



Engaging Students in Real-life Topics: The UN 2030

Agenda to Improve Global Communicative

Competence

Treball de Fi de Màster/ MA dissertation

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to see if students' global communicative competence improves by engaging them with real-life topics from the UN 2030 Agenda. This research attempts to explore whether real-life topics motivate students more than topics in textbooks, whether Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a better method to teach Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) than English books, and whether students improve their high-order skills by engaging them in real-life topics. In order to conduct the research, a nine-session teaching unit based on one of the SDGs was implemented. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of two questionnaires and two participation levels support the use of a TBLT teaching unit based on real-life topics to improve students' participation, motivation and high-order skills. An interview with the English teacher of the target student group was as well analysed to establish correlations. This work is consistent with previous studies and corroborates the findings that suggest participation and motivation are essential for students' progress. Finally, these findings pave the way for a more in-depth analysis on how to best choose topics, textbooks, and teaching methodologies that compel students to improve their global communicative competence.

Key words: communicative competence, textbooks, motivation, participation, real-life topics, UN 2030 Agenda

Resum

L'objectiu d'aquesta tesi és comprovar si la competència comunicativa global dels estudiants millora a través d'utilitzar temes de l'Agenda 2030. Per tant, aquesta recerca explora si temes de la vida real motiven els estudiants més que els temes dels llibres de text, si TBLT és un millor mètode per ensenyar que els llibres de text, i si els estudiants milloren les habilitats cognitives superiors a través de motivar-los amb temes de la vida real. Per tal de poder fer això, una unitat didàctica de nou sessions basada en un dels ODS s'ha implementat. Els resultats dels dos qüestionaris i els nivells de participació observats en l'anàlisi qualitativa i quantitativa confirmen que la participació, motivació i habilitats cognitives superiors dels estudiants milloren amb una unitat didàctica TBLT basada en un tema de la vida real. Una entrevista amb una professora d'anglès del grup on es va implementar la unitat didàctica també ha estat analitzada per establir correlacions. Aquest treball és consistent amb estudis anteriors i corrobora que la participació i motivació són essencials per al progrés de l'estudiant. Finalment, els resultats obren la porta a una anàlisi més profunda sobre com escollir llibres i metodologies educatives que ajudin els estudiants a millorar la seva competència comunicativa global.

Paraules clau: competència comunicativa, llibres de text, motivació, participació, temes de la vida real, habilitats del segle XXI, Agenda 2030

Resumen

El objetivo de esta tesis es comprobar si la competencia comunicativa global de los estudiantes mejora a través del uso de temas de la Agenda 2030. Por tanto, esta investigación explora si temas de la vida real motivan a los estudiantes más que los temas de los libros de texto, si el método TBLT es mejor para enseñar que los libros de texto, y si los estudiantes mejoran las habilidades cognitivas superiores a través de motivarlos con temas de la vida real. Para llevar esto a cabo, una unidad didáctica de nuevo sesiones basada en uno de los ODS se ha implementado. Los resultados de dos cuestionarios y los

niveles de participación observados en el análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo confirman que la participación, motivación y habilidades cognitivas superiores de los estudiantes mejoran con una unidad didáctica basada TBLT sobre un tema de la vida real. Una entrevista a una profesora de inglés del grupo donde se implementó la unidad didáctica también ha sido analizada para establecer correlaciones. Este trabajo es consistente con estudios anteriores y corrobora que la participación y motivación son esenciales para el progreso del estudiante. Finalmente, los resultados abren la puerta a una analítica más profunda sobre como escoger libros y metodologías educativas que ayuden a los estudiantes a mejorar su competencia comunicativa global.

Palabras clave: competencia comunicativa, libros de texto, motivación, participación, temas de la vida real, Agenda 2030

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1. Introduction

This document is the final dissertation for the *Official Master's Degree in Teaching in Secondary Schools, Vocational Training and Language Centres* offered by Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain), on the topic "Engaging students in real-life topics: The UN 2030 Agenda to improve global communicative competence", presented during the year 2020/2021.

This dissertation is the result of a detection of needs in the high school where the internship took place and the writer's professional interest as a future English teacher who wishes to adapt the English subject to 21st century skills and demands. 21st century is changing rapidly due to the economical, technological and societal changes that are happening at an increasing pace. Education needs to have quality as it has to instruct children to succeed in a world where citizens need to be prepared for jobs that do not currently exist. Hence, Quality Education (SDG 4) is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda which needs urgent action to promote lifelong learning and so that students are ready to become productive citizens. This document ratifies a set of 17 SDGs¹ whose aim is to prevent globalisation that widens inequalities, accelerates resource depletion and exacerbates social fragmentation (OECD, 2018). Despite the fact that the SDG 4 involves several targets, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018) places an emphasis on the tools students need to prepare for the future. In other words, education should be a space where students can develop their global skills to adapt to the challenges of globalisation. Nevertheless, as you will see in the following section what was seen in the observational internship are English content delivery classes.

1.1. Context and detection of needs

The internship took place in a public centre of compulsory and post-compulsory education in a neighbourhood which has the highest socioeconomic and cultural level of the province of Barcelona (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020). However, its students correspond to a middle-low status.

Languages play an essential role in this high school. According to its language programme, the English subject involves 3 hours per week, one of which is used to

¹ See [Appendix A](#) for a list of the SDGs.

promote speaking skills. In addition to this, students are required to complete other Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) subjects, such as History, Maths and Science in English. The school also plans international exchanges and one-week courses abroad to let students immerse themselves in a foreign culture (Projecte Educatiu de Centre, 2020).

Despite the fact that the school gives a lot of importance to languages, especially English, what was observed in the practicum is that students continue having teacher-centred classes with little space to interact. Students did not have enough room to develop an awareness on topics that provide growth and help them achieve high-order skills. According to the internship mentor and other 1st of Batxillerat English teachers, students did not seem to be motivated enough or engaged with the topics presented in the textbooks they use. Speaking activities assigned to small groups do not include topics that utilise student's global communicative competence; instead they discuss topics, such as 'punctuality, sports, food, travelling, etc.'. Speaking classes are based on the teacher giving students questions that they then have to ask to each other and giving oral presentations. Furthermore, teachers usually tend to follow a textbook which instructs them on what students have to learn as if there was a prefabricated order of grammatical structures and vocabulary items that need to be taught. Therefore, there is very little opportunity for students to interact and improve their communicative skills. As several authors have shown (Savignon, 1972; Vygotsky 1986, cited in Burkholder & Peláez, 2000), communicative competence should be given more importance as interaction drives cognitive development. It is through social interaction that knowledge emerges. Therefore, there is a considerable need to provide students with topics that not only encourage them to participate more but that also let them improve their global communicative competence involving high-order skills.

In order to comply with anonymity, the name of the school will be changed to the *Tea School* and participants' names will not appear at any moment. Further ethical procedures can be found in section 3.6.

1.2. Objective and research questions

The issues mentioned in the previous section matter a lot to the author of this dissertation as an English trainee teacher as classes should be open and safe spaces where teenagers can make the most of their education to become productive citizens and be

ready for the future. If teachers incorporated teaching units based on real-life concerns and which are student-centred, they would be meeting SDG 4 and giving students an opportunity to improve their communicative competence. A significant aspect concerning the topic of the research at hand is that the school is immersed in a quality education project which aims to improve the learning of languages (Projecte de Direcció, 2020). As explained in section 1.1, English lessons are mainly teacher-centred and based on the textbook. The textbooks² used in the classrooms do not usually include engaging real-life topics such as animal abuse, water consumption, changing education and ending with poverty that meet the UN 2030 Agenda. English classes do not provide students with enough interactional opportunities for global skills to develop.

Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation is to explore the improvement of students' global communicative competence by engaging them in real-life topics that meet the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The lesson plan developed for this dissertation explores if a teaching unit that compels students to raise awareness on real-life concerns and that is based on interaction better the quality of students' communicative competence. Moreover, English textbooks will be brought to the spotlight as students complain about the topics being demotivating. Considering the ideas laid out above, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: Will topics related to the SDGs engage students more than the topics English textbooks usually offer (e.g. travelling, food, health, sports, etc.)?

RQ 2: Do students improve their high-order skills (e.g. analysing, evaluating, creating, reasoning, etc.) by engaging them in real-life topics?

RQ 3: Is TBLT a more effective method to teach than the English textbooks?

In an attempt to answer these research questions, this paper will be looking at students' levels of participation, the topics of the textbooks they have, and their progress of critical thinking after the implementation of a task-based teaching unit named 'Fighting against animal abuse'.

Apart from the personal objective explained above, these research questions will help students to become aware about the urgent needs the world is facing and improve their global communicative skills. In addition to this, it is expected to aid teachers in this

² The textbook 1st of Batxillerat has is *Exam Focus 1* from Burlington. See [Appendix B](#).

particular high school to start making a change in the English subject towards a more 21st century and collaborative teaching.

2. Literature review

In this section, you will find a summary of the articles that are meaningful for this dissertation and which are related to the research questions presented in section 1.2. To distinguish the main theoretical frameworks, this section is divided into five subsections.

2.1. New educational needs

21st century life is characterised by significant cultural, social, economic and technological developments. Due to the fact that the world is rapidly changing, in 2015 the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as it has been explained in the previous section (OECD, 2018). At its heart is the SDG 4 which urges the need to guarantee an inclusive and quality education that promotes opportunities for everyone. Consequently, a new set of skills that equips new generations with transversal personal and professional abilities to face the challenges of what is yet to come has been identified (United Nations, 2015; Lorenzo-Galés & Gallon, 2020). This acceleration of globalisation has caused a substantial change in our understanding of learning and teaching practices.

Education is playing an essential role in this century as it is a powerful tool to empower new generations and prepare them for the globalised world. Teachers have the responsibility of leading this educational change as they are the only ones that can make a difference regarding the preparation and teaching of generations that will embrace future challenges (OECD, 2018; Mercer et al., 2020). The fact that there is this need to transform education is because what was being done was not enough and thus, education must move away from more traditional subjects so that learners can acquire the skills that are “critical to lifelong learning and success” (Mercer et al, 2020, p. 5). Rather than formal instruction, there is a need to teach more strategic transversal skills which improves students’ communicative skills and reach their full potential. This involves preparing students for work opportunities, and also provides them with the necessary skills to become active, responsible and engaged citizens:

To navigate through such uncertainty, students will need to develop curiosity, imagination, resilience and self-regulation; they will need to respect and appreciate the ideas, perspectives and values of others, and they will need to cope with failure and rejection, and to move forward in the face of adversity (OECD, 2018, p. 2).

2.2. Global skills and the teaching and learning of English

The OECD defines the term *global competence* as “the four interrelated capacities which can be demonstrated through skills, knowledge, values and attitudes” (Mercer et al., 2020, p. 7). Global skills include: communication and collaboration, creativity and critical thinking, intercultural competence and citizenship, emotional self-regulation and wellbeing, and digital literacies.

Despite the fact that there is a low consensus on which specific 21st century skills should be taught at school, it is clear that teachers need to teach global skills that go beyond the language classroom (Lorenzo-Galés & Gallon, 2020). As Mercer et al., (2020) state, many of these skills are not new, what is new is the fact that they have been recognised as a must to be taught across the curriculum.

Even though global skills can and should be taught in any subject, it is feasible to teach them in English classrooms for two basic reasons. The first reason is that, “the language classroom is an ideal place to teach global skills” (OECD, 2018, p. 27) since one of the objectives of learning a language is to achieve communicative goals. According to Cooley & Roach (1984), communication competence is needed to understand communication ethics, develop intercultural awareness, and to think critically. Language learning in isolation is not enough to develop communicative competence which implies that something other than vocabulary and grammar should be taught. In order to learn to communicate efficiently and effectively other global skills, such as the ones laid in section 2.1, are needed. The language classroom is the perfect place to integrate these global skills.

The second reason is that English is an essential skill citizens need to master due to its wide use internationally as a lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2011; OECD, 2018). Despite the fact that this dissertation focuses on the teaching of English, it is worth mentioning that there are other lingua francas in the world, such as Russian in North Asia (Pavlenko, 2006) or Mandarin Chinese in China (Plumb, 2016). English is a global skill itself and it can be the perfect medium for learning global competences (Mercer et al., 2020) which include: communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, intercultural competence and citizenship, emotional self-regulation and wellbeing, and digital literacies. Hence, the main challenge for teachers is to ensure the learning goals of language and global skills are taught effectively and efficiently whilst giving equal importance to both.

2.3. Assessing global skills

Global skills need to be assessed to see if students are progressing and thus, reaching high-order skills. The aim of teaching global skills is to prepare students to be more intellectual and adapt easier to the changes of globalisation (OECD, 2018). The most common pyramid used in education to check and explain students' high level thinking processes is Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001) as depicted in the first pyramid of *Figure 1* below:

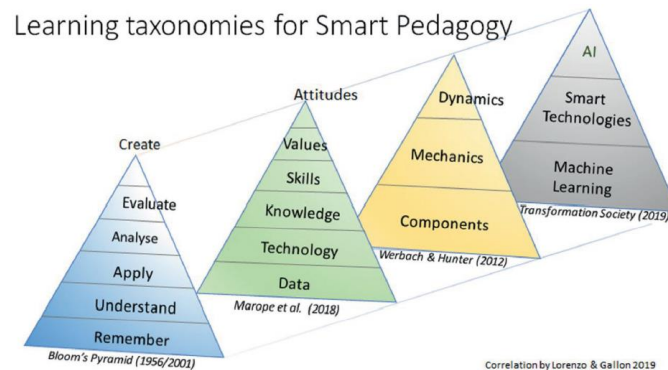


Figure 1. Correlation of learning taxonomies by Lorenzo & Gallon (Lorenzo-Galés & Gallon, 2019, p.19).

Bloom's original pyramid included six levels of complexity (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation), but its revision made by Anderson et al., (2001) presented a more dynamic approach by transforming nouns to verbs and changing the top part of the pyramid. The revised pyramid's levels are the following: remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate, and create. The top three levels of the pyramid correspond to high-order skills which are analysis, synthesis and evaluation. By comparing students' answers to each level teachers can observe how much the students have progressed in critical thinking (Anderson et al., 2001). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) also uses, based on the revised Bloom's taxonomy six levels to evaluate educational systems (Wasis, Sukarmin & Prastiwi, 2017).

As it can be seen in *Figure 1*, different pyramids have been presented in order to assess knowledge. Almost two decades later, Lorenzo-Galés & Gallón (2019) presented a proposal for a Smart Pedagogy framework as depicted in the fourth pyramid in *Figure 1*. The Smart Pedagogy framework follows three domains of social cognitive development to transform education: explicit information, implicit knowledge, and abstract meta-reflection.

2.4. Motivation and participation

Many studies (Turner & Patrick, 2004; Al-Shara, 2015; Tasgin & Tunc, 2018) have shown that participation and motivation usually go hand-in-hand. Participating in the classroom makes learning easier as it is a productive work habit. By participating students are provided with opportunities to express their opinion, verify if something is right or wrong, and realise if they need to revise content. Participation also allows teachers to observe what students have understood, diagnose learning problems or check their learning progress. However, for students to participate there is an essential component that needs to be taken into account. Al-Shara (2015) argues that if students are not engaged, they will not participate because they will get bored and will not be able to focus. If students are not engaged then negative consequences could follow such as failing the subject or even abandoning their studies (Tasgin & Tunc, 2018). This clearly demonstrates that content (i.e. textbooks and other materials) needs to be carefully selected if teachers want to engage their students and succeed (Seidhofer, 2011).

2.5. Communicative competence and Task-based language teaching

Methods of teaching global skills have become a point of discussion. As mentioned previously, some textbooks continue to have a traditional approach with topics that do not motivate students (OECD, 2018). If we want to teach our students global skills (e.g. creativity, critical thinking, intercultural competence and citizenship, emotional self-regulation) that prepare them for the future we should promote communicative competence and provide learners with activities that allow them to do so (OECD, 2020).

In the 21st century, communicative competence has been referred to as global communicative competence as current communication involves going beyond simply learning language skills (e.g. grammar, syntax, lexicon, etc.) to become global citizens (Mayda, 2020). Chen (2005, p. 5) claims that “in the global communication context, competence further requires individuals to be equipped with the ability to acknowledge, respect, tolerate, and integrate cultural differences in order to be qualified for enlightened global citizenship”. Through communication intelligence, creativity, citizenship, critical thinking, awareness of other cultures, and knowledge learners will develop the necessary skills to live in a peaceful and productive world. There is a need to be more flexible towards other societies and cultures if we want to thrive in this globalised world (Alfred & Byram, 2002).

Educators can either introduce global skills by integrating them little by little into short language activities or they can prepare larger tasks which allows for a more in-depth approach to developing the skills. Giving students problem-solving situations where they need to put several skills into use, is a good way to make them reach high-order skills and thus, develop global skills (Mercer et al., 2020). For instance, asking students to speak about *how much they use their mobile phones* is not the same as asking *how can we educate people to put an end to animal abuse*. What matters is that everything students are taught is meaningful and gives them opportunities to prepare for the future.

Many studies (Nunan, 2004; Costa, 2016) agree that traditional teacher-centred teaching does not work. However, this does not mean that teachers do not need to guide and provide support to students (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). In the past thirty years, a huge body of literature has appeared around TBLT. Savignon (1991), Littlewood (2004), Najjari (2014) and Waluyo (2019) claim that its interest is due to the diverse opportunities it can provide to promote the improvement of communicative skills. The main aim of TBLT is to engage language learners in activities which are meaningful and goal-oriented to reach an agreement/decision, solve problems, reach a decision, create a final product, and complete a task. TBLT forces students to negotiate meaning and the teacher is responsible for providing the necessary scaffolding so that students are able to say what they want to say (Gibbons, 2015; Escobar, 2020). Jeon & Hahn (2006) point out that TBLT seems very useful in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language and there is little to no contact with native speakers. A TBLT approach stimulates more active participation (Tasgin & Tunc, 2018) which also betters students' attitude in relation to language learning. Nonetheless, Dickinson (2010) disagrees stating that TBLT is not ideal for students who have a low level of English. They note that students will find it exceedingly difficult to communicate as they will lack vocabulary and grammar to express themselves and thus result in communication breakdown.

Willis & Willis (2011) explain how to integrate TBLT into textbooks as the many of them are not helpful when it comes to promoting interaction in classes. This pre-planned teaching of linguistic items listed on a syllabus, such as the structured syllabus seen in the majority of the textbooks, has a list of repetitive items based on grammar and vocabulary (Tze-Ming Chou, 2010) and neglects the communicative aspect of language. Willis & Willis (2011) claim that despite the fact that books are not designed for TBLT, this should not be used as an excuse to continue producing textbooks which do not help

students to improve their global communicative competence. If there is dissatisfaction with textbooks and their language pedagogy, teachers should voice their concerns and seek a remedy for it. Textbooks that provide material that has been shown to be ineffective and difficult to integrate TBLT can cause teachers to lose enthusiasm and as a result, provide less effective lessons.

3. Methodology

After having identified an issue in the internship and having read many articles on engagement and the need to prepare students for the future, this section will now move on to the methodology used. It will deal with the methodological approach, participants, the teaching unit, the different gathering tools and strategies used, process of analysis, ethical procedures, and research limitations.

3.1. Methodological approach

This dissertation is action-research based and a post-practice reflection (Nussbaum, 1996; Esteve, 2004) that examines if a TBLT teaching unit based on a topic of the UN 2030 Agenda engages and improves students' global communicative competence. The teaching unit implemented lasted for nine sessions. The research consists of both qualitative and quantitative data due to the different data collection tools that have been used.

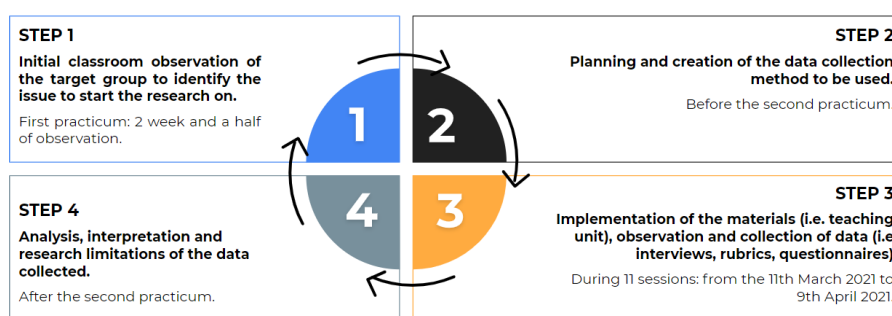


Figure 2. Research process overview (Author's chart, Barcelona 2021).

3.2. Participants

This study involves 31 students of 1st of Batxillerat C (i.e. 11th grade) who took the mandatory English subject at the *Tea School*. In terms of English proficiency and according to The Common European Framework for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) the majority of the students have a B1 followed by some A2 and B2 levels. 1st of

Batxillerat students were chosen because it was the only English level where three hours of class were completed in the internship timetable. 1st Batxillerat C was chosen because the classroom had good acoustics so with the facemask teachers did not have to shout to teach, and also because from the three groups the mentor had it was the less disruptive.

3.3. The teaching unit

The teaching unit (see [Appendix E](#) for the teacher's and student's books) called 'Fighting against animal abuse' was created by Silvia López de Torre and myself for the internship subject of this Master's Degree. It consists of nine TBLT based sessions. The decision of using the TBLT method was to improve participation levels and promote global communicative competence. The chosen topic is one of the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda as there is a need to make students create new understandings, attitudes, develop social values and socio-cultural skills for the future. By working on a topic which is controversial using tasks students have to exchange information on issues they are not familiar with, express their arguments, and try to find possible ways to solve them. Throughout all the activities students need to discuss, reach agreements, respect others' opinions, be critical, and propose ways of putting an end to animal abuse (see [Appendix H](#) for the teaching unit sequence). Half of the lessons were online as due to Covid-19, Batxillerat face-to-face lessons were reduced to a 50%.

3.4. Step by step: gathering tools and strategies

The initial and final questionnaires (see [Appendix C](#) for the questions of each questionnaire) were designed to help to answer the research questions and obtain information regarding the UN 2030 Agenda. Questions 1 to 5 were designed to answer RQ2, question 6 to see how familiar they were with the UN 2030 Agenda, question 7 to answer RQ1, and the rest to answer RQ3. Both questionnaires were designed and carried out by myself.

Both questionnaires were completed anonymously and individually because students are more sincere and write what they think if their names are not written down (Ong & Weiss, 2000). The first questionnaire was done on the 11th April 2021, one day prior to the beginning of the teaching unit before they knew what the teaching unit was going to be about. This questionnaire included six open-ended questions of which two also included yes/no questions. Similarly, the last day of the teaching unit (8th April 2021),

participants were asked to take a second questionnaire that contained the original six questions and included four new ones. The aim of doing the questionnaire before and after the implementation of the teaching unit was to be able to compare and analyse if they were able to reach high-order skills. There were two students that dropped out and another three that did not come the last day of the unit so only 26 completed the second questionnaire.

In addition to the questionnaire, students' participation was also evaluated in order to answer RQ1. Students' participation was taken on four different days of the teaching unit using the rubric below (see *Table 1*). This rubric assessed their participation in terms of quantity (i.e. how many times students spoke), grammar and vocabulary (i.e. complexity), content and communicative purpose (i.e. accuracy). It was created with the assistance of the internship mentor according to the items she usually takes into account when grading participation. This way it was easier to compare the previous marks learners were given for participation in terms 1 and 2, and after the teaching unit was implemented. Despite the fact that participation was assessed two days online (sessions 2 and 4), and two days face-to-face (sessions 1 and 3)³ the same rubric. Marks were given by the internship mentor, another English teacher, the author's internship peer, and the author of this master's dissertation. In order to know who was participating, a seating plan was done for face-to-face lessons. When the lesson was online, the names of the students appeared under their cameras so it was less difficult to know who was participating.

Table 1. Rubric used to assess students' participations (Author's table, Barcelona 2021).

	<i>Very good 4</i>	<i>Good 3</i>	<i>Fair 2</i>	<i>Poor 1</i>
Grammar and vocabulary	Shows a very good range of grammar and vocabulary. Attempt at complexity. No mistakes or very few.	Show a good range of grammar and vocabulary. Some mistakes.	Shows a basic grammar and vocabulary. Little or no attempt at complexity. Many mistakes.	Shows a limited range, not able to build a sentence. No attempt at complexity. Lots of mistakes.
Quantity	Participates 2 or + times voluntarily.	Participates 2 times, one of them because the teacher has pushed him/her.	Participates 1 time voluntarily.	Only participates when the teacher asks him/her.
Content and communicative purpose	Rich contribution. Links ideas easily and gives examples. Shows critical thinking (level 3)	Good contribution. Misses examples or does not link ideas easily. (level 2)	Tries to explain things, but the teacher helps him/her to link ideas and explain things (level 1).	YES/NO answers.

³ See [Appendix H](#) for the teaching unit sequence.

After the completion of the teaching unit, two students were interviewed (see [Appendix D](#) for the recordings and transcripts) for 5 minutes on the 8th April 2021 by the author of this study. These interviews were designed in order to see what a student who was very motivated and other who was not very motivated understood by ‘motivation’ as it is emotional and thus, a subjective issue. They were asked three questions with the purpose of seeing if they established any relationship between motivation, participation and high-order skills. The internship mentor was the one who chose a very motivated student and a demotivated one as she knew them better than the author of the present study.

Finally, an interview with the internship mentor, who was the English teacher of the target group, was conducted on the 22nd of April. Open-ended questions were used to elicit her opinion of the efficacy of the TBLT teaching unit (see [Appendix D](#) for the list of interview questions). This was done to compare her point of view of the efficacy of the lessons with the questionnaires from the students. This information was then analysed and used to answer RQ1 and RQ3. The strategy of asking questions not directly related to the teaching unit (i.e. general questions) was to let the teacher express herself freely and give her point of view about the unit, textbooks, ways of teaching, and students’ motivation.

3.5. Process of analysis

This section introduces the reader to an explanation of how the data were collected and stored, the different treatment procedures used and the method employed to ensure reliability. A secondary plan to collect data was created (as seen in [Appendix G](#)) in case students were confined and unable to participate face-to-face. Fortunately, students were able to attend some of the lessons in person and the secondary plan was not necessary.

Questionnaires were created using *Google Forms*, and answers were downloaded to two *Google sheets* (see [Appendix C](#)). Next, in order to see students’ progression, answers were classified differently. A challenge in analysing the questionnaires was converting qualitative responses into quantitative data that could be analysed. Subjective and emotional answers (e.g. motivation, high-order skills, and participation) were transformed into academic, scientific and sociological answers and organised by converting *qualia* into *quantum* (Rodríguez & Valldeoriola, 2009). Firstly, answers to

questions 1 and 3 of both questionnaires were classified using the learning taxonomy proposed by me which can be seen below in *Figure 3*.

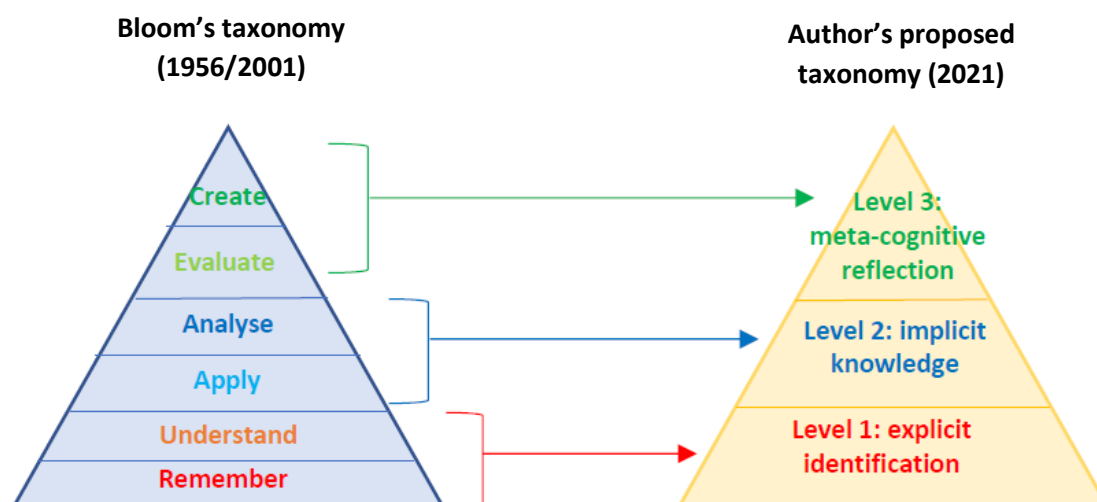


Figure 3. Correlation of Bloom's revised taxonomy (2001) and author's learning taxonomy (Author's figures, Barcelona 2021).

This pyramid was used in order to determine if students improved their high-order skills. The six levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001) were grouped in pairs which resulted in three levels. The idea of grouping complexity levels two by two has been influenced by Werbach & Hunter (2012), and Lorenzo-Galés & Gallon (2019). These three levels of the proposed learning taxonomy follow Lorenzo-Galés & Gallon's (2020) domains of social cognitive development: explicit information, implicit knowledge, and abstract meta-reflection. The terms Lorenzo-Galés & Gallon (2019; 2020) used were adapted to explicit knowledge (level 1), implicit knowledge (level 2), and meta-cognitive reflection (level 3). Therefore, level 1 includes descriptive answers which recall facts, basic concepts and explain ideas/concepts. Level 2 includes answers which imply using information in new situations (e.g. interpret, apply), and drawing connection among ideas (e.g. differentiate, compare, analyse, question). Finally, level 3 answers involves justifying a decision (e.g. argue, defend, value, critique), and creating new or original work (e.g. design, develop, formulate). On the following page, *Table 2* exemplifies how one of the questions was analysed according to this. Once the answers were classified, a percentage was given to each column bearing in mind how many students out of the total provided an answer of each level. The task of discerning which answer corresponded to levels 1, 2 or 3 of the pyramid was not easy and it can sometimes be compared to Kohlberg's (1984) dilemmas.

Table 2. Answers analysed using the three levels of the author's proposed learning taxonomy seen in Figure 3. (Author's figures, Barcelona 2021).

QUESTION 1: What is animal abuse?		
EXPLICIT/DESCRIPTIVE LEVEL	IMPLICIT ARGUMENTATION	META-COGNITIVE REFLEXION
Is any kind of activity that affect the animal wellbeing in any way	taking advantage of animals without worrying about their well-being	Animal abuse is any way to make animals unwell. Now, I know that animal abuse is more serious than I thought.
In mi opinion animal abuse is any action that involos violence or mistreatment to an animal.	when animals are physically or mentally abused	Animal abuse is using animals to experiment or make them do hard work or keep them in very poor condition and harm them against his will.
The animal abuse is the abuse that te animals suffer	I think animal abuse is any kind of abuse towards animals with an intention, both the abuse that some pets recive and even zoo animals	animal abuse is beating animals and abusing them, for example cosmetics that are made from animals or abusing them by testing products with animals to see if they really work or not and this can cause injuries.
I think that is horrible, we can't do this.	Hurting an animal in any way, physically and emotionally.	In my opinion, this cruel act should be drastically reduced, not only for animals, but also in order to improve ourselves as people
	Animal abuse is any type of action that harms animals. It's not only that they are hit, but also that they live in poor conditions or that they are stressed.	I don't think, I believe that animal abuse it's a serious matter and we should take actions soon to stop it. But it's impossible by several reasons, there is a huge mafia behind the animal abuse apart from the laboratory experements or bad treated pets by their owners. The biggest one and what we should stop it first it's the illegal wild life animals export or capture.

Questions 2 and 5 of both questionnaires were classified by the quantity of examples (i.e. how many students provided one example, how many two, how many three, etc.) rather than by learning taxonomies

Interviews were recorded using a smartphone and the audio were transcribed using *Microsoft Office Word*. The interview of the English teacher included more information than what was needed for the dissertation so only the parts that help to answer the research questions and other information which is valuable to take into account for further research have been selected. From the two interviews conducted to two students, the information that was extracted from them was used to correlate motivation, participation and marks as indicators of success.

Participation marks were collected on paper for the first four days of the teaching unit. These marks were later entered on a *Google sheet* (see [Appendix F](#)) so that the average participation for the teaching unit and terms 1 and 2 could be compared. Participation marks for terms 1 and 2, as seen in [Appendix F](#), were provided by the internship mentor. It would have been ideal to check participation in all the sessions so as to have more accurate results. Unfortunately, the internship peer had an accident and was absent during three sessions and it was only possible to collect participation on four days. Since the teaching unit was planned for co-teaching, the English teacher had to step in and was not able to record participation on those days.

In order to ensure reliability, *ex-ante* and *ex-post* validation was used for the questionnaires, participation rubrics, and the questions for the students' and teacher interviews. This material was first shown to both the internship and peer mentors to confirm that they found it coherent and adequate. Changes were made where necessary to ensure students would understand questions, such as being more direct when asking them. Once the data was collected, triangulation of observations was used. The internship and peer mentors were asked to provide feedback on students' responses to the interviews. Both the internship mentor and peer helped in implementing the teaching unit and in collecting the data, especially for grading and counting participation.

3.6. Ethical procedures

In order to meet the ethical requirements of educational research, the headmaster signed an authorisation (see [Appendix I](#), p. 43) on the first day of the internship that provided permission to record and collect data. All questionnaires started with a section for consent (see [Appendix I](#), p. 44) that explained that responses would be used for a Master's dissertation but they would remain anonymous and be respected at all time which included a formal consent to use their answers for this Master's dissertation and which . For privacy reasons, the names of students, teachers and the high school are not directly mentioned and the information extracted from official documents has been referenced without mentioning the high school's name. The names of students in the excel sheets have been replaced by 'student 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.'.

In regards to the interviews conducted with two students of 1st of Batxillerat, consent forms (see [Appendix I](#), p. 45) were signed by both students and their parents which explained the purposes and use of the collected data . The two participants' names were changed to Margarita (interview 1) and Estela (interview 2). Finally, oral consent (see [Appendix I](#), p. 47) was provided by the school mentor to confirm she understood the terms and conditions of the interview. The internship mentor's name was omitted and she is referred to as *internship mentor*.

3.7. Research limitations

Before moving on to the analysis of the collected data, it is vital to highlight the research limitations encountered while collecting data. Lessons were intended to be face-to-face which meant that it would be straightforward to confirm student participation and

observe their progress. However, three weeks before the second practicum, the school explained that since the COVID-19 pandemic was not improving, the Education Department of Catalonia preferred to have half of the sessions online and the other half face-to-face to reduce the spread of the virus. Therefore, half of the lessons for the teaching unit had to be adapted to an online format. The material for this teaching unit was uploaded to *Moodle* and *Google Meet* was used for the online classes. Fortunately, the lesson plan was not hard to adapt since many digital tools had already been planned to be used to meet the Digital Competence of the Catalan Curriculum.

Another significant limitation for the study was the use of facemasks in the classroom. Without facemasks, it would have been easier to identify who contributed spontaneously without having raised their arm. Moreover, a seating plan had to be drawn as it was difficult to remember students' names without seeing their entire face. Lastly, the fact that participation could only be collected for 4-5 days fully limited the ability to assess it.

4. Results

This section will first present and analyse the initial and final questionnaires students completed. Next, it will review students' participation marks. The transcripts and audio of the interviews can be found in [Appendix D](#), otherwise the length of the paper would be extremely long. Lastly, the results will be compared to draw some interpretations.

4.1. Results of the questionnaires

The first item of data to be analysed were the two questionnaires the participants were asked to answer. Students' answers were compiled into *Google Sheets*, analysed as explained in section 3.5, and presented in different types of graphs as you will be able to see below.

As *Figure 4* shows, in questionnaire 1, question 1, students were asked to describe what they thought animal abuse was. 55% of the class gave a question corresponding to level 1, 42% to level 2, and only 3% to level 3. Comparatively, as observed in *Figure 5*, in questionnaire 2, question 1 15% of the class gave a question corresponding to level 1, 67% to level 2 and 23% to level 3.

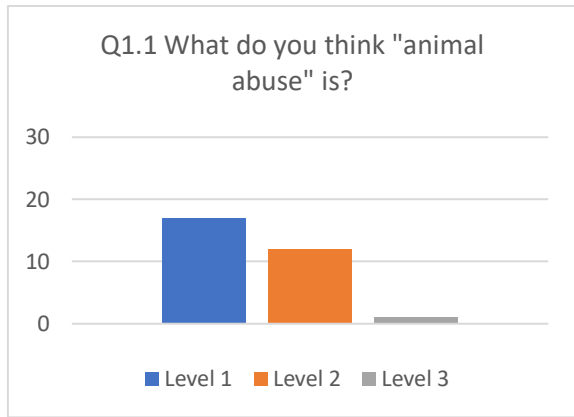


Figure 4. Students' answers to question 1.1.
(Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

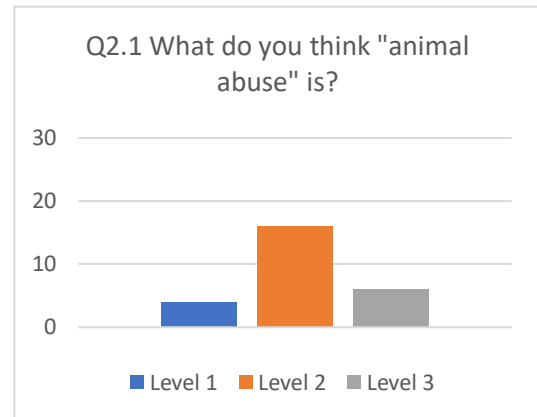


Figure 5. Students' answers to question 2.1.
(Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

It can be observed that students have considerably improved their knowledge as in questionnaire 2 half of the class provided an answer classified as implicit knowledge. This has decreased by 40% while explicit knowledge has increased by 27% and critical knowledge has increased a 20%.

As Figure 6 indicates, in questionnaire 1, question 2, students were asked to provide examples of animal abuse. 48% of the class gave one example, 30% gave two examples, 18% submitted three, and 4% of students mentioned four examples. In the second questionnaire, as seen in Figure 7, only 8% of the class gave two examples, 40% submitted three, 36% gave four, and 8% of the class gave five and six examples correspondingly.

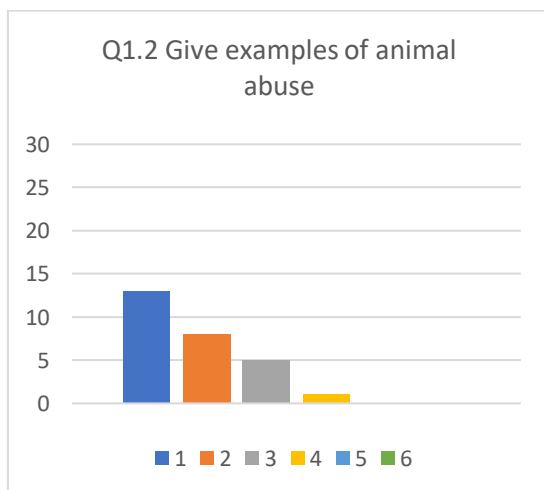


Figure 6. Students' answers to question 1.2.
(Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

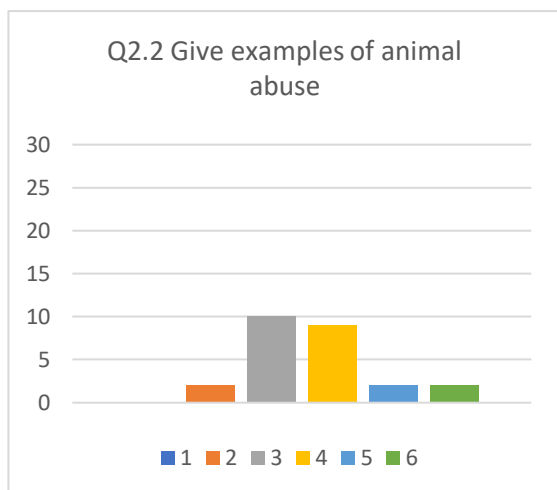


Figure 7. Students' answers to question 2.2.
(Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

Figure 8 illustrates that in questionnaire 1, question 3, students were asked to provide solutions for ending animal abuse. The question already required an answer that

involved critical thinking, however the majority of the students were not able to get to this third level. 52% of the class gave a response corresponding to level 1, 42% to level 2, and only 6% to level 3. In comparison, *Figure 9* shows that for questionnaire 2 only 15% of the class gave a question corresponding to level 1, 50% to level 2, and 35% to level 3. Again, results show a significant increase towards critical thinking. As it can be seen from the questions analysed, students improved the quality of their answers and the quantity of examples after having participated in the teaching unit.

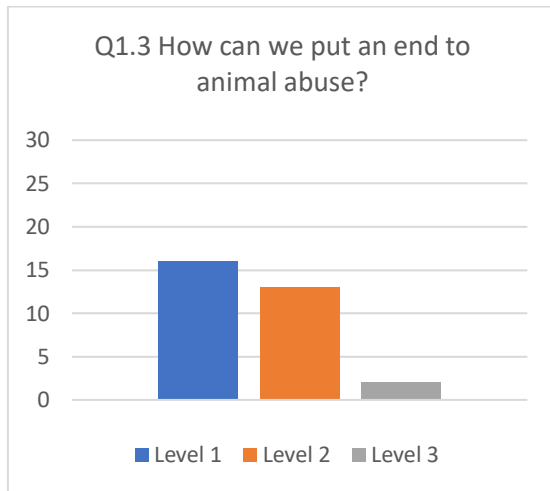


Figure 8. Students' answers to question 1.3.
(Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

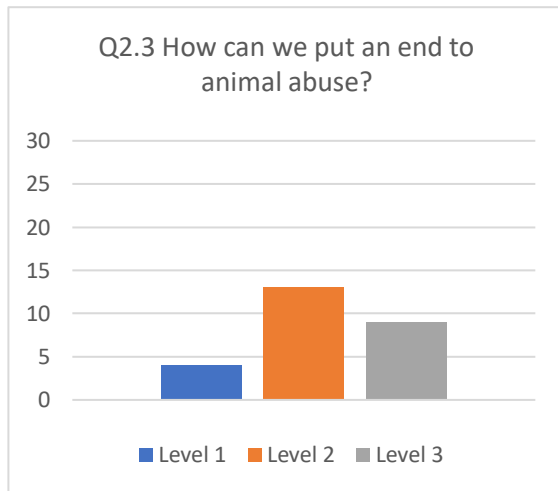


Figure 9. Students' answers to question 2.3.
(Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

In regards to the knowledge of the UN 2030 Agenda, students were able to obtain a better idea of what it is. Surprisingly, as seen in *Figure 10*, according to the results found in questionnaire 1, question 4, only 16% of students had a vague idea of what the UN 2030 Agenda is while an 84% had no idea of what it was. Students who attempted to explain what it is (29%) were unable to clearly describe what the UN 2030 Agenda is. Despite the Agenda being approved in 2015, it is very shocking to realise that students were not familiar with it. After the teaching unit and despite the fact that the UN 2030 Agenda was only briefly mentioned in class, *Figure 11* shows that 65% of the students were not able to explain what the UN 2030 Agenda is while 35% of the students were unable to remember it.

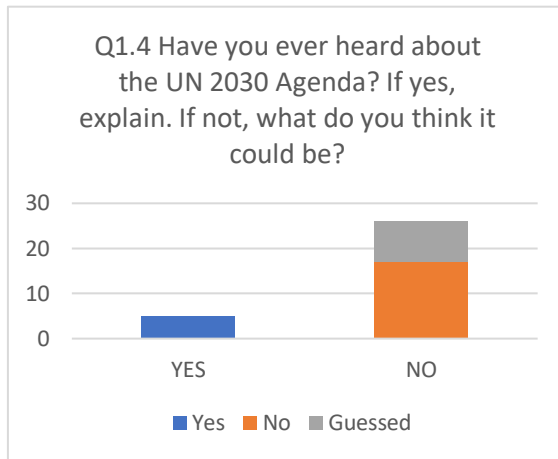


Figure 10. Students' answers to question 1.4. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

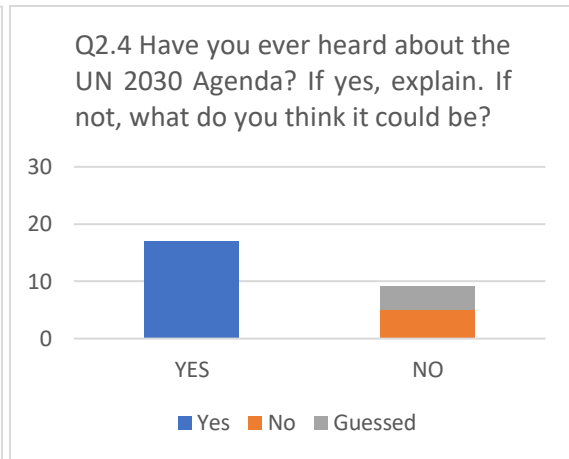


Figure 11. Students' answers to question 2.4. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

Question 5 on both questionnaires asked them to choose which pictures from the 17 SDGs were related to animal abuse. As *Figure 12* illustrates, 10% of students did not choose a picture, 19% chose only one picture, 19% chose two, 16% chose three, 16% chose four, 7% chose five, 10% chose six, and 3% chose nine pictures.

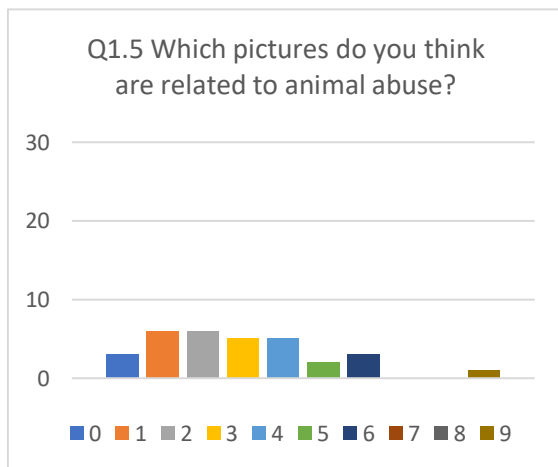


Figure 12. Students' answers to question 1.5. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

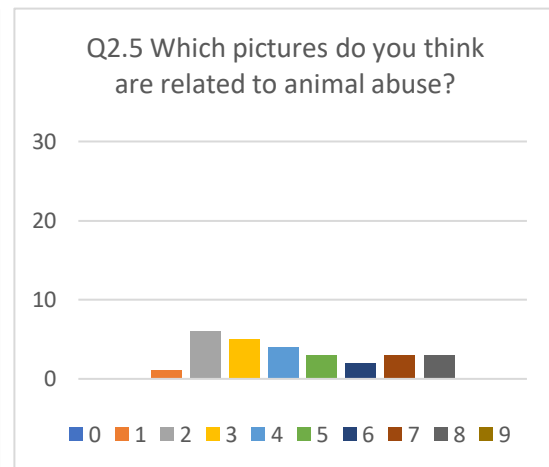


Figure 13. Students' answers to question 2.5. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

Surprisingly, on the second questionnaire, all students were able to choose at least one picture and there was an increase in the number of pictures provided. *Figure 13* illustrates these changes where only 3% of student chose one picture, 23% chose two, 19% chose three, 15% chose four, 11% chose five, 7% chose six, and 11% chose seven and eight pictures correspondingly. These results are similar to the ones obtained in question 2. In both questions 2 and 5, the percentage of students who were able to choose more than one item increased when they finished the teaching unit.

Finally, as you can see in *Figure 14*, in questionnaire 1 students were asked if they had ever participated in a debate in class. 75% of the students confirmed they had participated in a debate. In questionnaire 2, students were asked whether they liked it or not and why. *Figure 15* shows that all students said they liked the debate, but the reasons were different. More than half of the students (56%) said the debate was a good way to improve their speaking skills and to learn how to argue their opinions in a respectful way. 27% claimed it was a fun activity different to what they usually do while 17% recognised it was a way of putting everything they did into practice.

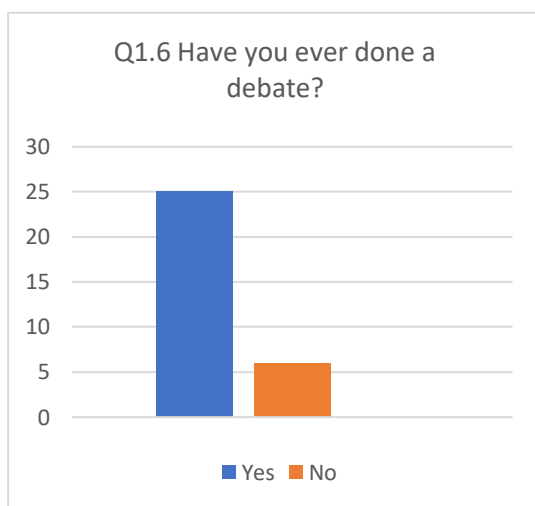


Figure 14. Students' answers to question 1.6. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

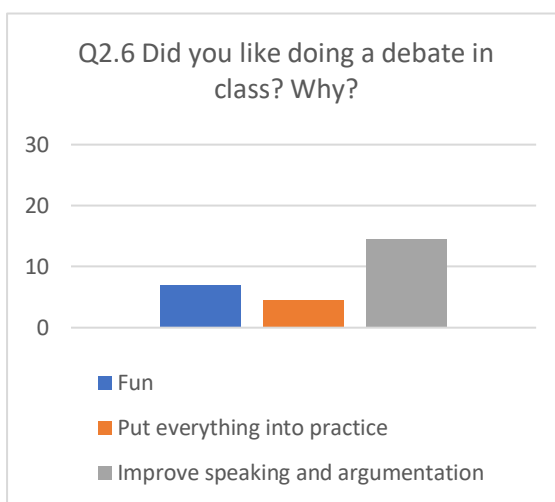


Figure 15. Students' answers to question 2.6. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

Even though the majority of the students acknowledged having been participated in a debate, some of them said that teachers do not usually make them participate in debates.

Questions 7-10 were only created for questionnaire 2 as they could only be answered after having participated in the teaching unit. Question 6 asked learners whether they liked the teaching unit or not and why. All students said they enjoyed the teaching unit, but the reasons were a little bit different. *Figure 16* illustrates the different reasons students enjoyed the class.

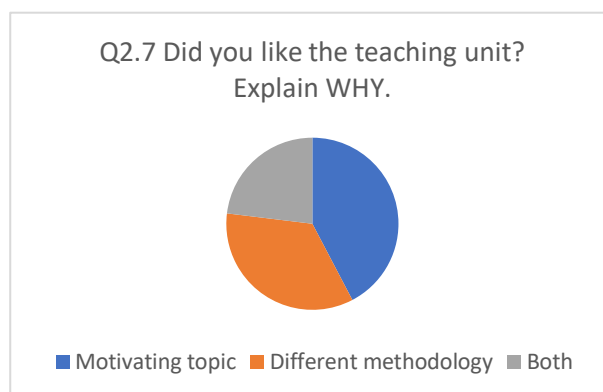


Figure 16. Students' answers to question 2.7. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

42% of students said they liked the lesson because it was an interesting topic that they never talked about, 35% said they liked it because of the methodology used (e.g. dynamism, participation, oral activities, etc.), and 23% said they liked it because of both the methodology used and the chosen topic.

Question 8, in questionnaire 2, asked whether students liked the activities and topics their English textbook offered and why. *Figure 17* shows that 15% of students stated that they liked the activities and topics in the book, 4% considered the book boring, 39% found the book to be repetitive, and 42% of the class said the book was both repetitive and boring.

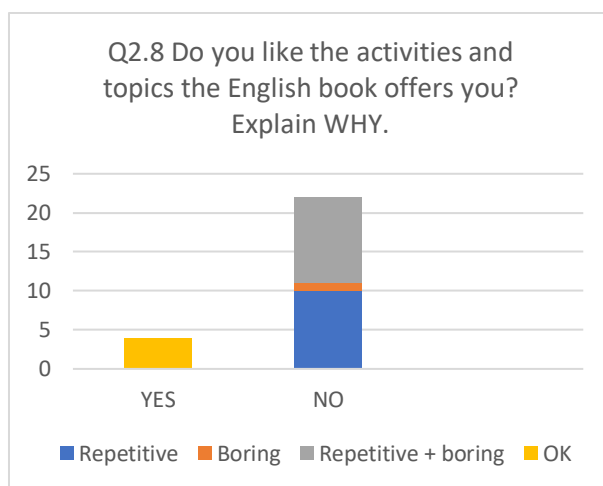


Figure 17. Students' answers to question 2.8. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

Very few students actually liked the book and the rest of the class did not find value in it.

Question 9 asked students whether they preferred to have teaching units similar to the one that was implemented or if they preferred the textbook, and explain their reasoning. Student responses can be seen in *Figure 18*. There were not any students who preferred the textbook over the teaching unit. However, 10% said it would be better to have both the textbook and a teaching unit similar to the one that was implemented. 90% of the students claimed they would prefer to have teaching units like the one implemented rather than the textbooks they have for different reasons. 67% explained they preferred the teaching unit because the topics are more interesting and current. 23% of students explained that apart from being interesting topics they also raised awareness about what was going on in the world.

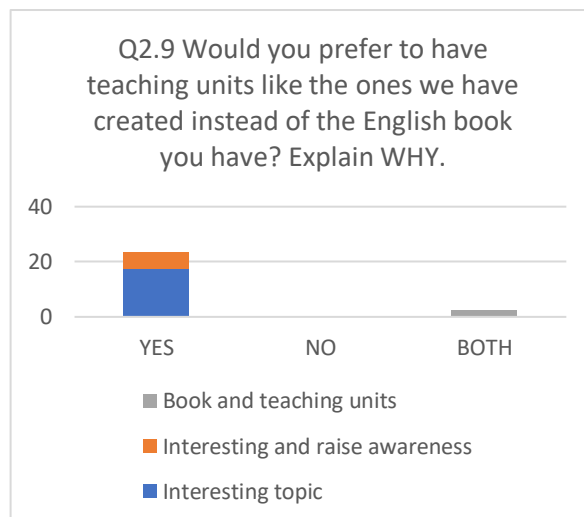


Figure 18. Students' answers to question 2.9. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

Finally, students were asked what suggestions they had to change the English subject. They were then asked what they would do to change the class and explain why. *Figure 19* depicts student responses to this question.

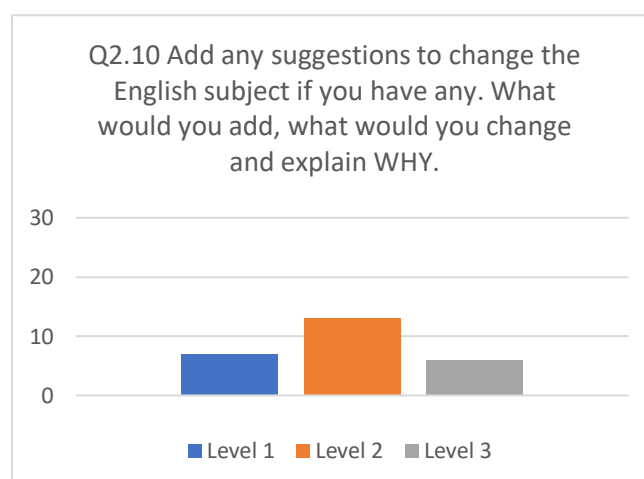


Figure 19. Students' answers to question 2.10. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

The majority of students said they would change the way class is taught while a 27% (7 students out of 26) said the class was fine or they did not know what to change. These students' arguments were of level 1 as they only answered the question directly and did not provide any examples of why they would not change it or why they did not know whether they would change it or not. 50% of the students provided an answer of level 2 as they gave examples and they argued why they would change it. Last but not least, 23% provided an answer of level 3 which included an argument that involved a reflection to change the method of teaching English for their future.

4.2. Results of participation

The second item of data to be analysed was the participation observed during the lessons. This was compared to the mark given by the internship mentor (i.e. English teacher) in the first and second terms to see if students participated more during the teaching unit than during their normal class. As mentioned in section 3.4, the mark for participation was given based on a pre-existing rubric used by the English teacher. Below in *Figure 20*, you can find the three marks that correspond to the first term, second term and teaching unit (see [Appendix F](#) for the individual marks of all the students).

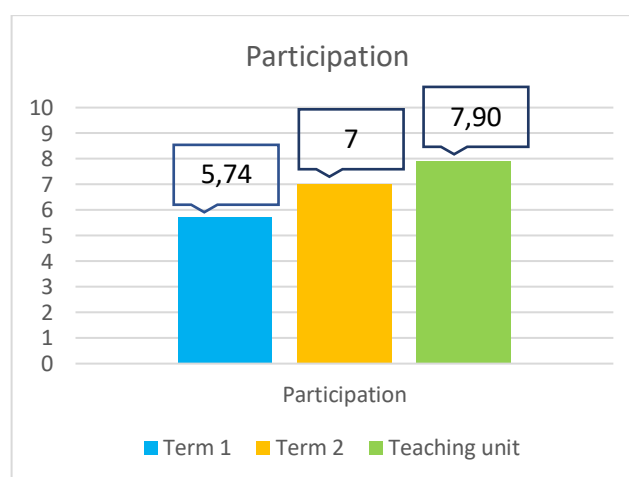


Figure 20. Students' participation regarding the first and second terms, and the teaching unit. (Author's graph, Barcelona 2021).

As can be seen, students' participation improved by 0.90 points in relation to the second term which suggests that students participated more in the teaching unit than in their regular lessons. In comparison to the first term, students' marks significantly improved by 2.16 points.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretations

5.1.1. Interpretations of questionnaires and interview with the mentor

The results of questions 1 to 5 for both questionnaires suggest that the implementation of the teaching unit about a real-life topic had a positive influence on the development of critical thinking skills. Students were able to move from a majority of explicit knowledge to a majority of implicit knowledge and meta-cognitive knowledge. In other words, most of the students moved from level 1 to levels 2 and 3. Comparing questions 1 and 3 of both questionnaires, the results suggest that after introducing students

to a challenging and thought provoking topic related to the SDGs, students made significant progress towards critical thinking. This clearly suggests that students were provided with the necessary opportunities to develop global communicative competence and their answers were enriched after having taken part in the teaching unit.

The same is observed for questions 2 and 5 of both questionnaires as students were able to provide more examples of animal abuse and select more pictures from the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda. This might have happened for different reasons, but as students mentioned in questions 7-9 they liked the teaching unit because it was interesting and different from what they had been to doing. This suggests that using a different methodology helps to improve students' global communicative skills. Global communicative competence improvement can be observed in the results through the huge increase of explicit answers to meta-cognitive ones. Another interpretation that can emerge from these results is that communicative activities that are based on real-life topics aid in students' improvement of high-order skills. All activities required student interaction which suggests that students' high-order skills improved due to activities which required them to agree, disagree, respect others opinions, etc. It is important to bear in mind that this teaching unit did not have an exam and students were not told there would be a final questionnaire. Since students were not provided with these external means of motivation for improvement, it is reasonable to conclude that student improvement was due to their own motivation and efficacy of the lesson.

Regarding the UN Agenda 2030, almost 70% of the class was able to explain what it was while the rest could not remember it. Bearing in mind that the teaching unit only dealt with one SDG and that the UN Agenda was only briefly mentioned, students were still able to grasp what it is well enough that they were able to have marked improvement on the second questionnaire. Nonetheless, these results seem to suggest that more needs to be done to promote the visibility of the Agenda 2030 as students were not familiar with it when they were asked in questionnaire 1.

With respect to questions 8 to 10, student answers clearly illustrate that the topics and methods in the English textbook need to be changed or at least adapted. Every student mentioned that they liked the teaching unit for several reasons: motivating topic, different methodology and both. Students also claimed that the books they have are not sufficient. A few students said they would prefer to have the textbook they usually have and also have teaching units like the one implemented. The vast majority of students agreed that

the textbooks they have are boring and repetitive. If given a choice between a textbook or a teaching unit like the one that was implemented, none of the students would choose the textbook for two main reasons: 1) the teaching unit that was implemented has more interesting and new topics than books, and 2) the topics in the teaching unit raised awareness and helped them understand what was going on in the world. Therefore, the fact that only a minority of students like the textbook indicates that the textbooks should be revised. Due to the repetitive topics, grammar and vocabulary activities textbooks have, students believe that what they are learning is not important and get bored.

Finally, students' complaints about the textbook were also shared by the internship mentor and some other teachers in the English department of the *Tea School* (see [Appendix D](#) for the interview). The main issue is that the topics in English books are the same throughout high school, the only changes are some grammatical structures and added vocabulary items from the previous year. The repetition of topics year after year causes the textbooks to be boring and repetitive. Therefore, teachers should be careful with the textbooks they choose or, if possible, collaborate with teachers of the same department to create teaching units that will ensure learners are motivated and take advantage of the English lessons. Unsurprisingly, this is not an easy task to accomplish as explained by the mentor in the interview. She criticised the lack of collaboration in the English department and lamented the fact that most teachers prefer to have textbooks that provide lesson plans so that they do not have to spend time preparing materials. Despite her criticism, she expressed that she would like to reach an agreement with the other English teachers in order to select books that are more compelling for students and are not repetitive every year. The results of this study support textbooks with new topics each year as they will motivate students more than repetitive topics and thus, participation and interaction among them increases. Regrettably, if only one or two teachers of the fourteen in the department want to change the textbooks and prepare activities that engage students is not enough for a change to occur.

5.1.2. Interpretations of participation

The results show that participation numbers improved due to the implementation of this teaching unit. If participation numbers are compared to those from the second term, they improved by almost a full point. As the internship mentor noted in the interview, she did not notice that participation increased and that if it did, this might have occurred because the teachers were young and the topic was new and interesting. However,

students' answers to the questionnaires and triangulation of observations with the internship peer were crucial to discover other possible reasons. Participation might have increased due to the novelty of the topic which they had not previously dealt with in class. However, this increase might also be due to the use of TBLT. Since this methodological approach requires significant interaction from students to fulfil the assigned activities and tasks, it is not surprising that participation among students would increase.

Another point to consider that emerged from the interview with Margarita (a very motivated student) and Elsa (an unmotivated student) is that participation seems to be correlated to engagement. Both felt that a student who is motivated actively participates, completes homework and earns good marks. Conversely, a student who is not motivated is reluctant to participate, does not complete the homework and earns poor marks. By asking two students with contrasting motivation levels, it is plausible that if students' participation is connected to motivation then the implemented teaching unit can be seen to have increased their participation and in turn, their engagement levels.

5.2. Answering research questions

In light of the findings presented in the previous section and after having analysed in depth students' participation, questionnaires and interviews, it seems plausible to recall the research questions so as to be able to answer them.

The first research question of the study was to see if topics related to the SDGs engaged students more than the topics English textbooks usually offered them. Students engaged more with the topic of the teaching unit than with the ones in the textbooks and students' participation showed a remarkable increase. Students participated more with the task-based teaching unit about animal abuse than with the other topics offered in the textbook. Participation marks, students' answers, and the teacher's comments show that more teaching units with new, interesting and provoking topics, such as the ones of the SDGs, would increase students' participation. Additionally, it provides a good opportunity for students to improve their global communicative competence. The more they participate and contribute to the topic, the more they will be able to agree, disagree, express themselves and respect others. The fact that learners acknowledged that they liked the teaching unit because the textbook topics are repetitive and boring reinforces the idea that real-life topics are more engaging to them.

The second research question of the study asked whether students improved their high-order skills by engaging them in real-life topics. The data suggested that topics that

are thought provoking and that entice students to participate helps improve high-order skills. It can be claimed that if students are engaged in real-life topics then their high-order skills improve since their results show a significant increase of answers towards the top-three levels of Bloom's taxonomy (i.e. analysing, evaluating and creating). Forcing students to do numerous vocabulary, grammar, and speaking exercises about repetitive and mundane topics do not improve progress as much as teaching units which have topics that are real-life oriented. This shows that contrary to what students are used to, they are still taught and assessed to the level 1 (i.e. up to the third level of Bloom's taxonomy) which does not support students' global skills since they simply focus on memorising content. In other words, students are basically taught memoristic and descriptive content.

The third research question wanted to see if TBLT was a more effective method for teaching than the English textbooks. Research suggests that TBLT would certainly be a better method to teach the SGDs than the ordinary books. Students learnt a considerable amount about animal abuse with this method and it is also interesting that they have liked the interactive nature of the method itself. Students reported that they enjoyed this method because the topic was motivating, and the method involved activities other than just doing grammar and vocabulary. Students dislike the textbook because of the structure and the topics they have. Textbooks tend to use a *Presentation, practice and production* (PPP) approach because it mainly introduces an item, lets students practice it by doing one-correct answer activities and then students produce sentences in relation to what they have previously been practising in *fill in the gaps* activities. PPP seems to be very linear and behaviourist and fails to take into account learners' developmental stages and does not give enough room for speaking activities. It is not that PPP activities are not useful, but only using this method is tiresome and useless if we want students to improve their global communicative skills. Furthermore, the fact that students claimed that they would like to have more projects and speaking activities, such as debates, demonstrates that the methodology of textbooks should be revised. The way textbooks are currently designed do not invite learners to utilise their global communicative competence and global skills.

5.3. Coincidence and divergence with other studies

This study has confirmed and added data to existing literature and reveals what still needs to be researched. Turner & Patrick (2004), Al-Shara (2015) and Tasgin & Tunc (2018) argued that participation and motivation were correlated and that topics that were engaging improved students' participation. This research confirmed that topics that are

new, motivating, and interesting, such as the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda, encourage students to participate more than topics found in ordinary textbooks. Therefore, as mentioned in the theoretical frameworks, giving students the opportunity to speak more and provide their opinion on real-life topics will in turn improve their participation. However, it is essential to make sure that these opportunities and spaces are provided (Savignon, 1972; Vygotsky 1986, cited in Burkholder & Peláez, 2000). Knowledge emerges from interaction and through which improves communicative competence.

The results of this study are in alignment with the OCDE (2018) and Mercer et al., (2020) that real-life topics improve students' high-order skills. Topics that go above mere lists of grammar and vocabulary, or simple topics such as food and sports, have been shown to improve students' critical thinking. 21st century skills need to be given more space in the English classroom for students to be able to develop global communicative competence, and it is teachers' responsibility to provide students with the necessary tools so that they can prepare for the future. Topics that ask students to agree, disagree, respect others' opinions, propose solutions and be critical all contribute to the construction of global communicative competence.

Findings from this study also agree with Willis & Willis (2011) that TBLT is a good method to add to English textbooks. Textbooks are traditionally oriented to help teachers teach, but not to help students learn. An idea that emerged from the research is that the methodology of textbooks and topics demotivate students who find them boring and repetitive. Furthermore, the majority of students claimed that if they could change the English subject, they would change the method and add more speaking activities. As discussed in the literature review (Najjari, 2014; Waluyo, 2019), TBTL seems to be a very logical choice as a method to use to improve communicative competence since it requires students to negotiate meaning to complete tasks. Contrary to what Dickinson (2010) argued, TBLT has proven to be successful among low-level students and communication breakdowns were not experienced. As the marks for participation in this study show, students who had low marks improved. This reinforces what Scott and Ytreberg (1990), Gibbons (2015), and Escobar (2020) argued about the importance of scaffolding. Part of students' being able to convey their message and understand their lessons is due to the teachers' performance.

5.4. Prospective

Action-research has been useful to see what works, what does not work, and what needs to be looked at more in depth. It is very useful to let teachers see what happens in the classroom while they are immersed in the teaching task. Students improved their high-order skills in the final questionnaire after having completed nine classes in a TBLT teaching unit that was based on a real-life topic. A relevant issue that emerged from this study is that students' do not like the assigned textbooks and complain about the textbooks' methodology and topics. This supports the recommendation that teachers should give more voice to their students and listen to students' suggestions. In addition to this, results also help to understand

In order to encourage all students to participate, teachers should pay more attention to the reasons students may be unwilling to participate. Teachers need to know whether students do not participate because of personal issues, shyness, or a lack of motivation. Ensuring that all students participate should be a requirement as it is through interaction that students will improve their global communicative competence. Students with lower levels of motivation or who are shy could be paired with others that prompt them to speak, such as more participative students. Although participation improved for the teaching unit, not all of the students participated in all of the activities. Therefore, future implementations of this teaching unit should be redesigned to try to make all students participate.

Another aspect that would be worth considering for further research is that when students were asked how they could put an end to animal abuse, one said "I think this is something that people will keep doing secretly, no matter how forbidden it is. Although as a first step, I would destroy all animal testing laboratories that aren't to aid health". Other students also suggested that other ideas to put an end to animal abuse could be "eliminating all bad people who abuse animals" and "the death".

These responses lead to another question, do some students need emotional support in order to prevent an existential crisis? These comments are both pessimistic and aggressive and students might need to have some attention drawn to them. The pandemic has affected many students emotionally. Therefore, both teachers and researchers should make an effort and pay attention to the motivation behind students' answers. This could even lead to a need to revise the Catalan curriculum for the English subject as ethics and

emotions should also be taken into consideration. Luckily, contrary to other subjects, English allows teachers to deal with more topics.

6. Conclusion

Teaching in the 21st century is challenging. Teachers need to find new ways of providing students with opportunities to acquire global skills. Additionally, students cannot continue having teacher-centred classes where there is little opportunity for them to interact and improve their global communicative competence. This dissertation is not only relevant for myself as a future teacher, but also for the educational community, students and the academia.

This study has demonstrated that a TBLT teaching unit based on a real-life topic can engage students more than the topics in the textbook and can improve students' global communicative competence. Data gathered through this research has confirmed that topics that are related to the SDGs can have an impact on students' participation and motivation, and leads to questioning topics found in textbooks. The implications of the research also suggest that using real-life topics in teaching units, such as the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda, encourage students to participate more than with repetitive topics that do not require them to interact. Activities that ask students to be critical, respect others, and use their problem-solving skills are an effective way to teach high-order skills.

This paper has also highlighted deficiencies in English textbooks. The fact that students have acknowledged that they liked the teaching unit more than their textbook, and found the textbook topics and methodology to be boring and repetitive suggests that textbooks need to be rewritten. Textbooks should be updated to include more effective teaching techniques like TBLT and topics like the SDG. Despite the fact that some teachers recognise this necessity, they are just not willing to put in the time to create these lessons. Some teachers, like the internship mentor, are willing to do so, but they do not have the time. Therefore, publishing houses should take the initiative to change their textbooks to include TBLT and provide more opportunities to shape students into productive 21st century citizens.

6.1. Further research

Bearing in mind that this research was only conducted with a single target group and complications caused by Covid-19, it is recommended to administer the teaching with

additional groups, conduct the same research, and analyse differences and similarities between the different groups.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyse why students chose the pictures related to animal abuse in question four of both questionnaires. A deeper analysis could be conducted on the correlations students make before and after the teaching unit. For instance, in questionnaire 1 nobody chose SDG 17, but in questionnaire 2 a lot of students chose it. Does this mean that by doing activities that ask them to agree, disagree, and respect others' opinions, that they realised that they learnt this? Or are students relating these values of respect, peace and dialogue to animal abuse as a prerequisite to discuss how to put an end to animal abuse?

6.2. Personal reflection and professional development

This study comes from both personal and professional interests. After conducting this research I realised the importance of preparing enriching teaching units and being careful with choosing textbooks. Being able to see and analyse the outcomes of this teaching unit has been a gratifying experience to reflect and pay attention to the educational aspects that might need to be changed. Teaching is something more powerful than just opening a textbook and giving the lesson. Instead, it is an opportunity teachers have to prepare productive citizens for this globalised world that is demanding for more competent adults. Therefore, the educational community needs to take into account not only students' needs but also adapt the content to include 21st century skills and help learners develop high-order skills. Teaching mere lists of grammar and vocabulary, which students will easily forget, will not lead them to become more informed and better citizens. This does not mean that teachers need to eliminate grammar and vocabulary, but that more space should be given to global skills, especially to global communicative competence.

The UN 2030 Agenda is a list of goals that involves everyone. Teachers should be provided with a wider knowledge about the UN 2030 Agenda. The UN 2030 Agenda will not be achieved unless people know what it is and are aware of the real problems the earth is facing. Schools should familiarise students with the Agenda and prepare teaching units and choose books that address these topics in a compelling and motivating manner. Motivating students with topics that are provoking and/or demanding will force them to speak about it. Interaction is essential for students to develop global skills and for knowledge to emerge.

As a future English teacher, all of this will be taken into account and I will continue my research on how to contribute to the world of education. I would like to improve my teaching skills in order to become an informed, 21st century and resourceful teacher. Last but not least, I would like to receive more teaching regarding TBLT so as to prepare teaching units that are enriching and compelling to prepare my students for the unexpected jobs the 21st century has ready for them.

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of SDGs



Figure 21. List of the sustainable development goals of the UN 2030 Agenda. (United Nations, 2021).

Appendix B: Topics of English textbooks

1st of Batxillerat English textbook from a high school in Barcelona:

Contents			
Starter	1 Home sweet home <p>p. 8 Grammar: Present tenses – review Vocabulary: Houses</p>	2 National dishes <p>p. 9 Grammar: Quantifiers Vocabulary: Food</p>	3 Flashmob <p>p. 10 Grammar: Present Perfect and Past Simple Vocabulary: Shops</p>
	Vocabulary	Reading	Grammar
1 People	<p>pp. 16–17 Clothes and accessories; verb phrases to do with clothes; adjectives of appearance and personality Reading: Facebook profile photos and what they mean</p>	<p>pp. 18–19 An article about genes Exam Focus: Multiple choice; statements</p>	<p>p. 20 Dynamic and state verbs p. 21 Present Perfect Simple and Continuous</p>
2 Sports	<p>pp. 28–29 Sport; compound nouns and sport collocations; people in sport Reading and listening: Sports Quiz</p>	<p>pp. 30–31 An article about a Paralympic athlete Exam Focus: True/False statements</p>	<p>p. 32 Narrative tenses p. 33 Verb patterns</p>
3 Let's go!	<p>pp. 40–41 Travel; means of transport; travel collocations; compound nouns; phrasal verbs Reading: Travelling for a living</p>	<p>pp. 42–43 Stories about memorable holidays Exam Focus: Open questions</p>	<p>p. 44 Present and past speculation p. 45 <i>used to</i> and <i>would</i></p>
4 Eat up	<p>pp. 52–53 Food; food categories; adjectives and antonyms for describing food; word families Reading: Fussy Eaters</p>	<p>pp. 54–55 Texts about food consumption Exam Focus: Multiple choice; questions</p>	<p>p. 56 Future time clauses p. 57 Future Continuous and Future Perfect</p>

4 Money, money, money <p>p. 11 Grammar: Comparative and superlative adjectives; too and enough Vocabulary: Clothes</p>	5 At the movies <p>p. 12 Grammar: Future forms Vocabulary: Books and films</p>	6 City life <p>p. 13 Grammar: Articles, <i>a/an</i> or <i>the</i>, no article Vocabulary: City life</p>	7 Growing up <p>p. 14 Grammar: Modal verbs for obligation and permission Vocabulary: Education</p>	8 My technology <p>p. 15 Grammar: First and Second Conditionals Vocabulary: Science and technology</p>
Listening	Speaking	Writing	Quick Review	Video
<p>p. 22 A radio programme about friendship Exam Focus: True/False; statements Pronunciation: numbers</p>	<p>p. 23 Describing a photo</p>	<p>pp. 24–25 A description of a person</p>	<p>p. 26</p>	<p>pp. 27 Distressed jeans</p>
<p>p. 34 Interviews about role models Exam Focus: Matching Pronunciation: long vowel sounds</p>	<p>p. 35 Asking for and giving an opinion; agreeing and disagreeing</p>	<p>pp. 36–37 A blog entry Vocabulary: Unkers</p>	<p>p. 38</p>	<p>p. 39 Andy Murray: The man behind the racquet</p>
<p>p. 46 People talking about different holiday experiences Exam Focus: Multiple choice Pronunciation: word stress</p>	<p>p. 47 Asking for and giving advice</p>	<p>pp. 48–49 A personal email</p>	<p>p. 50</p>	<p>p. 51 A local's guide to Rio de Janeiro</p>
<p>p. 58 People talking about their diets Exam Focus: Gapped sentences Pronunciation: vowel sounds</p>	<p>p. 59 In a restaurant</p>	<p>pp. 60–61 A formal email</p>	<p>p. 62</p>	<p>p. 63 Unwani</p>

Focus 1- eText Premium-

4	Eat up	pp. 52–53 Food; food categories; adjectives and antonyms for describing food; word families Reading: Fussy Eaters	pp. 54–55 Texts about food consumption Exam Focus: Multiple choice; questions	p. 56 Future time clauses p. 57 Future Continuous and Future Perfect
5	One world	pp. 64–65 Geography; geographical features; verb collocations; word families Reading: Living with natural disasters	pp. 66–67 An article about satellite technology and the environment Exam Focus: Sentence completion	p. 68 Defining relative clauses p. 69 Non-defining relative clauses
6	Good health	pp. 76–77 Parts of the body; word families – injuries; body idioms Reading and listening: How much are they worth?	pp. 78–79 A story about a disease Exam Focus: Finding synonyms and antonyms	p. 80 Second Conditional; wish/if only p. 81 Third Conditional
7	In the spotlight	pp. 88–89 TV; reality shows; modifiers with base and extreme adjectives; word families Reading: Reality television	pp. 90–91 A text about vlogging Exam Focus: Matching headings with paragraphs	p. 92 Reported Speech – statements; reporting verbs p. 93 Reported Speech – questions and imperatives
8	Good citizens	pp. 100–101 Human qualities; suffixes – forming nouns and adjectives; verb phrases Reading: And here is the good news ...	pp. 102–103 An extract from a novel Exam Focus: Gapped text	p. 104 The Passive p. 105 have something done

p. 58 People talking about their diets Exam Focus: Gapped sentences Pronunciation: vowel sounds	p. 59 In a restaurant	pp. 60–61 A formal email	p. 62	p. 63 Umami
p. 70 An interview about an eco school Exam Focus: Dictation Pronunciation: word stress	p. 71 Expressing and justifying an opinion; describing and contrasting pictures	pp. 72–73 A 'for and against' essay	p. 74	p. 75 Nature's Great Events: The Great Melt
p. 82 People talking about charity events Exam Focus: Multiple choice Pronunciation: vowel sounds	p. 83 A doctor's appointment	pp. 84–85 A formal email/ letter expressing an opinion	p. 86	p. 87 Health and fitness technology
p. 94 People talking about viral videos Exam Focus: Matching Pronunciation: word families and word stress	p. 95 Asking for and giving permission; polite requests	pp. 96–97 An article reviewing an event Vocabulary: adjectives and modifiers	p. 98	p. 99 YouTube®: behind the scenes
p. 106 An interview with a young ex-offender Exam Focus: Multiple choice Pronunciation: word stress	p. 107 Opinions: talking about advantages and disadvantages	pp. 108–109 An opinion essay	p. 110	p. 111 The inspiring story of Chen Shu-chu

Appendix C: Questionnaires

Questionnaire 1	http://bit.ly/TFM_questionnaire1
Questionnaire 2	http://bit.ly/TFM_questionnaire2
Answers questionnaire 1	http://bit.ly/TFM_Q1answers
Answers questionnaire 2	http://bit.ly/TFM_Q2answers

Appendix D: Interviews

http://bit.ly/TFM_Interviews

Appendix E: Teaching unit

Student's book	http://bit.ly/SB_Teachingunit
Teacher's book	http://bit.ly/TB_Teachingunit

Appendix F: Participation marks

Participation term 1, term 2 and teaching unit marks	http://bit.ly/TU_participationaverages
Participation teaching unit	http://bit.ly/TU_participation

Appendix G: Secondary plan to collect data

It consisted in sending students the *Google Forms* that were created in case there was not enough time left to do it in the classroom. In case the students were confined, the interviews would have been done using *Zoom* and the internship mentor would have sent me the marks regarding participation and the second term. Nevertheless, this was not necessary as students were not confined.

Appendix H: Teaching unit sequence

Table 3. Teaching unit ‘Fighting against animal abuse’ sequence. (Author’s table, Barcelona 2021).

Session	Activities	Skills + digital competence present everywhere
1. Let’s get to know animal abuse.	Describing what animal abuse is	I
	Discovering different types of animal abuse	I
	Calendar	L
	Assessment	L
	Classroom values and ethics	I + L
	KPSI	R
	Concluding game in pairs: How much do I contribute to animal abuse?	I + R + L
2. Let’s explore the dark truth behind wildlife tourism. <i>ONLINE</i>	Activating knowledge and looking back	I + L
	Jigsaw reading: wildlife tourism	R + I + W
	Reflecting on wildlife tourism	I
	Homework: Looking for a piece of news and creating a <i>Coggle</i>	R + W + I
	Exit ticket	W
3. Let’s educate humans	Hypothesising from the pictures	I + W
	Homework: Let’s see how cruelty-free you are	R
4. Let’s talk about animal testing <i>ONLINE</i>	Feedback on homework (products we have at home)	I
	Discovering animal testing	I + L + W
	Optional homework: Food for thought	R + W
5. Let’s help our animals	Analysing a for and against essay	W
	Essay checklist	W
	First steps of the writing process	W
6. Let’s be creative <i>ONLINE</i>	Writing a for and against essay	W
	Homework: Essay peer-assessment	W + R
	Exit ticket	W + I
7. Let’s become debaters	Discovering debates	I + L
	Creating a rubric	I
	Homework: <i>Flipgrid</i>	S
8. Let’s prepare for the debate <i>ONLINE</i>	Debate rules	R + L
	Preparation for the debate	I + R
	Exit ticket	W
9. Let’s debate	It’s high time to debate	I + L
	Self-assessment and peer-assessment	W
	KPSI	W

Appendix I: Authorisations

Authorisation signed by the school's headmaster to collect data.



FACULTAT DE CIÈNCIES DE L'EDUCACIÓ. PRÀCTICUM

SOL·LICITUD DE PERMÍS PER A L'ENREGISTRAMENT D'IMATGES I LA CAPTACIÓ DE FOTOGRAFIES AL CENTRE DE PRÀCTIQUES

Jo.....alumne/a del pràcticum.....
del Grau d'Educació/Màster de Secundària
de la Facultat de Ciències de l'Educació de la UAB, amb D.N.I. o Passaport número

SOL·LICITO PERMÍS per a la **captació de fotografies i l'enregistrament d'imatges** en el centre de pràctiques (*nom del centre i població*):

Situacions que demano poder enregistrar i/o fotografiar:

Finalitat de l'enregistrament i les fotografies:

Assumint els següents compromisos:

Respectar el dret a la imatge de l'alumnat que no vulgui ser enregistrar.

- ✓ Les imatges fotografiades i/o enregistrades seran per a ús exclusivament educatiu i de recerca relacionat amb les pràctiques que realitzo.
- ✓ Respectar el dret del centre a què no s'utilitzin fora del seu àmbit els enregistraments realitzats, si el centre ho demana.
- ✓ No difondre les fotografies ni els enregistraments per cap mitjà electrònic o digital o de cap mena (DVD, CD, memòria USB, Internet, etc.). La seva utilització es limitarà estrictament al marc de les pràctiques i de les activitats formatives derivades, sota la supervisió de la Facultat.
- ✓ Lliurar una còpia de l'enregistrament per al centre, si aquest n'estigués interessat.
- ✓ Lliurar una còpia del treball final de pràctiques al centre, si aquest n'estigués interessat.
- ✓ L'alumne/a podrà cedir les imatges al centre per al seu ús en l'àmbit de comunicació del propi centre. En aquest cas, el centre sempre farà constar l'autoria de les imatges i del treball realitzat, així com la seva vinculació al Pràcticum del Grau / Màster Secundària corresponent, de la Facultat de Ciències de l'Educació de la UAB.
- ✓¹

Data:	Autorització del centre:
Signatura Nom de l'estudiant: DNI/Passaport:	Signatura i segell. Persona que autoritza: Data:

¹ Afegir altres compromisos suggerits pel centre, si escaigués.

Questionnaires' consents:

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

Welcome to Mónica's project!

I am doing el 'treball de fi de màster de professorat' and you are the most important piece in my puzzle!

I would appreciate if you could answer these questions with your own words without using the Internet or asking your peers. It is completely anonymous so please try to do your best while writing them. The answers will be seen by me, my tutors and the teachers in the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Any questions you may have, please ask.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HELP. I KNOW YOU ARE CHAMPIONS!

[Següent](#)

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

Welcome to Mónica's project!

I am doing el 'treball de fi de màster de professorat' and you are the most important piece in my puzzle!

I would appreciate if you could answer these questions with your own words about the lessons we have done. It is completely anonymous so please try to do your best while writing them. The answers will be seen by me, my tutors and the teachers in the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Any questions you may have, please ask.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR HELP. YOU ARE DEFINETELY CHAMPIONS!

Students' interview consent:



Consentiment informat

La professora en pràctiques universitàries Sra. Mónica Cuevas està fent actualment un estudi per motivar als estudiants amb temes del món real: l'agenda de les Nacions Unides 2030 per millorar la seva competència comunicativa *global (Engaging students into real-life topics: the UN 2030 agenda to improve the global communicative competence)*.

A la classe de 1er C Batxillerat es farà una enquesta/entrevista/observació sobre el tema.

El propòsit d'aquesta investigació és identificar patrons de motivació dels estudiants i saber que entenen per 'motivació'. Això forma part d'un treball de final de màster de formació de professorat de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

L'entrevista té una durada d'uns 10-15 minuts aproximadament i només d'àudio. En cap cas la imatge de l'estudiant serà filmada ni sortirà enlloc. No hi ha riscos de cap tipus en la seva participació, i es mantindran sempre les precaucions establertes en el centre.

Si us plau, llegiu acuradament aquest document de consentiment abans de decidir si el vostre fill participa en aquest estudi.

Si decidiu autoritzar la participació del vostre fill, la seva identitat es mantindrà confidencial en tot moment. S'utilitzarà un pseudònim per presentar casos d'estudi.

La participació del vostre fill en aquest estudi és completament voluntària. Si esteu rebent aquest consentiment és perquè el vostre fill s'ha presentat de forma voluntària.

Nom i cognoms del la persona investigadora
(Data i Signatura)

Consentiment

Com a tutor legal de l'alumne:....., he llegit la informació sobre el projecte de recerca i he tingut l'oportunitat de fer preguntes, les quals se m'han respost satisfactòriament.

- Entenc que en aquest estudi la informació d'aquest projecte mantindrà l'anonimat de l'alumnat (sense identificadors personals) i només s'utilitzarà per posar els resultats globals a disposició d'altres investigadors, un temps després d'haver finalitzat el projecte.
- Estic d'acord d'autoritzar la participació voluntària del meu fill, i signo d'aquest consentiment per a les activitats següents:

Enregistraments i ús de testimonis del fill, qui també podrà assentir o no

1-Estic d'acord que s'enregistri (en àudio) l'entrevista amb el meu fill amb objectius de recerca:

SI ☐ NO ☐

2-Autoritzo que es facin citacions literals de les seves intervencions sense mencionar-ne el nom:

SI ☐ NO ☐

3-Autoritzo l'ús de les seves intervencions d'àudio preservant-ne la identitat per a finalitats de divulgació científica:

SI ☐ NO ☐

Nom i cognoms del tutor/de la tutora legal
(Data i Signatura)

School mentor's interview oral formal consent:

Moltes gràcies per haver-me donat l'oportunitat de fer aquesta entrevista. Abans de començar llegiré el consentiment informat:

Aquesta entrevista serà utilitzada per a l'elaboració del Treball de Final de Màster que he de fer al màster de professorat d'educació secundària. Les respostes seran completament anònimes i els resultats només es compartiran amb els nostres tutors i la universitat.

