groups of two, one student would write the first three lines of the poem, and the other the final two lines. Another idea is to have each class create a word bank, then send that word bank to the other class, and every student has to create a haiku using some words from that word bank. The final task can be adapted to better suit the needs of the students, for example if the teachers agree that students have already successfully acquired the vocabulary and would rather focus on improving creativity, they could host a contest between the two classes where every student has to write their own haiku, without any limitations nor guidelines, and have the students vote for their favourite haiku.

If collaboration with another ESL class is impossible, there are a few ideas to consider. If the class has a considerable number of students, simply dividing them into two groups can serve as a way to put into practice the aforementioned activities without needing excessive modification or adaptation. When working with highly reduced groups, something common on language academies, other possibilities will have to be considered. An interesting proposal could be a guessing game, a fun activity but harder to execute on bigger groups. We would task the students with writing a haiku poem, giving them complete freedom over the topic, over what is being described, and have the rest of the class try to discover what is the haiku describing, or what image does the haiku convey. This activity can be adapted to various topics, should the teacher prefer to work on the contents of the learning situation being worked on in the class, or if there is an interest for one topic over another. A topic that would, likely, be well received is that of art. If we look at the activity proposed in annex 2, the students would look at a

painting and use it for inspiration for their haiku. They could either focus on describing the painting itself, or what it evokes in them, or what they think that might have inspired this piece. This is also an activity that could be considered during early stages of the project should the students struggle with inspiration since, as can be seen on the activity, we are providing them already with a source of inspiration, and few ideas for them to write their haikus. It is important, once again, that we set guidelines, ideas, or suggestions, but never obligations. This activity has the advantage of not working directly with vocabulary, but indirectly. The initial activities proposed have focused on vocabulary acquisition and practice, but that doesn't have to always be the case. This activity could, for example, be used to practice semantic fields of nature, or seasons, or paints, etc.

Another example could be countries around the world. With this activity, students would be learning about famous locations in such countries, interesting facts, their history, etc. For example, with the activity proposed in Annex 3 the students would learn about various festivals around the world, which would, much like with the activity in annex 2, provide them with inspiration to write their haiku. This activity is also very versatile because it could be used for describing the festivals in themselves, the idea and feelings that they transmit, details about the culture of those peoples.

Whatever activity we choose or develop for the final task, the most important part is to convey on the students the impact that it has had on them. A reflection activity would constitute the perfect ending for this project of using haikus to learn English. Asking students to compare their initial perception of poetry, before starting the task, their reception of the task, what they thought of it initially, and what they think of it now after its conclusion, allows them to become aware of their learning process, and might encourage them to keep regarding literature as a tool for learning English.

3.3. Other considerations

On this paper, we have created a proposal for using literature, haiku poems, to teach ESL and encourage creativity. But we have done so imagining an idyllic scenario where all the students would be highly motivated and delighted to participate in the project. In the real world, however, it is not uncommon to encounter students that

feature a perspective towards a subject that could only be described as hate, while others experience considerable adversity trying to reach the set goals. On this section, we will attempt to list some of the most common difficulties that a teacher that would set to apply this project on their classroom could face.

First and foremost, I would like to talk about diversity. We have to consider that not all the students are equal. Some are more skilled on a subject than others. In the case of ESL classrooms, this translates as students having vastly different levels of English proficiency. When working on an activity about creative writing, it could be argued that English proficiency might play an important role in the quality of the final product that the student is able to produce. In our project, however, since the focus is placed on haiku literature, there might not be that much of a variation on the quality of the final product between students regardless of their English proficiency, since the emphasis is on vocabulary, which does not necessarily convey a higher or lower level of proficiency. Even though this proposed project can work as a successful tool to help the students learn English, teachers must bear in mind that considerable discrepancies in high levels of proficiency in their classroom can lead to students feeling frustrated, discouraged, or even ashamed to participate in this project. Besides from each student's own level of English proficiency, there is another factor that should be considered: students that require special needs have just the same rights to participate in the classroom and its activities. Adapting our activities and projects so that all our students may participate is a demanding but highly rewarding task. The degree and aim of the adaption would, of course, depend on the context, but working on collaborative groups is a commonly employed strategy that often bears positive results.

Another difficulty that we may face when trying to implement this project in our classroom is the lack of interest, of motivation, and perhaps even thorough negativity and reluctance to participate. There are several factors that can trigger this behaviour, ranging from a lower than the class average level of English proficiency, to the commonly held negative stigma over literature, or even the belief that one is utterly unable to produce a poem. It is easy for us teachers to become frustrated when our students are not engaged on the activities that we devote so much time preparing for them, but we have to learn to view this negativity from the perspective of the student. In some cases, this behaviour arises from hateful feelings towards the subject, in others, it

might be students not believing in their creative capabilities, or in others still, it might just be the students refusing to write a poem. These are situations that are hard to solve by the teacher. It is unlikely that the teacher will be able to change the perspective of a student towards its subject in just one session, just as it is highly improbable that we will be able to encourage a shy student to participate in just one session. These are issues that require a more continued work, issues that we should try to address and solve, or at least reduce, before we start this ambitious project.

It might result that this project is not achieving the results that the teacher intended for it to reach. Perhaps the project did not receive the positive expectative that we were hoping for, and the class is not motivated or even refuses to participate. These are scenarios that we must consider. This is an ambitious project that tries to have the students understand an uncommon way of learning new vocabulary in ESL classrooms. The aspect of this project that is most likely to scare the students is not its difficulty due to the length of the tasked creative writings, but the creative capability needed to actually write these creative poems, which are in fact extremely short. Students accustomed to working with textbooks in ESL classes will likely be familiar with writings that focus more on the structure than on the content. Most ESL textbooks have writing proposals that attempt to teach to the students how to make a writing to introduce a friend, how to make a movie review, how to write a formal email, etc. but, most of the time, all the steps, tips, guidelines, that are proposed are aimed at structuring the writing. These type of writings, which are not creative writings, focus on having the students learn new types of writing, but they do not actually improve the writing skills of the students. A student that struggles to do the writing proposed in unit 1 will struggle with the writing proposed in unit 2 because they would not be actually improving their writing. More often than not, students know how to structure writing, and the main difficulty that they encounter is actually creativity. They get stuck on selecting the topic, they run out of ideas after the first paragraph; they repeat the same ideas all over their work, etc. If we as teachers can present this haiku project as an opportunity for our students to focus more on the content than on structure, we might increase their motivation towards it and encourage them to try.

3.4. Further work

This paper and its project have only addressed the issue at hand from the perspective of an ESL high-school classroom. As mentioned, it is our belief that a better solution would involve coordinated work from all the teachers in the educational centre. While this paper has focused on using literature as a tool for learning English and encouraging creativity, there are many more approaches that could be considered, both from the point of view or perspective of an ESL classroom, and from that of the other subjects.

ESL classrooms are not the only ones where literature can have a prominent use as a means to both encourage creativity and work on the contents of the subject. As mentioned, *Literatura Universal* is an optional subject that could also benefit from this approach, should the students choose this optional subject. In the future, it would be desirable to conduct research on how to foment creativity on this subject using literature and creative writing. Since it features a different curriculum from that of ESL or *Primera Lengua Extranjera: Inglés*, the activities that could be considered would also be different. A collaboration between ESL and World Literature would be an excellent scenario for developing this project. Certain high-schools already have programs that allow subjects to collaborate with one another, in the case of ESL the most well known are the CLIL programs, or Content and Language Integrated Learning (Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenidos y Lenguas Extranjeras, AICLE). This project allows subjects to be imparted in English. Overall, it is a controversial project that might not be currently generating the expected results, but it can allow us to create an activity that uses literature to teach a subject and encourage creativity. Apart from the obvious previous example of World Literatures, another good subject to consider for collaboration could be History. There are many poems that provide us with some firsthand experiences about relevant historic moments of their time. War poetry, for example, with Wilfred Owen or Siegfried Sassoon, could help teach World War II. Owen poem's present high imagery, much like the haikus. However, if we were to continue using haikus, there are another subjects that could be considered, such as *Fundamentos del Arte* or *Técnicas de Expresión Gráfico-Plástica*, or *Dibujo Artístico*. Subjects from the branch of arts enable an easy collaboration with ESL, and even allow for continuation of the project proposed in this paper. After our semester-long project,

students are expected to have become acquainted with the haiku style of poetry, to have gained confidence, and skill. A proposal that could be developed between these subjects could have students describe some of the art pieces that they would normally comment on in this subject, but by means of haiku poems. This type of project can also be considered with subjects such as Latin or Greek, where the students could write haikus that relate key moments from some of the most important classic texts, such as *The Iliad*, perhaps in second of *Bachillerato* students could even write a whole haiku in Latin.

Finally, it would also be interesting to approach this project from subjects from the field of sciences such as physics and chemistry, mathematics, and also from those related to social sciences such as geography, economy, etc. In this subjects it can be slightly harder to find activities that could use literature as teaching tools, but we could very slightly alter the approach and have the students be the only ones who use literature. In a collaborative project with Mathematics, for example, students could write a haiku that expresses how they feel when first facing a new type of problem, and another once they become experts at solving them. This type of activity would, once more, also allow the students to become knowledgeable of their own learning.

4. Results

As commented various times over this paper, this project has never been actually implemented in an ESL classroom. These are all suggestions and proposals and, as such, have not produced any observable results that could be analysed. For that reason, this section will instead focus on the expected results of this project. What is our perspective of it, what do we hope that it will accomplish, and how will the students react to it.

At various points of this paper, we have briefly commented on the stigma against literature that students might have developed during their journey through the educational system. Literature is seldom considered for the purposes of teaching ESL, this preconception might arise from the fact that most literature is written by proficient speakers of the language that are bound to utilise an English with a level of proficiency that might be inaccessible for students. Furthermore, the presence of literature in the official *curriculum* is slim, but it is there, and we should consider it when preparing our lessons. With the haiku project here proposed, we aim at providing teachers with an example of a successful implementation of literature in an ESL classroom. In particular, to teach vocabulary, practice it, and encourage creativity, while at the same time creating a positive environment for the students to develop socially, personally, and academically.

The first and foremost goal of this project is to eliminate, or at least reduce, the stigma that weights over literature in high-schools. Literature can be used to learn a language. In fact, generations ago that was the main approach to learning a new language, becoming proficient on it by reading literature. Of course, the efficacy of that approach is questionable, but if we pair literature together with a standard learning situation, and keep a healthy balance, we can successfully implement literature in our classroom and help the students understand that literature is so much more than Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Our second goal is to encourage creativity. We have analysed the research, seen the figures, and we need to do something about it: creativity steadily declines as we spend more years in the educational system. Students are rarely given the opportunity to

be creative, we limit their creative potential by telling them how they have to do things, or about what they have to write. With our task, we intend to initiate students in the first steps at using their creative capacity. Through haikus, we provide them the structure and give them the freedom to choose the topic, to express themselves through 3 lines of text. Tasking students with narrative creative writing exercises, which are considerably longer than haikus, and have fewer guidelines, can have the opposite effect to that we are trying to achieve: it can lead to frustration and lack of motivation. Haikus, on the other hand, create an appropriate first project for students unacquainted with creative writing, given their short yet structured composition.

Our last goal is to promote autonomous learning. We are presenting students with an approach to studying that they may not be familiar with: mental maps, associating concepts to images and ideas. We are enabling the students to apply this approach to the study of other subjects. The process of learning to write haikus is also autonomous. We present the students with some haiku examples from experienced writers, and give them the freedom to approach this type of poetry in their own way. Instead of conveying the idea that only what the teacher teaches in the classroom is important, we are encouraging students to pursue learning on their own, through their own methods, following their inspiration. In the end, our objective is to teach the students to use their creativity, to understand that not everything has already been written, to see literature as more than an entertaining device for those well versed in the language, to see that they themselves can write literature and that English may provide that experience.

The results will, of course, depend on the context: the number of students, their level of English proficiency, their interest in the subject, etc., but the following are the expected results: initially, it is expected for the students to show reticence over the project, to be reluctant about the idea of having to write poetry, but at the same time slightly intrigued by this new teaching method. At first, it is likely that the students will have difficulties coming up with topics for their poems, not being able to decide between several ideas or, worst case scenario, being unable to come up with any idea for their haiku. Over time, however, we expect them to realise that the broad possibilities of topic for writing a haiku are not a disadvantage but a factor in their favour, as they can choose to write about whatever they would like to. Hopefully, the

students will understand the power of haikus to create such vivid images with so few words, and they will start to utilise the mental maps approach to linking ideas, connecting new vocabulary with a vivid image of what it conveys through means of a haiku. Finally, we expect the students to feel motivated about the proposed exchange project with another high-school. They will feel that their work is important, that people do care, and it will broaden their perspective of their world as they could possibly start working together with someone from another country.

5. Conclusion

Throughout this paper we have reached several conclusions, some through research, others by personal reflection and interpretation. In this section, we shall offer conclusions, as well as provide a proposal for improvement.

The first hypothesis that we set ourselves to prove in this paper was that creativity is not being encouraged in the educative system. Parting from the supposition that the educative system was not encouraging students to develop their creativity, we first tried to find previous evidence of creativity being studied from this point of view of education, which lead us to the work of E. Paul Torrance starting around 1950. His TTCT, or Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, appear to be the first documented tests aimed at measuring creativity and creative thinking which, already in the 20th Century, were showing signs that creativity was in decline in young students. Another big contributor to the study of this capacity or ability was professor George Land, who conducted a test to measure the creativity of the people applying for a position at NASA, and thought it simple enough to also conduct it on children at several points over their journey through the educational system, showing alarming results as creativity catastrophically dropped as the children progressed through school. However, the researcher that succeeded the most in raising concerns about what this data meant is Sir Ken Robinson, whose TED Talks on the subject have been watched by dozens of millions of people. All this research proved that creativity declined rapidly as we were “educated” by the system.

Our next goal on this paper was proving that this decline was worrisome and undesirable, by highlighting the positive aspects of creativity and defending this trait, ability, or capacity, as something that we should most definitely not be suppressing. Following on Sir Ken Robinson’s research, we introduced the topic of our proposal as a way to foster the development of creativity in high-school classrooms while teaching English as a second language (ESL) at the same time. Having introduced literature and one of its branches, poetry, we created a proposal for using haiku poems.

With this project, we apply literature to the teaching of ESL. Some of the activities proposed, especially some developed in the annex, are a clear and easy to

follow example for an activity that works firsthand with the fifth block of the *curriculum*. As we saw earlier, literature was listed as one of the possible tools for learning about the sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects that inevitably accompany an English text. Traditional textbooks tend to focus on grammar, and the few activities that they propose that could be argued to work this fifth block and its tenth criterion are very shallow, and actually contribute little to students' knowledge about literature. The project that we propose in this paper would make for a fabulous activity for working the eighteenth *estándar de aprendizaje evaluable* or evaluation standard, especially that of the second year of *Bachillerato*:

Comprende los aspectos principales, detalles relevantes, algunas ideas implícitas y el uso poético de la lengua en textos literarios que presenten una estructura accesible y un lenguaje no muy idiomático, y en los que el desarrollo del tema o de la historia, los personajes centrales y sus relaciones, o el motivo poético, estén claramente señalizados con marcadores lingüísticos fácilmente reconocibles. (Curriculum Primera Lengua Extranjera)

This project undoubtedly works this standard by having the students observe the poetic usage of the language by teaching them how to write a haiku poem and having them practice it for a semester. Furthermore, this project is a key exponent of the work in the linguistic competence, one of the seven key competences of the Spanish educative system. Successful implementation of this project will allow students to work on their understanding of the language, learning about its diversity of use and function, learn about poetry, and express themselves in a written format that will likely be new to them. Moreover, should the teacher manage to work on the proposed exchange activity, or simply by celebrating those small poetry recitals, students would also have to listen with attention and interest, control and adapt their response to the situation, they would look forward to constructive criticism, and become aware of the repercussions of language in other people. These are all elements that the key competences encourage us to work in our classrooms but that we might struggle to implement.

By learning to write haikus, students will also be working on their description skill, which is core for the successful work of evaluation criteria one, three, six, and eight: “Descripción y apreciación de cualidades físicas y abstractas de personas, objetos, lugares, actividades, procedimientos y procesos.”, while also contributing to the work of the tenth evaluation standard:

[...]describe con cierto detalle hechos, experiencias, sentimientos y reacciones, sueños, esperanzas y ambiciones, y responde adecuadamente a sentimientos como la sorpresa, el interés o la indiferencia; cuenta historias, así como el argumento de libros y películas, indicando sus reacciones; ofrece y se interesa por opiniones personales sobre temas de su interés; hace comprensibles sus opiniones o reacciones respecto a las soluciones posibles de problemas o cuestiones prácticas; expresa con amabilidad creencias, acuerdos y desacuerdos, y explica y justifica sus opiniones y proyectos.

As well as the fourteenth: “Comprende correspondencia personal en cualquier soporte, y mensajes en foros y blogs, en los que se [...] describen de manera clara y detallada, experiencias, sentimientos, reacciones, hechos, planes y aspectos tanto abstractos como concretos de temas de su interés”.

5.1. Proposal for improvement

The main purpose of this paper has been to raise awareness about the results offered by some of the best known and respected researches on the impact of the educative system in the development of creativity in children and young adults. The activities proposed are just one simple example of what a teacher could do in the classroom to change the results of future studies on this field. Nevertheless, there are many other approaches that could be studied and activities that could be developed. On this paper, we have focused on the matter from the perspective of an ESL classroom, but we do not, by any means, suggest that creativity is something that can only be developed only on ESL classroom; quite the opposite: a successful change, a project

that could really improve this situation, has to come from the agreement of all the teachers on the need for a change that would shake the foundations of our approach towards education. As Sir Ken Robinson concludes, a mere reform of the system is not enough. The changes that would successfully address the situation would have to come from a deep restructuring of the educational system

ESL is so much more than grammar and listening exercises. Having the students see that they are capable of creating their very own texts in this language can be a powerful motivation tool for them to change their negative perception of the English language, and banish those self-denigrating thoughts that students often voice about how they are unable to learn English, or write something all by themselves. This project can help us give the students the confidence that they might lack, making them aware of their creative skills which they might have thought to be null. In essence, if we cannot be creative teachers able to create stimulating activities for our students, we cannot expect them to produce creative writing and be motivated in our lessons. This project presents itself as a learning tool to both the teacher and their students, and tries to demonstrate to us all that we can be resourceful people that can use all those resources at our disposal in a creative way, such as using literature to create a fun and interactive project for learning vocabulary while encouraging creativity.

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7. Annex

7.1. Annex 1

The following is a haiku with the traditional 5-7-5 structure. Read it and look at how we divide the words into their syllables.

Love haiku

I am over you

Then my eyes meet yours once more

and I fall in love

I¹ AM² O³ VER⁴ YOU⁵

THEN¹ MY² EYES³ MEET⁴ YOURS⁵ ONCE⁶ MORE⁷

AND¹ I² FALL³ IN⁴ LOVE⁵

As you can see, monosyllables are more prominent in English than they are in Spanish

Here are other haikus following the traditional structure. Try separating them in syllables, use the space right of them.

Autumn love

Coolness fills the air

Scarves and sweaters everywhere

Fall weather is here

Love for mom

Mom, you are the best.

I think you deserve a rest.

You work all day long.

Ice cream

Cream, smooth as velvet

A taste, sweet as your first love

Cold and refreshing

Halloween

Costumes everywhere

cries of laughter fill the air

Happy Halloween

Summer

School is out, warm days

Watermelon, sweet and red,

Hanging out with friends.

Falling leaves

Golden butterflies

float down to the soft, moist ground

and rest till fall end

7.2. Annex 2

Haikus and art

Take a look at the following painting, or at images.zeno.org/Kunstwerke/I/big/kml2692a.jpg



We consider painting as one of the common examples of art, but what about haikus? Can haikus be considered as art? To help you reflect on your answer, write a haiku about this painting, you could write about the following suggestions. After that, turn the page.

- A haiku that describes what you perceive that happens or is shown in this painting. What do you see in this painting?
- A haiku about the source of the painting. What do you think might have inspired this painting?

This painting is called Pink Peach Tree, by Van Gogh (1888), it is considered an Impressionist painting. Impressionism was highly influenced by Japanese art and, as well as haiku, focuses on nature and unrepeatably moments.

In the next class we will read and compare everyone's haikus. That way we can see if we all agree on what this painting evokes on us, and what we think was the inspiration behind it.

Bonus task: if you have the time and are feeling creative, select your favourite painting, sculpture, monument, art exposition, or whatever example of art you like, and write a haiku about it. You could follow the suggestions above, or perhaps write about why it is your favourite art.

7.3. Annex 3

Quick jaunt around the world

How much do you know about festivities around the world. You might have heard of Halloween, but do you know what does it celebrate?

Look at the following pictures. These are all very popular celebrations around the world. Match the pictures with the festival and location, then we will discuss about them all in class.

Festivals:

Loy Krathong & Yee Peng

Fourth of July

Carnival

Carnival

Saint Patrick's Day

Day of the Dead

Holi

Locations

Venice, Italy

Chiang Mai, Thailand

India

United States of America

Rio de Janeiro

Ireland

Mexico







These festivals have something in common, they are all very colourful! Having seen these pictures, it's time to write a haiku, you can use the following suggestions.

- Invent a new festival and describe it in a haiku, you could even include a drawing made by you
- Choose an existing festival and write a haiku about it, what do you do, what do you wear, etc.