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“Multiculturalism within a Culture: Learning a Language through its History”

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Vº Bº:

INDEX

1.	Introduction.....	2-3
2.	Methodology and objectives pages.....	4-7
3.	History seen as a set of stories.....	8-12
3.1	Importance of the English language.....	8
3.2	History seen as a set of stories.....	9-11
3.3	Videos: the tool which will rise proficient student's level to a higher state.....	11-12
4.	Analysis of the main characteristics of the films pages.....	13-23
4.1	Film <i>The Piano</i>	13-16
4.2	Film <i>Small Island</i>	16-18
4.3	Film <i>East is East</i>	18-19
4.4	Film <i>This is England</i>	19-23
5.	Proposal of materials and activities.....	24-30
5.1	<i>The Piano</i>	25-26
5.2	<i>Small Island</i>	27
5.3	<i>East is East</i>	27-28
5.4	<i>This is England</i>	28-29
5.5	Activities to be done after having worked on all the films.....	29-30
6.	Conclusion.....	31-32
7.	Bibliography.....	33-34

1. INTRODUCTION

In this Master's Dissertation, different activities related to the history of the British culture are going to be elaborated, in order to try to achieve motivation both in students and teachers when learning and teaching English. Nevertheless, before getting into the essay straight ahead, I would like to explain the reasons why I have decided to choose this topic.

To begin with, I must start saying that I have always been interested in languages. English is the language that I have chosen to work with, since many people in this country feel the need of learning it. In my opinion, I believe it would be enjoyable for them to learn it through activities related to its history, rather than just focusing on course books all the time.

Secondly, as we all know, each country's history is part of the world's history. I have always shown interest in that, as history and evolution are relevant to all societies and cultures. Understanding history means having culture, and I find interesting the idea of working on cultural items while assimilating another language. In fact, when I was studying a Degree in English, I had the opportunity to come across a great variety of cultural elements which I found really attractive. Working on these cultural elements increased my interest in the idea of including them in my future lessons. Hence, while attending this Master, I realized that the art of cinema and teaching cultural elements could in fact be joined together into a teaching methodology. I must add that I have chosen this topic principally because it is based on creating material which will be useful when teaching English in a future. Furthermore, I am very interested in culture, languages, and the different processes they go through with time.

This Master's Dissertation (Máster de Profesor en Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, Bachillerato, Formación Profesional y Enseñanza de Idiomas) is focused on how to be a good teacher and one of its main goals, due to the context where education takes place in, is the motivational factor. However, this motivation is not only focused on students; in fact, the most important factor is that the teacher himself feels with energy and enthusiasm when teaching and giving a lesson. The innovative aspect of this project is the fact that almost all the attention is focused on the role of the teacher, instead of the role of the pupil. Positive energy is transmitted to students when showing enthusiasm. If the teacher enjoys the lesson, students will probably feel in a similar way. This is why the main target of this project is to show why different videos are suitable to easily work with cultural elements, as well as to prepare material from a perspective which will in many cases make the teacher

enjoy what is being taught, due to the variety of activities linked to the different cultural aspects of the British culture. Such aspects have been developed throughout the history of the British society, which enable people to see why Great Britain has such a multicultural society.

2. METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

This Master's Dissertation is a proposal of teaching a language by using historical and cultural aspects. Culture is attractive, so it would be a more interesting and attractive way of learning English. Many adults would be more motivated, as they are not only learning structures, vocabulary and ways of interacting, but also the history of another land, which in my opinion is very complex due to the great development which the British have undergone. The extension of the British Empire around the world made possible the contact between very different cultures and that has indeed had an influence in different cultures around the world. I have chosen to work with British culture, since it is where all was originated.

It is well known that the British Empire spread all around the world, and this changed the history and development of certain cultures. This fact had a great impact in the British Society itself, and did help in the construction of its own traditions. Therefore, the idea is to prepare material related to different stages of their history. Motivation will be established by the screening of different films and series, through which cultural aspects will be shown (not only including multiculturalism, but also how the society reacted towards the great variety of situations which the British nation had to undergo). Nowadays, the concept of learning languages has undergone various changes in its meaning. We used to support the idea of multilingualism, which had as a purpose to encourage students to learn more than one foreign language. However, a plurilingual approach, which attempts to expand the learner's personal experience of the language in its cultural context, has gained more importance. This is to say that any cultural experience should help to develop the language learning process, where the communicative competence should gain more value. In order to develop a plurilingual competence, students should be aware that language learning is a lifelong task, and that learning outside the class is vital to achieve an evolution.¹ Teachers who are familiar enough with the contrasts between the world of the learner and the target community do know that there are many elements which cannot be ignored. There is a need of being aware of having sensitivity for the underlying cultural presuppositions. This is why any language user should be aware of cross-cultural characteristics. A second language teaching should offer the opportunity to gain entry into the experience of a different version of a sociocultural reality by familiarizing students to cross-

¹ Council of Europe. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Web. 10 June 2014. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf.

cultural contrasts and similarities.² Since culture is different from country to country and from time to time, there is a need to educate people in order to adapt to the evolution of the multiple cultures which we can find around the world. It is important to learn how to adapt to different contexts, therefore there is a need to be aware of traditions and habits, since we all come from different backgrounds. Through education, multicultural consciousness can be achieved. It is also relevant to have in mind that the main aim is to make people discover and get to know new aspects of life; hence teachers should inform and not impose lifestyles and traditions. Multicultural education makes reference to all kind of differences between groups; there is a wide range of aspects which take part in this differentiation, including the culture and ethnic, the age, the sexual orientation and the type of religion of the people from a specific place. It is highly significant that language users bear in mind how important values which support attitudes and behaviors are. Communication is basically one of the most important skills which affect behavior. This is why teachers need be competent psychologically, in order to adopt an objective attitude and ignoring any type of relativism when dealing with prejudices and stereotypes. Through the different activities and films which are going to be presented, multicultural characteristics of British culture are going to be developed; however, at the same time that we are having a multicultural education, we are also working on an intercultural one. While working on multiculturalism within one same culture, students will extend their capacities of mutual comprehension and interaction in various types of environments from different perspectives. Therefore, students have to be able to know how to be on someone else's shoes and see different points of view. And so, empathy needs to be developed since it will help educational processes.³

This methodology is thought to be for adult learners who have freely chosen to study English and who already have a competent level. According to the BOCYL 59/2008, 21st of August, Decree, the education of advanced level languages which refers to the official language schools in Castilla y León, it can be determined that this education is oriented to develop the communicative competence following the patterns which the Common European Framework for languages. The main targets in language teaching in addition to the ones already jotted regarding the high level teaching determined in the Royal Decree 1629/2006, 29th of december, will be the following:

A) Encourage the intercultural dimension.

² Loveday, Leo. *The Sociolinguistics of Learning and Using a Non-Native Language*. Oxford: Pergamon Institute of English, 1986, pp.56-58.

³ Abdallah-Preteuille, Martine. *La educación intercultural*. Barcelona: IDEA BOOKS, S.A.2001, pp.75-76.

B) Encourage responsibility and autonomy of the student in order to achieve a more effective learning.

Taking into consideration the Common European Framework, we should state that there are six different levels which are divided into three categories in the foreign language learning process, these are:

-Basic user A1-A2

-Independent user B1-B2

-Proficient user C1-C2

This Master Dissertation is meant to be addressed to teachers who focus on proficient user's students. Depending on the level which is demanded of the teacher when assessing students, this material could be both used for C1 and C2 levels. According to the Common European Framework 'C1 represents an advanced level of competence which is suitable for more complex work and study tasks, whereas C2 could be extended to include the more developed intercultural competence'.⁴ The main difference between C1 and C2 levels is that the second one is meant to have a degree of precision and appropriateness with the language. At the same time, these students are required to understand a wide range of demanding and even recognize implicit meaning. C2 students are requested to have a more accurate listening comprehension which is characterized by being more difficult due to accents and external factors which make it more complicated.⁵ "The processes of reception, production and interaction are highly important when developing the learner's communicative language competence."⁶ The first two are obviously primary, however taking into consideration the level of the students to whom this proposal is being addressed to, that they won't have any problem in practicing any type of task. Instead, they will find challenging situations where to improve their level while acquiring cultural knowledge.

According to Krashen's Affective hypothesis, the acquisition of a second language is highly influenced by a number of 'affective variables'. These variables are motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen supports the idea of students acquiring more successfully a second language through a

⁴ Council of Europe. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Web. 10 June 2014. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

high motivation, a good self-image, self-confidence and a low level of anxiety. Without these elements, pupils tend to have a 'mental block' which distances comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. This 'mental block' is erased when students feel that they are in a cosy atmosphere, where they are motivated.⁷

Our target students will probably be self-confident, since they already have a competent level. However, we know that each human is different and that psychology and self development have a very important role in life, and particularly in learning languages. To promote plurilingualism, there is the need to develop interculturality. This is not only important for the students, but also for the teacher. As we all know, learning is a process that never ends, knowledge needs to be updated, with time everything evolves and humans need to change with life. This is only a proposal which will enable both teachers and students to seek information about passed cultural aspects, which could be compared to the present situation within that same culture and even compare it to our own. With time, there will be more and more events in the world's history which will undoubtedly modify many cultures and will definitely have an impact in those languages. This is why, it is very important to be aware of 'the linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language. These are altered by the knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how'.⁸ Through the development of these aspects, any language learners (teachers or students) will definitely develop an enriched, more complex personality which will positively widen their capacity for learning in life and will probably open people to new cultural experiences.

One of the main objectives of this Master Dissertation is to show why these four films which have been chosen are suitable for being a proper tool which will inspire and motivate teachers when preparing their lessons and their course work. The videos will not only be suitable material for teachers in order to develop the listening comprehension in their students, but they will also offer many aspects which will be discussed, compared and contrasted within the British culture, and any other culture including the student's own one. Taking into consideration the need for working certain competences, it will be highlighted which components from the films enable the development of intercultural skills and know-how, the 'existential' competence (savoir-*être*), and the ability to learn (savoir-apprendre).⁹

⁷ Schütz, Ricardo. *Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition*. Web. 3 May 2014. <http://www.english.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html>.

⁸ Council of Europe. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Web. 10 June 2014. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

3. HISTORY SEEN AS A SET OF STORIES

3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The majority of us have probably asked ourselves at least once, why English is such a widely used language or why has it acquired such an importance all around the world. In *A History of the English Language*, A. C. Baugh and T. Cable state that “a language lives long only if there are people who speak it and use it as their native tongue. A language, in this case, English, is important when the people who speak it are important, politically, economically, commercially, socially and culturally”.¹⁰

Besides, students should be aware of this importance, since when being aware of how relevant and necessary English is around the world, they will probably feel the need of improving their level. Although the importance of the language is not just a simple matter of numbers or territory, as has already been said, it also depends on the importance of the people who speak it. Moreover:

English is the mother tongue of nations whose combined political influence, economic soundness, commercial activity, social well-being, scientific and cultural contributions to civilization has given an impressive support to its numerical precedence. English is a *lingua franca*, which means it is a common language that can be used by everyone to communicate with everyone else. It is a language that is widely used beyond the population of its native speakers. English is now the dominant or official language in over sixty countries and is represented in every continent. From this fact, it can be understood that English is a vital means of communication for millions of people around the world. Most of the scientific, technological and academic information in the world is expressed in English and over 80% of all the information stored in electronic retrieval systems is in English. English is also the most commonly taught second language; that is because of the enormous impact of the United States in politics, economics and culture around the world.¹¹

In summary, the English language is now important because of its significance in terms of economics and politics - for instance - being used as a means of common communication. With time, it has become a *lingua franca*, and that means, as we have mentioned before, that people from non mother-tongue English language countries use it when they come into contact. Since it is the principal language which people use for communicating, schools around the world choose this subject as a second language to learn.

¹⁰ Baugh, Albert C. and Cable, Thomas. *A history of the English Language. Great Britain*. London; Roudledfe & Kegan. 1978, p. 3.

¹¹ Coury, Jane G. *English as a Lingua Franca*. Karen's Linguistics Issues, October 2001. Web. April 17 2014. <http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/linguafranca.htm>.

3.2 HISTORY INTRODUCED AS A STORY

The importance of English around the world seems to be a commonly accepted issue, but how has English become such a widely used language? This question will actually be the main tool for teachers to have a lot of resources and interesting facts to tell students about and make them investigate about. Important nations such as the United States of America or Great Britain have English as their mother tongue. Ever since the Industrial Revolution and with the expansion of the British Empire, English has been used greatly used in politics, economy and commercial activities, and that has indeed given the language a great importance and that is why so many people have been forced to learn it.

First of all, it has to be highlighted that English managed to extend itself around the world as a result of English colonization. Little by little, due to the expansion of the British Empire, this language was used for economic and commercial reasons, and therefore its power increased. There are quite some interesting aspects which have left a footprint in the evolution of the language and the culture, which will probably interest students; this is why it is a great idea to transmit culture while practicing the language. The extension of the British Empire will be the line to follow in the development of the course. It will be the context for the English classes.

It would be appropriate for the teacher to have summary of the British Empire's extension, so that the he could have a guide line to follow when preparing the whole course. Apart from the films to introduce students to parts of the history of the British culture, various features regarding the history will be explained in class as if they were stories. For instance, some interesting facts which would be explained during the lessons would be the following:

The slave trade leads to the introduction of African English into the USA. Goods were brought to West Africa in exchange for slaves. These slaves were transported to the plantations of the West Indies and the southern states of the USA, where they were exchanged for sugar and tobacco. The “broken” English spoken between the slaves and the masters became known as *pidgin* English. It was also spoken between the slaves themselves and is the basis of the Caribbean Creole dialect.¹²

These slaves originated from different tribes and areas in Africa, that is to say people spoke different languages. Although they were forcefully brought together, they did not know other languages.

¹² BBC Radio 4. *The Routes of English*. Web. 7 April 2014. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/routesofenglish/>.

Once forced into working together, they needed a means of communicating in some way. This brought about the origin of pidgin English which had vocabulary items from each language. A pidgin language takes one or more already existing languages as its point of origin. Therefore, most of the pidgins we hear appear to be crude and simplified forms of a more sophisticated language.¹³

As an example, the English based pidgin found in Papua New Guinea which has existed for about a century,¹⁴ uses the word *mi* for “I” and “me” and the word *yu* for “you”, as in:

<u>Pidgin English of Papua New Guinea</u>	<u>Standard English</u>
Mi go	“I go”
Yu go	“You go”
Mi lukim yu	“I see you”
Yu lukim mi	“You see me”
Papa bilong mi	“My father”
Gras bilong het	“hair” (from grass of head)

These are just interesting facts about the evolution of the English language itself, which they will probably enjoy knowing about. When telling students these concerns which are just funny things to know, they will probably be more attracted to the culture, since a great amount of people love to gossip and in some way it does have a similar effect on them. In addition, it is important to highlight that students need to be hooked to wanting to know about cultural facts, since the more one knows, the more one wants to learn, and willing to learn means evolving which always helps in developing skills for a better acquisition.

Another curiosity which will be explained regarding the period of colonization of Australia, which is explained by Christine Lindop, is that:

In current day the slang term to refer to an English person is “pommy” – this comes from the fact that the convicts that were brought to Australia, wore suits that had “P.O.H.M” (Prisoner of his/her majesty) printed on the back. Nowadays, the Australians still joke that the English are the prisoners. Life was very diffi-

¹³ Aitchison, Jean. *Language Change: Progress or Decay?* University Press: Cambridge. 1938, p. 182.

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

cult, and the convicts had to work very hard, making roads, buildings and farms. These early Australians tended to lose their regional accents and, as a result, there are few variations in accents and word usage across the whole Australia. This could also be due to the fact that the majority of the Australian population is concentrated on the East and West coasts.”¹⁵

However, there are great similarities between Australian English and the London Cockney accent. When having said this, it would be appropriate to spend a session working on several aspects regarding these two accents (not all varieties of accents at once, since they will be distributed among the whole course). At the end of the year, it would be appropriate to prepare a session where all the accents developed could be heard and practiced.

3.3 VIDEOS: THE TOOL WHICH WILL RISE PROFICIENT STUDENT’S LEVEL TO A HIGHER STATE

The first question that is raised is: Why are videos a very convenient instrument to motivate students while improving their language level? The answer is that videos help in developing listening skills, as well as presenting or reinforcing language. There is easy access to them, so if students want to, they could watch them as many times as they wanted to (but that would of course be done at home by themselves). Students need to be introduced to a context before watching the film, if not, the film might remain incomprehensible and no image will be translated into thought. In addition, the teacher should guide them into the specific ‘language of the cinema’, which emphasizes certain aspects by paying more attention to some scenes. This will be achieved by stopping some videos at certain scenes with a specific purpose to analyze. Psychological content of communication through art is not mere perception but true experience of such imaginary reality. However, we do not have to forget that directors try to guide spectators into seeing the reality they want to present which might in some cases differ from true facts.¹⁶

Besides, videos enable retention of cultural information such as language, outfits, traditions... as well as having the opportunity to observe social dynamics within the native culture. In this paper, four films have been chosen which students will have to watch. In these, they will find interesting information linked to particular stages of the history of the British culture. When being surrounded

¹⁵ Lindop, Christine. *Australia and New Zealand*. Oxford Bookworms Factfiles: Oxford University Press. 2008, p. 2.

¹⁶ Leontiev, Alexei. *Psychology and the Language Learning Process*. Oxford: Pergamon Institute of English, 1981, pp.144-145

to a constant usage of the second language, students will probably feel more comfortable when having to express themselves, since they got used to hearing it.

Due to the different accents, certain films are quite difficult to understand themselves. Furthermore, certain scenes will be stopped by the teacher in order to analyze what has been said and what has occurred, so students will be forced to try to understand most of it and not to just have a general idea. One condition which will harden the task will be the time which the students will have to operate. In addition, in some scenes from the films we are offered certain factors which complicate understanding in the listening comprehension. Some of these would be the ambient noise or interference (crowded street, parties, pubs...) which are very common in films, making it perfect for this high level lessons. However, films provide ample, content rich target language inputs, since in audio-visual reception the user simultaneously receives an auditory and a visual input. C1 students are capable to understand enough to follow extended speech on complex topics, therefore they might feel the need to ask about some details which they might have not understood, especially if they are not used to the accent. They will also be able to appreciate register shifts, being able to follow the usage of a certain degree of slang and idiomatic usage.¹⁷

During the whole year four films would be screened in class, these would be:

- *The piano*
- *Small Island*
- *East is east*
- *This is England*

¹⁷ Council of Europe. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Web. 10 June 2014. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FILMS

Throughout this paper, it is going to be shown the reasons why these artistic representations have specifically been chosen.

4.1 FILM *THE PIANO*

Since the main target of this project is to try to have a quick glance at part of the history and evolution of the British culture, in my opinion, the best option to begin this journey with a film contextualized in the Victorian Times, *The Piano*.¹⁸ The film is set in mid XIX Century in New Zealand while there's a process of colonization.

This is an ideal piece of art to work with in an English class, as it contains various aspects which are very important to British culture. Society since then has evolved and changed a lot. Jane Campion, the film director, managed to challenge certain gender stereotypes through this artistic representation. On the other hand, normative conventions of gender are subverted. Through this film, students will be able to overcome stereotyped relationships by checking out how Jane Campion manages to challenge those stereotypes, and at the same time they will be able to compare those conventions to any culture from nowadays and exchange opinions regarding certain patterns of behavior which are common in particular cultures. This communicative activity will also encourage students to work on competent arguments when defending one's point of view, since individuals are also affected by attitudes, motivations, beliefs, values or personality types when wanting to express oneself. This actually makes reference to the development of the "existential competence" (savoir-être, concept which was developed in the second section of this essay).

To begin with, let's focus on how conventions of gender were in the Victorian Era. Victorians discussed sexual differences in terms of oppositions: women are fragile, passive and emotional while men were strong, active, and intellectual.

¹⁸ Champion, J. *The piano*. Ciby 2000/ Jan Chapman Production, 1993.

“For the rising of middle classes, the ideal woman would be expected to be a worthy companion for her husband, a loving educator of her children, and a competent manager of her household.”¹⁹ Discussion of women’s duties centered on the concepts of “mission”, “sphere”, and “influence”. Woman’s mission was to begin the moral regeneration of society by displaying the principles of Christianity. Their noblest qualities were integrity, charity, innocence and patience. The figure of women, taking into consideration that they had to guide their children’s education and guard their husband’s integrity, served as the conscience of the family. Farmer’s wives and tradesmen’s wives gladly abandoned the dairy or shop if they could afford to do so. However, many middle-class Victorian women were unmarried and unemployed. Separated from the world of men, women gained prestige and support from nurturing other women both within and without the family structure. The Victorian’s concept of women describes them as pure, and more spiritual than men.

Since the director of the film manages to challenge social conventions, the teacher will have to guide students so that they realize how society was at that time and how the film tries to challenge that tradition. In the film, for example, there are some characters which support this tradition but some other do not. Students would be asked to analyze these contrasts through a common written project. Consequently, it could be interesting to create a blog to comment on several aspects of the films. Since the teacher would also analyze the film itself, if there is any particular characteristic which pupils haven’t noticed, it would then be illustrated by the teacher.

Once we have been generally introduced to the social context from the Victorian Times, we can now start analyzing how the main characters are, in order to be able to see who do challenge tradition and who support it.

Ada is a mute Scottish woman that travels to New Zealand to get married. She is a symbol of white bourgeois femininity and is the only female character with “access to a spiritual world” in the film, through the sensitivity of her music. Her emotions are expressed through a powerful fusion between music and the movement of the camera. For instance, there are constant close up’s of “Ada’s pale shimmering face with her eyes closed in rapture as she plays her piano”.²⁰ “Superficially she stands for the normative convention of the Victorian woman. She symbolizes purity, seen by “the whiteness of her face” and through being dressed in “that voluptuous traditional costume”²¹. But her

¹⁹Yusufzai, Shabnam and Chun, Sue. “The Portrayal of the Cloistered Victorian Woman”. 2001, p. 1. *Web. 9 June 2014*.http://www.nines.org/exhibits/The_Portrayal_of_the_Cloistere.

²⁰Dyson, L. *The return of the repressed? Whiteness, femininity and colonialism in The Piano*. *Oxford Journal*.(1995) *Literature from Oxford*. *Web. 9 May 2014*. <http://screen.oxfordjournals.org/content/36/3/267.full.pdf>.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

character is very complex and evolves as the movie goes on. Ada's personality is first presented from a position of repression but already with desires to break with the imposed tradition of being a good wife. Firstly, she does obey his father's commands (fact that supports traditional values) and goes to New Zealand to get married to Steward. However, the fact that she has a daughter and yet is mysteriously single does contradict the Victorian standards. Ever since she arrives, she shows a strong attitude so that everybody knows that she does not really want to be there. The audience probably believes that she is kind of dehumanized when considering that her only love is the piano and that she just seems to feel comfortable with an object. She does not act like a proper mother, she does not show care for her daughter, actually in many occasions it looks like she just uses her to communicate with the rest. Nevertheless, this situation changes when Baines starts playing tricks on her and awakens her passion and love for humans instead of only feeling it for objects. When she realizes that she has feelings for him she desperately fights for her love. She even plays with Steward's feelings, by manipulating him. Caressing his nude body she intends to make him feel she will stand by his side, even though her only purpose is to be let free from the house. She even attempts to undress him slowly (showing that she has the control over him), but when he tries to kiss her she moves. He wants to touch her, but she does not let that happen, and in fact, when she does not touch him again it is made clear that she does not love him, and that she is just using him to get to Baines. Even when he talks about maybe them being good together some day, she just looks somewhere else, showing that she does not want that and ignoring him at the same time. Her personality changes so much that she even obliges Flora (her daughter) to do the wrong for her own benefit. Ada is not raising her child properly due to her desire of liberating herself from the arranged marriage. This power that is attributed to Ada positions tradition upside down, since men were the powerful figures and women were expected to do as told in that century.²²

"Ada's oppressive and austere Victorian costumes are made to function both for and against her".²³ She superficially embodies the archetypal nineteenth-century wife, but certain scenes ridicule this image and even make her decide whether she wants to be part of the normative or if she dares to free herself from those conventions. For instance, when Ada is drowned tied to her piano, encased in her billowing skirts it can be seen how enormous the outfit is symbolizing the great repression that women in those costumes suffer. This scene also breaks with the Victorian female stereotype when she in the end rejects her close link to her piano and instead chooses to live and share her life

²² Calero, A. *Challenge of gender stereotypes*. Universidad de Hull. 2001, p. 1-2. Essay.

²³ Dyson, L. *The return of the repressed? Whiteness, femininity and colonialism in The Piano*. *Oxford Journal. (1995) Literature from Oxford*. Web. 9 May 2014. <http://screen.oxfordjournals.org/content/36/3/267.full.pdf>.

with the man she really loves. When she makes her decision, she enables the spectator to see that she is a fighter and has managed to be where she desired (away from Steward and instead with Baines). Another clear situation that exemplifies her rebellion against her designated position is when Ada poses for her wedding photograph in a dress which she has only flung over her day clothes, without even attempting to fasten the back. In addition, she even breaks it while taking it off rapidly.²⁴

In this first screening, students would be helped out by the teacher since it would be the first time that they would have to work with the dynamics of learning from videos in an English class. The class would be divided into different groups and they would be asked to look for information regarding the context of the film.

4.2. FILM *SMALL ISLAND*

Another film which would show multicultural aspects and how society reacted to the income of immigrants is *Small Island*. The Jamaican characters of the story will have to fight to fit in the English society, their so called Mother Country. They will have to face many impediments to manage to reach their goals, since they won't be as welcomed as they expected to be.

Multiculturalism is defined as "the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles."²⁵ However, on many occasions there are limitations and problems, due to social conflicts. This artistic production will challenge students to understand a great variety of accents (Jamaican, Cockney, Yorkshire...). This fact will complicate the listening comprehension skills, but at the same time it will help students to work them out. Thus, subtitles will be on during the screening, so any misunderstanding will probably be solved by the written component.

Throughout the film some experiences in the war are shown through the character of Gilbert. After the war, he goes back to Jamaica, but his only desire is to go to England, where he hopes to find a job, since there are no opportunities for him to live in Jamaica. Immigrants hope to be welcomed in England, since they have been fighting for the Mother Country in the war. Howev-

²⁴ Calero, A. *Challenge of gender stereotypes*. Universidad de Hull. 2012, pp. 1-2. Essay.

²⁵ IFLA. *Defining Multiculturalism*. 2013. Web. July 20. 2014. <http://www.ifla.org/publications/defining-multiculturalism>.

er, their reception won't be as cosy as they expect it to be. For instance, Hortense soon realizes that Jamaicans are despised and discriminated against, racism is therefore suffered. Through these characters, the audience will be aware of how tough adaption was, and the strong hesitations which bombed immigrants.

In this artistic production, we are also shown how part of the British population had to undergo hard situations. For instance, when Bernard leaves Queenie on her own and she has to take care of his father who suffers shell-shock as a consequence of fighting in World War I. We can appreciate how families were broken apart as consequence of the war, and that the World War I did not only bring death and misery, but it also meant negative physical and psychological effects.

A positive characteristic that this film offers is that it is a mishmash of historical acquaintances which combines love issues with racist discrimination. This is perfectly exemplified through the character of Queenie. She has to face hard situations, like when her husband comes back home after being several years away and she then gives birth to a dark-skinned baby. This situation creates a lot of drama and forces different characters to evolve due to the context.

Since *Small Island* is based on Andrea Levy's book, after having watched the film and having discussed about it, attention will be paid to certain extracts from the book. Certain passages from it will be read in class, some others at home (the teacher will provide photocopies of the extracts). The main target of reading some scenes from the book is to pay more attention to certain situations and to the language which is used. For example, on Andrea Levy's *Small Island* we can find this extract:

As he left the room Hortense turned to me to sneer, 'He your friend?'

I shut the door. Now, to get back into the room, I have to step over the damn trunk.

'What you doing?' she say.

'The thing in me way'.

'That is a valuable trunk'.

'What- you wan' me sleep in the hallway? You no see I caan round must be step over?'²⁶:

In the film, there is a scene where Queenie and Gilbert are talking. Gilbert describes how he feels in England. He explains that just because he is black people think he comes from Africa,

²⁶ Levy, Andrea. *Small Island*. London: Clays Ltd: 2004, p.25.

however, he insists arguing that he is from Jamaica, in the West Indies, he is British just like any other citizen belonging to the British Empire:

When I arrived here, the English, they look at me dark skin and then say 'aw, you are from Africa'. I say 'no, I'm from Jamaica in the West Indies, I'm British like you'. And their face go blank. And I realize that this mother country about which we Jamaicans know so much does not even know where her own children live. She does not care one jot for us.²⁷

The characters of Hortense and Queenie will be deeply studied. Hortense goes through a hard evolution, from being rough and proud she manages to adapt to a new and very different society. She does seem to make an effort when talking (she has a different accents and she is used to using different vocabulary). For example, she tries to have a posh accent, since she describes herself to be a well-educated woman, who is in fact a teacher (a very important profession). The character of Queenie needs to be highlighted since it is the one which contrasts with the rest of the British society.

4.3. FILM *EAST IS EAST*

East is East raises a great variety of topics which also refer to multiculturalism in England, however, it also manages to deal with other problematic topics at that time, like domestic violence, homosexuality, learning about other cultures than yours, cultural identity, religion, English language varieties, clichés about cultural identities, individual identity and mixed-ethnicity problems.

The main story is set in Salford in 1971. *East is East* criticizes certain aspects with success through humour. On many occasions, some issues are mocked; however, some scenes manage to reach the audience through feelings, for example when the father hits somebody or a character is crying. *East is East* is a film that deals with the mixture of cultures; this fact can be seen through different aspects. For example, as they want to feel integrated they have to have English names, like Harry, Tony or Nigel. In addition, through the film you can see one same aspect through different eyes. Not only it is seen from different character's point of view, but since ages between them differ we are also shown that various generations think differently.

This offers different perspectives from where to see every situation which is presented, and each of these is different, there could be three main points of view:

²⁷ Alexander, J. *Small Island*. Itv Studios, 2009. Second CD, Min. 14:06- 14.40.

1. The dad's point of view and other pakis point of view.
2. The children's point of view.
3. The mother's point of view and her friend's.

It is interesting how the concept of family is used to explore wider cultural conflicts. Many people believe that family is supposed to be a unit. However, in *East is East* it can be seen that within that family there are numerous struggles, such as:

- Conflicts between the parents. The mother in some way supports the fact that they should do as the father says while they are under that roof; however, she does show empathy for her children and fights with her husband to defend them.
- Relationship between the brothers. Most of them feel British and reject the Pakistani culture.
- Bacon scene where one is spraying, then when Ella arrives she helps them to hide that.
- Bringing shame to the family/ the solution is to go where there are more Pakis. The fact that Naziir doesn't marry the girl his father wants to, means him being dead for his father.

Students could be encouraged to watch *West is West*, since the point of view of the Pakistanis towards the English is seen and several cultural aspects are deeply worked on.

In this film, the existential competence is going to be developed. Teachers need to be very good at psychology since they have to deal with many external factors. The communicative activity of learners is affected both by academic factors (like understand, their knowledge and skills) but also their personality which involve a certain type of attitude, motivations, beliefs and values.²⁸

4.4 FILM *THIS IS ENGLAND*

British society is the result of a mishmash of cultures. From the Celts, to the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons through to the Normans, Britain has experienced constant blends and mixtures in its society. Then, throughout the period of British Colonialism influences from even further were introduced into British culture, as we have already seen through the previous screenings. In the film *This is England*, we are shown how the British culture reacts to a more recent type of influx from other cultures, initially due to the breakdown in this Colonial link. In this film, the main

²⁸ Council of Europe. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Web. 10 June 2014. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf.

foreign cultural references that are highlighted refer to Pakistani and Jamaican influence. However, we see that multiculturalism is not an easily developed process, especially initially, and in times of financial difficulties, and nationalistic groups form to react against those of non-English roots. *This Is England* demonstrates the difficulties of multiculturalism and concepts such as “race” in British society. Let’s have a closer look to this film work.

Shane Meadows tries to introduce two different subgroups of skinheads, one which just follows the aesthetics of clothes and music, and in contrast another which is violent and supports a radical nationalistic ideology. Through this, we can see how each gang reacts within the English society. The film is set in the eighties, at a time of economic difficulties and Thatcher reforms, where multiculturalism was a quite new circumstance. In *This is England* we see how those of visibly non-English origin, are not accepted by everybody, in fact the movie clearly represents how certain groups organize themselves to stand against immigrants.²⁹

Through this production, students will be able to study the political context, as well to have a closer look at the nationalistic movements which occurred at that period. We are mainly presented to two groups. On the one hand we have Woody’s group, whose main target in life is having fun as a group of friends.

In some situations we can see that they enjoy themselves through seemingly senseless violence, yet this violence is not politically or ideologically directed at a particular group of people but it is a senseless way of having fun through destroying things. An example of this is when they go ‘hunting’. In contrast, there is the violent, ideologically motivated group of Combo. Combo is perhaps the typical bully and leader who is feared and respected and whatever he says must be done. He guides the group to the nationalistic meeting, where we can see other supporters of the belief that one’s national culture and interests are superior to any other. Combo persuades his followers to decorate the streets with racist graffiti and teaches Shaun how to insult immigrants (mostly Pakistanis) and even uses him as a pretext to rob an immigrant’s shop yielding a machete to terrorize the owner.³⁰

Through the character of Combo, extremist skinheads are described and we are introduced to a context where acting racist and aggressively is the normal way to function. There is a scene when Combo and his gang drive to the National Front meeting in the middle of the countryside, the people who are attending it are all “whites”. They are all proud to call themselves English and through a convincing speech we can see that even though they say they are not racist, they simply consider themselves as patriotic, but by labeling themselves Nationalists they are indeed showing that they in fact are. They want “England” to be for the “English”, and they do not want people from other origins on the Isle. It is when the concept of Nationalism is introduced that it

²⁹ Calero, A. *Multiculturalism in This is England*. Universidad de Hull. 2012, p. 2. Essay.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

is made clear that those people supporting it are intolerant of multiculturalism, since these are complete opposites. In the film, we hear two main nationalistic speeches; the first one is made by Combo, in front of Woody's gang, where he sarcastically gives his version of the situation in England and tries to convince his followers of the existence of a "pure, white race", as in:

Open the fucking floodgates and let them all come in. Get off your ship. Did you have a safe journey? Why don't you build a shop and then build a church? Follow your own fucking religions. Do what you want. When there's single fucking parents out there, who can't get a fucking flat. We're giving the flats to these fucking Pakis. Right? Who've got 50 and 60 in a fucking flat on their own." There's three and a half million unemployed out there. Immigrants are cheap labour. Cheap and easy labour.³¹

The other important speech dealing with this topic is the one Lenin gives in the National Front. In this speech we are told "Send the bastards back"³² or "Our country has been stolen from under our noses"³³. Any time comments like these are uncontrolled; we are shown that many people assume that the existence of "races" is a given fact.

On the other hand, in the film *Yasmin*³⁴ we can also see that multiculturalism does not flow peacefully within society. "There are also scenes of racist graffiti insulting. Another example is when the main character of this film, Yasmin, is at work and she has to put up with racial discrimination and taunting. Even though, she is clearly westernized and as British as the other members of her work. Perhaps, the difference between the discrimination that Yasmin suffers and the Pakistani shop owner in *This Is England* is the motivation behind it. In the case of *Yasmin*, it would seem to be because of a fear of terrorism propagated by the media - towards the

unknown foreign culture" of Islam. This shows the political atmosphere generated at the crucial moment of 9/11 where western society was shaken, whereas in *This Is England* the violence is probably more economically motivated by a group of socially deprived and depraved members at a moment where society has undergone changes from the revolutionary days of peace and love of the hippies of the sixties and early seventies to the crude reality of the economic downturn of the eighties.³⁵

The teacher will make sure that students see that, as in any performance, the director constructs what he wants the spectators to see. In *This is England*, we are given a cultural representation of immigrants as basically non-problematic members of society. The main example of this is the Pakistani who owns a shop; he is a hard-working, upright citizen who does not tolerate bad

³¹ Meadow, S., *This is England*. Film four and the UK Film Council Production, 2006. DVD. Min 42:50 - 43:40.

³² *Ibidem*. Min 54:32-54:33.

³³ *Ibidem*. Min 54:53- 54:55.

³⁴ Glanaan, K. *Yasmin*. Parallax Independent Production. 2004.

³⁵ Calero, A. *Multiculturalism in This is England*. Universidad de Hull. 2012, p. 3. Essay.

behavior from children, imposing his values onto Shaun. He is someone peaceful, the only aggressive people that appear in the film are white English people, but that does not mean that immigrants do not cause problems.

This Is England not only deals with verbal aggression in racism but also physical violence. The fact that this country has such a multicultural society is, as it has been mentioned above in this paper, due to Colonialism. This concept is introduced in the film through references to the Falklands war. Within Colonialism there exists a hierarchy, of the leader and the followers. Hierarchy in the film is illustrated through the leader figures Combo, Woody or Lenin who are obeyed and looked up to by their own group. Whenever a racist comment is made, they are reinforcing the idea that “white” people are in a higher position than “black” people, as if they had to be lead. This demonstrates a total lack of acceptance of multiculturalism.

A useful technique to reach the audience’s feelings is through violence. Scenes such as when the violent skinhead gang throws graffiti tins at women or when Combo starts hitting Milky bring out pity for the immigrant society in the spectator.

One of the best tools to manipulate the audience’s impressions is through the use of music, which helps to dramatize what one is watching. When Combo’s group is going to the National Front meeting, the music is challenging them to question themselves if they are ready to face a war.

Although certain skinhead characters are portrayed as racist, it is important to highlight that even though they consider themselves skinheads, the movement originated from another culture. “The first skinheads were highly influenced by the Jamaican immigrant fashion. They adopted a similar taste regarding fashion, music and lifestyle.”³⁶ “The gang division is crucial to demonstrate that there are two different types or trends of skinheads, we can see that not all skinheads are violent and that there some (known as SHARP) that show respect for cultural differences.”³⁷ Students would be challenged to look for information regarding these topics, with the aim of discovering facts like this. However, if they did not manage to find this information, the teacher would end up giving them it.

Another technique that the director uses in the film to show that racist people want to avoid having a multicultural society, is by exhibiting a dark skinned character (Milky), who is indeed integrated in society but will at some point be badly treated by a nationalist (Combo). This

³⁶ Southern Poverty Law Center. *Racist Skinheads: Understanding the Threat*. 2014. Web 25 June 2014. <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/skinheads-in-america-racists-on-the-rampage>.

³⁷ Calero, A. *Multiculturalism in This is England*. Universidad de Hull. 2012, p. 3. Essay.

relationship could be considered a metaphor for the multicultural problem in England. In the first scene, where Combo and Milky see each other, there is a lot of tension; however, this is relaxed when Milky affirms he feels English instead of Jamaican. But, since he decides to leave with Woody and not join Combo's group the relationship is still ambiguous. In the last part of the film, Combo goes to look for Milky to get some weed and then works things out with him. When they are both under the influence of the drug, they even talk about "black and white together", "we are like brothers now", which gives the impression that they are in fact friends. This however, is short-lived, as soon Combo suddenly goes mad and starts kicking Milky due to his resentment towards "coloured" people being happy.

It would seem that the main theme of *This is England* is that not everybody tolerates the fact that England has a multicultural society. It shows the difficulties of adaptation and acceptance of another society. Concepts such as "race" are used as a biological justification for cultural differences. This means that such discrimination will apply to you no matter whether you are a first or second generation. However, this possibly hides underlying economic factors and fear and suspicion of all things foreign or weak. Even if you are a native English citizen you can be bullied in a hierarchy system.

Meadows has achieved to illustrate that many people who are against multiculturalism are brainwashed about it, mainly by extremists. For example, Shaun or Gadget do support violent acts like kicking some children out of the streets (shown by them smiling and not doing anything to prevent it), but when Shaun sees that Combo is going to have a conflict with Milky, he does try to avoid it. That is because Shaun knows Milky and is aware that nothing is wrong with him. But when he does not know the victim he just assumes that they must have done something wrong.³⁸

Basically, all these features give the opportunity to work many different aspects in class. Students will be able to identify British cultural aspects respecting the differences with their own culture, this is also help them to think about how to coexist in a democratic and plural society seeking for a peaceful coexistence as well as thinking about ways of resolving certain conflicts. Working and analyzing contexts and films will help students to develop how to apply their values in a responsible and critic way. At all times will respect be acquired as a tool to interact with different cultures.

³⁸ Calero, A. *Multiculturalism in This is England*. Universidad de Hull. 2012, p. 3. Essay.

5. PROPOSAL OF MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

Outline³⁹

Material to achieve: Motivation and Language Improvement

Something which entertains but that is difficult at the same time:

Activities to support the ideas related to the films:

- **FILMS with components which attract the audience:**
 - A) Blender of conflict and love stories.
 - B) Humour.
 - C) Dramatic but emotional.
 - D) Violence retains attention.
- **Entertaining activities:**
 - A) Activities related to the distinction of accents and to practise them.
 - B) Oral presentations and debates regarding the topics presented.
 - C) Role plays.
- **Not so amusing activities:**
 - A) Readings
 - B) Writings.

- However, these will be based on interesting topics .

Each of the films that will be screened in class is different from one another, since each of them reaches the audience through a different way. The first one, *The Piano* is characterized by being dramatic but emotional at the same time. *Small Island* is a blender of conflict and love stories and that totally reaches the spectator. *East is East* enables students to take a break from a more serious type of film through its humoristic components. Finally, *This is England* impacts again through violence which retains the audience's attention. Taking into consideration these aspects some activities have been developed as a guide to follow if this methodology was to be put into practice. There are three main parts where to intervene, these are: pre-video activities, questions to follow a line while watching the film and post-screening activities.

³⁹ Calero, A. "Material to achieve: motivation and language improvement". Universidad de Valladolid. July 2014. Picture designed by myself.

Some of the texts which will be used for reading activities have nothing to do with British culture itself, but it is positive for the students to also see facts from other places and cultures, so that they can link it to what is being studied in class and with their own experience. Those texts which have been extracted from *Reading the News*⁴⁰ including pre-reading tasks, reading focus, comprehension work, vocabulary work, exam preparation tasks and discussion prompts. These can be used by the teacher as a guide line, but it isn't necessary to use all of them.

5.1 *THE PIANO*

Before watching the film, students will be told that the film is set in the Victorian Times while New Zealand was undergoing the process of colonization. The class will be divided into different groups and they will be asked to look for information regarding the context of the film. They should jot down information about the colonization of Australia and New Zealand and the culture of the Maori's. Apart from that, they should also be aware of how the situation was in Great Britain at that time, and which the social conventions were, as well as how the traditional outfit to be worn was. Once each group has collected the information they were asked to find, they will be required to explain what they gathered, as well as to post it on a blog the teacher will have created for exchanging information and opinions regarding the various films and their contexts. They will also be encouraged to upload pictures of the different outfits of the epoch.

While watching the film, students will be given different questions to think over during the screening. Some of these questions will be:

- Are social conventions challenged in the film? If so, how?
- Do the characters evolve along the film? If so, describe which changes they undergo.
- A blog has been created so that we can all comment on any aspect of the film.

After having watched the film some of the topics for speaking activities and debates will be:

- Do people nowadays have to follow patterns of behavior depending on which culture they belong to? Compare and contrast different cultures that can be found around the world nowadays.

⁴⁰ Sharma, P. *Reading the News*. Boston: Thomsom ELT, 2007. p.29.

- Are there stereotyped relationships within your own culture? If so, describe them and say if you think these patterns should be abolished. If not, have there ever been? Explain what kind of stereotypes were there.

There will also be a reading activity related gender issues. The text is “Women’s Work / the Wage of Equality: A world of Unfinished Business”⁴¹. The article and some activities (including pre-reading tasks, reading focus, comprehension work, vocabulary work, exam preparation tasks and discussion prompts) are attached. However, I will include an extract of the text so that it can be seen that the level is adequate: “The reasons for this persistent inequity are complex, and they vary with geography. In many places, discrimination in education and hiring is responsible for a diminishing fraction of the gender wage gap.”⁴²

The discussion prompts on page 31 will be used as a guide for writing tasks, these are:

- Do you agree that women should always be paid the same as their male counterparts?
- Why do you think that women continue to earn less than men?
- Do you think there are still some “traditionally male professions” disappearing? How is society changing in respect to attitudes towards women?⁴³

Different speaking activities will be carried out. One of them will be a consequence of the writings. The class would have been divided into three, and each of these parts would have been required to write on one specific topic. Afterwards, each part will defend their point of view taking into consideration what they have written (they have had more time to make their mind up, since they had to write on that). The rest of the class should try to give a different point of view and give arguments about their contrasted opinion, so that we can have several debates regarding each of the three topics in class. Another oral activity, which would enable them to work on aspects on phonetics, is also being proposed. They will have to look for videos where accents from New Zealand, Australia and Great Britain (Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland) can be distinguished. Each group will focus on one place and will then give an oral exposition to the rest of the class showing the characteristic that they have found out (they should try to find words or expressions which are common in these countries). They can exemplify the accents by showing instances, but they should also try to imitate them.

⁴¹ *Ibidem.*

⁴² *Ibidem.*

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

5.2 *SMALL ISLAND*

Before screening *Small Island* the text “Immigration in the Twentieth Century”⁴⁴ will be read in class. It doesn’t specifically refer to Jamaicans coming to Great Britain, but it does highlight the amount of Commonwealth Immigrants to Britain.⁴⁵ This text will introduce students to the historical context. While watching the film, students will be given different questions to think about during the screening. Some of these questions will be:

- How do Jamaicans feel towards their Mother Country?
- By only watching the film, can you describe which consequences did World War I have in England?
- Are there racial discrimination scenes in the film? If so, can you describe any of these?

After watching the film, different extracts from the book *Small Island* will be analyzed in class and some others will be asked to be read at home. Through the extracts, pupils will be more conscious about how Jamaican English differs from standard English. Some of the racial discrimination scenes which can be spotted in the film will be useful to encourage students to talk about racism nowadays. They should give their opinion towards multiculturalism and respect in Spain, and they should try to contrast it to the situation in other countries like France or England.

5.3 *EAST IS EAST*

Before the screening of this film, no work from the students will be required, since the context is similar to the reading activity (“Immigration in the Twentieth Century”⁴⁶) from the previous film. During the movie, students should pay attention to these questions:

- Is family Khan presented as a unit?
- Highlight some conflicts and argue why you think those are relevant.
- Which different attitudes can be found towards arranged marriages?

⁴⁴ Oakland, J. *British Civilization*. London: Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King’s Lynn: 1999, pp. 53- 58.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p.54.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 53-58.

- Describe the various situations where Mr. Khan believes someone is making a fool of him. Why does he think so? Can you explain the cultural clashes?
- The role of food in the film. Can you draw conclusions of what type of food is eaten in England?

After having watched *East is East* students will have to read the text “Cityscape: Street chef in a city that loves its food”.⁴⁷ Through this text, students will come across new terminology regarding the issue of food and will have a pattern to follow for the writing task that they will be asked to do. The writing activity will be: “Imagine that you are going to write an article describing the “cityscape” in Great Britain. What things would you write about? How would you describe them?”⁴⁸ Part of the terminology which they will come across can be seen in this extract from the text: “Feeding his hundreds of loyal customers involves midnight trips to spraying night markets, predawn deliveries, the clack-clack-clack of early morning vegetable chopping and the mixing and stirring of what Sompong calls his “secret sauce”.⁴⁹

5.4. *THIS IS ENGLAND*

For the film *This is England* some internet articles will be read before watching it. The three of them will be attached to this Master’s Dissertation.

- Opinions towards Margaret Thatcher.⁵⁰
- Thatchers Britain in the 80s.⁵¹
- Britain 1947.⁵²

Some of the questions students will have to bare in mind while watching the film will be:

- Which social conflicts can you spot in the film?

⁴⁷ Sharma, P. *Reading the News*. Boston: Thomsom ELT, 2007. p.65.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ Franks, L. “Remembering the 80’s”. *The independent*. 2006. Great Britain. Web. 3 June 2014. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/remembering-the-80s-477887.html>.

⁵¹ Information Britain. *Thatcher’s Britain in the 80’s* Great Britain. Web. 3 June 2014. <http://www.information-britain.co.uk/historydetails/article/41/>.

⁵² Rennel, T. “Britain 1947: Poverty, queues, rationing- and resilience”. *Mail Online*. 2007. Web. May 2014. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-495096/Britain-1947-Poverty-queues-rationing--resilience.html>.

- After watching the film, can you describe how skinheads are? Is there one type of skinhead or can you differentiate several kinds?
- Is multiculturalism accepted in the film? Why?

After having watched the film students will be handed out two different readings, the first one “Attitudes to Britishness and National Identity”⁵³ will be the tool to start a debate and for them to exchange opinions and when possible to contrast or compare any aspect to their cultural background. The second text which will be read “A British Invasion for the Digital Age”⁵⁴ will encourage students to look for information regarding the film’s soundtrack and to inform themselves about important groups in the history of Britain and those which are popular nowadays. Students will also be asked to write essays on the following topics:

- Examine British economic policy and performance from Margaret Thatcher to the present.
- Discuss the role of the trade unions in British life.⁵⁵
- What was the Falklands war about?

5.5. ACTIVITIES TO BE DONE AFTER HAVING WORKED ON ALL THE FILMS

Once all the screenings have been watched, these are various tasks which could be done. They could be asked to choose a scene from each film where any accent is clearly perceived and reproduce it (the idea is to at least start repeating what the actor or actress is saying so that they can imitate the accent, then the students can invent any sentence he or she desires). This could be done in couples and they should try to jot down the minute in the film so that the whole class can compare the scene itself to their reproduction. Another activity would be for them to choose a period of Britain’s history which has been developed in class and prepare a performance taking into consideration the outfit (that can just be illustrated through a power point presentation or when desired students can dress up), the accents, the registers, the theme, the dialogues and the vocabulary employed. Some adults might not like having to perform, however, it is necessary to be able to express oneself in different situations and with different type of pressures. Students can try to make a performance using any other type of accent, even if it hasn’t been listened to in

⁵³ Oakland, J. *British Civilization*. London: Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King’s Lynn: 1999. pp.61-67.

⁵⁴ Sharma, P. *Reading the News*. Boston: Thomson ELT, 2007. p.91.

⁵⁵ Oakland, J. *British Civilization*. London: Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King’s Lynn: 1999. p.214.

class, but they should then work on it at home and introduce it to the rest of the class. A listening activity will probably motivate them. Students will be handed out a sheet with different extracts from the songs which will be played. They should be able to spot the difference in accents from song to song (American, Jamaican, Australian, English and Irish). To make it complex, pupils should write down which each accent is, fill in the gaps for the missing words, organize the paragraphs within one same extract and put the extracts from each song in order (they are given the lyrics randomly and they have to see in which order the songs are played).

It would be a good idea to make them look for any accent they have enjoyed and encourage them to try to imitate it, by creating a dialogue which they will have to interpret using the appropriate accent. This activity could be handled in different ways. They could record themselves, they could do this in class; however, the teacher will encourage them to record the video in other environments, such as in the street or any other place where they feel comfortable. They could even interview any foreigner they find in the street and afterwards try to imitate their accent, and even include the outtakes. If those steps went well, they could even be asked to perform a little play, but of course this depends on the type of students there are in class and how well they work as a group.

6. CONCLUSION

Throughout the whole year of work, students will have improved their ability to learn since the activities and films which are proposed to be seen encourage language users to seek for more information on their own, as well as to be attracted to practice a great variety of accents which will improve their phonetic skills. Not only will pupils focus on British culture, but they will also have to compare it with others including their own. In my opinion, students will be motivated and entertained at the same time as they will be improving their language skills. Screening films and working on topics which are related to cultural aspects which are somehow developed in the movies will help them to be familiarized with the various cross-cultural contrasts as well as the similarities.

Through the tasks which students will be asked to perform, they will most probably develop their empathy which is very significant when learning language and having to interact with people from other cultures. A very important feature which should be highlighted from the activities proposed is that students will probably teach new aspects regarding the British culture to the rest of the class and maybe even to the teacher too. When students seek for information by themselves in relation to certain epochs, they might come across specific aspects which the teacher might not be aware of. If this happens, the teacher will probably be encouraged to look for any other piece of information which he or she wasn't aware of, and by doing this the teacher's motivation will increase and most probably will feel the need of updating his or her knowledge more often.

The cultural aspects developed in the various films which will be screened in class enable students to understand the complexity of the English language which is spread all around the world. They will be aware of the wide range of variants it has, regarding accents, vocabulary and expressions which are indeed related to the history of the language itself. Students will then keep in mind that when traveling to one specific country where English is in fact the native language, they should try to adapt their vocabulary and expressions to where they will be staying as well as respecting the multiculturalism of the area and seeing it as something beautiful, fruit of the history of the English language. Most probably, after a course applying this proposal, many students might even be aware of aspects from other cultures (which have English as their native language), that their speakers might not even know about. If pupils are aware of this, they might even feel the need of traveling and interacting with the people from the place they are visiting, to exchange opinions towards their history and try to find out more them. The accent component which we be worked on during the course, will also have an impact on the student's motivation.

Their curiosity will lead them to travel to scenarios where they know they can find peculiar accents, in order to practice their listening skills as well as to get used to any kind of variety of the language. However, it should be also pointed out that the target students are required to have a high level of English, this is to say that this material would not be suitable for secondary school lessons.

Finally, both teachers and students would probably enjoy a course based on this topics and it would also encourage them to keep on working developing cultural and language skills. If this application was to be successful, it would be a good idea to try to look for films which focused on other English speaking countries' culture, like the American one.

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Texts extracted from:

Oakland, J. *British Civilization*. London: Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn: 1999. Print.

Sharma, P. *Reading the News*. Boston: Thomsom ELT, 2007. Print.

Text 1⁵⁶

“Attitudes to Britishness and national identity”

Immigrants have historically been seen by some people as a threat to British moral, social and cultural values, whose presence would radically change the society. This view ignores the difficulty of defining what is meant by such norms at specific times in history. The British Isles have always been culturally and ethnically diverse. There are many differences between the four nations of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and distinctive ways of life within each country. This situation, and the presence of immigrant communities, raise questions about the meaning of contemporary ‘Britishness’.

The history of the British Isles before the eighteenth century is not about a single British identity or political entity. It is about four different nations and their peoples, who have often been hostile towards one another. ‘Britishness’ since the 1707 union between England/Wales and Scotland has been largely identified with centralized state instructions, such as monarchy and Britain’s imperial position in the world.

Political terms like ‘British’ and ‘Britain’ can thus seem artificial to many of the peoples who comprise the present United Kingdom population and who have retained their individual cultural and national identities. Foreigners often call all British people ‘English’ and sometimes have difficulties in appreciating their distinctions, or the annoyance of the non-English population at such labelling. The Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish are largely Celtic peoples, while the English are mainly Anglo-Saxon in origin.

It is often argued that the contemporary ‘British’ do not have a strong sense of a ‘British’ identity. In this view, there needs to be a rethink of what it means to be British in the contexts of a multinational, multiracial UK and a changing Europe. But some critics suggest that the emphasis should be not so much on examinations of multiculturalism and separate ethnic identities as on a cross-cultural perspective, with influences flowing between different parts of the society.

There has obviously been racial and cultural intermixture in Britain over the centuries, which resulted from adaptation by immigrant groups and internal migration between the four nations. Social, political and institutional standardization and a British awareness have been established. However, the British identification is often equated with English norms because political unification occurred under the English Crown, state power is concentrated in London, the English dominate numerically, and because of England’s historical role.

English nationalism is arguably the most potent of the four nationalisms, and the English have had no real problem with the dual national role. The Scots and Welsh have always been more aware of the difference between their nationalism and Britishness; resent the English dominance; see themselves as very different to the English; and regard their nationalist and cultural feelings as crucial. Their sense of identity is conditioned by the tension between their own distinctive histories and centralized government from London.

National identifications have, until recently, been largely cultural, and the British political union was generally accepted in the four nations, except by some people in the minority Catholic population of Northern Ireland. However, political nationalism increased in the 1960s and 1970s in Scotland and Wales. Today it seems that calls for independence in these two nations are not strong, except from the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Welsh National Party (Plaid Cymru). But the devolution of greater powers of self-government to Scotland and Wales may fuel movement towards full independence in the two countries, and this goal is held by some 30 per cent of Scottish people.

⁵⁶ Oakland, J. *British Civilization*. London: Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King’s Lynn: 1999, pp.61-64.

Some commentators argue that Scottish and Welsh devolution may spark a resurgence in English nationalism, and arguably this is already occurring among English teenagers. A *Sunday Times* poll in 1997 found that 66 per cent regarded themselves as English rather than British: 72 per cent regarded their English nationality as important; 71 per cent were opposed to regional government in England; and 59 per cent thought that Britain would be divided into separate nations (England, Scotland, and Wales) within 20 years. They thought that the following defined their sense of Englishness: the national football team (36 per cent); the national anthem (30); television soap operas such as *East Enders* and *Coronation Street* (17); the royal family (14); Britpop (2); and the Houses of Parliament (1). National identification among the young is therefore no longer tied to traditional institutional features.

There are also differences to be found within the four nations. The English react against London influences, and there are some demands for decentralized political autonomy. Since the English are a relatively mixed people, their customs, accents and behaviour vary considerably, and local identification is still strong. The Cornish, for example, see themselves as a distinctive cultural element in English society and have an affinity with Celtic and similar racial groups in Britain and Europe. The northern English have often regarded themselves as superior to the southern English, and vice versa. English county, regional and local community loyalties are still maintained and may be demonstrated in sports, politics, competitions, cultural activities or a specific way of life.

In Wales, there are cultural and political differences between the industrial south (which supports the Labour Party) and the rest of the mainly rural country; between Welsh-speaking Wales in the west and centre (which supports Plaid Cymru) and English-influenced Wales in the east and south-west (where the Conservative Party has some support, despite losing all its Welsh seats in the 1997 general election).

Yet Welsh people generally are very conscious of their differences from the English. Their national and cultural identity is grounded in their history, literature, the Welsh language (actively spoken by 19 per cent of the population), sport (such as rugby football), and festivals like the National Eisteddfod (with its Welsh poetry competitions, dancing and music). It is echoed in close-knit industrial and agricultural communities and in a tradition of social, political and religious dissent from English norms. Today, many Welsh people feel that they are struggling for their national identity against political power in London and the erosion of their culture and language by English institutions.

Text 2⁵⁷

“Cityscape: Street chef in a city that loves its food”

PRE-READING TASKS

1. Think about your own experiences eating food sold by street vendors and answer the questions below.

1. How often do you eat food sold by street vendors?
2. When did you last eat food from a street vendor?
3. What kind of food was it?
4. Was it cheap or expensive? How much did it cost?
5. Do you think that street vendors should be regulated to ensure safety? Why or why not?

2. What are your impressions of Bangkok, Thailand? If you have visited the city, write a few things you remember about it. If you haven't been there, what have you hear or read about it?

READING FOCUS

Focus on the newspaper: EVOKING A SCENE

Sometimes when reporters tell a story in a faraway or unusual locale, they use striking language to give the feeling of the place. They may use words relating to one of the senses (sight, smell, sound, touch, and taste) to describe the scene. This language helps readers more easily imagine the context of the situation being reported about.

1. Scan the article for descriptions of these features of the Bangkok “cityscape.”

the weather
the streets and alleys
the residents
fast-food restaurant
Thai street food
the life of a vendor

2. These word from the article relate to different senses. Group them in the chart below.

aromas, spicy, stillness, sprawling, delicious, tender, ginger-laced, appetite, sweaty, serpentine, sticky, clack-clack-clack.

Sight	Sound	Smell	Touch	Taste

⁵⁷ Sharma, P. *Reading the News*. Boston: Thomsom ELT, 2007. pp. 64-67.

“Cityscape: Street chef in a city that loves its food”

By Thomas Fuller

The world’s great cities often lay claims to culinary excellence, but perhaps in no other place are the aromas and sights of food so ever-present, the residents so preoccupied with their next meal and casual conversations so frequently devoted to eating as in this massive, sweaty metropolis.

There are at least 43,000 street food vendors in Bangkok, the municipal government says, a legion of operators of food carts crammed into every available nook of urban real estate. Among them is Sompong Seetha, who for eight years has risen well before dawn to make his popular rendition of chicken rice, the specialty from the Chinese island of Hainan that combines tender boiled chicken with a spicy, ginger-laced soy sauce, served on a bed of rice and accompanied by a small bowl of broth.

“This is the only thing I know how to cook,” Sompong said one day about 5 a.m., as he shoveled coals onto the lid of a giant cooking pot to steam rice.

Street stalls are the testing ground for Thai cooks, a Darwinian competition to win the hearts and sate the appetites of Bangkok’s hungry- and often picky- 10 million or so residents.

Sompong, 38, was trained to be a sticky-rice farmer in northeast Thailand, a life he left behind because it was not lucrative enough. Today, the serpentine concrete alleyways of central Bangkok are his adopted home.

Customers at Sompong’s stall are served quickly, but this is not an anonymous fast-food experience. Although taciturn, Sompong connects with his clientele much more than the bored, pimply teenagers who stand behind counters at air-conditioned hamburger franchises do.

Sompong remembers his customers’ preferences: dark meat or white. Some women forego the skin because they feel it is too fattening, he said. When he has not seen a customer in a while, he asks why.

Feeding his hundreds of loyal customers involves midnight trips to sprawling night markets, pre-dawn deliveries, the clack-clack-clack of early morning vegetable chopping and the mixing and stirring of what Sompong calls his “secret sauce.”

The near miracle of the process is that, for all the hustle and hard work, customers at his stall pay 30 baht, or 75 cents, for a full plate of chicken rice- cheap even by Bangkok standards.

Inexpensive but delicious street food fits into the mosaic of Bangkok’s luxuries. To foreign tourists and wealthy Thais, this city represents cheap modernity: skyscrapers and swank hotels. Bangkok is the city of the hour long, \$5 foot massage; the \$2 air-conditioned taxi ride cross town; and the \$7 golf caddy, tip included.

When Sompong left behind his family’s small rice farm nine years ago, he arrived at Bangkok’s main train station without any idea of what job he would get. He worked for a year at a beef-noodle shop, earning the equivalent of \$2.50 a day. But he wanted to own his own stall. So from an Indian loan shark he borrowed 30,000 baht, which at the times was worth \$1,200, and started his chicken-rice business. Slowly he built up his customer base and paid back the loan- at 20 percent interest.

Rising at 3 every morning and working through the stillness of the Bangkok night is a lonely job. Even after the arrival of his assistant, Wilawan Kopaikaew, whom he pays \$7.50 a day, jogging every evening in nearby Lumpini park, going to the movies occasionally.

Sompong’s goals are most modest. He would like to open a massage shop one day, but he will need to serve many more plates of chicken rice to meet that goal. His life savings, he said, is the equivalent of \$2,000.

COMPREHENSION WORK

Read the article. Then underline the errors in these statements about Sompong Seetha and correct them.

1. He has been preparing his rendition of chicken rice for ten years.
2. His recipe for chicken rice comes from Hong Kong.
3. He left his life as a farmer because the work was too hard.
4. He has an impersonal relationship with his customers.
5. His chicken rice is fairly expensive by Bangkok's standards.
6. He started his food stall right away after he came to Bangkok.
7. He rises at dawn every morning.
8. He pays his assistant \$10 a day.
9. He leads a very hard life.
10. He wants to open a restaurant some day.

VOCUBULARY FOCUS

1a. Find these adjectives in the article. What things (nouns or noun phrase) do they describe?

1. lucrative
2. picky
3. serpentine
4. anonymous
5. taciturn
6. sprawling
7. swank
8. middling

1b. Write the adjectives from Exercise 1a after the appropriate definitions.

1. twisting and turning
2. choosy; difficult to please
3. profitable
4. average; neither at the top or the bottom
5. very luxurious or posh
6. quiet: not talkative
7. nameless, not special or unique.
8. spreading out in all directions.

2. Find four more words or expressions about food preparation from the article. Write the number of the paragraph in which the word or expression can be found.

chopping, para.8

EXAM PREPARATION TASKS

1. Circle the letter of the best answer.

1. Which of the following can be inferred?
 - A. Sompong's family is from Hainan Island.
 - B. The average price for lunch in Bangkok is 30 baht.
 - C. Sompong is a very ambitious individual.
 - D. Wilawan Kopaikaew makes a decent local salary.
2. Which of the following is NOT implied?
 - A. Sompong created his own "secret" recipe.
 - B. Thai people talk about food often.
 - C. Fast food jobs are easier than being a street vendor.
 - D. Sompong didn't have connections when he arrived in the capital.

2. Complete the summary below using the following words: aroma, metropolis, sate, culinary, middling, sprawling, forego, mosaic, serpentine, hierarchy, preferences, taciturn, legion, preoccupied, lucrative, rendition.

Bangkok is a large (1) _____ in Thailand known for its (2) _____ delights such as curries, noodles and seafood dishes. In this colorful (3) _____ of various street vendors is sompongs Seetha. Sompong considers himself a (4) _____ individual but his customers would disagree. They find him friendly and attentive. They buy his rice dish in order to (5) _____ their appetites and to connect with someone in this (6) _____ city with narrow, twisting (7) _____ streets. Even if you never converse with him, the (8) _____ will reel you in with one sniff. Although not on the top of the vendor (9) _____, Sompong finds his place in the ranking with a (10) _____ enough business to hire an assistant and lead a good life.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Based on the information in the article, would you expect Bangkok to be an interesting city for a tourist to visit? Why or why not?
2. Because there are so many of them, street vendors in Bangkok are involved in a "Darwinian competition" to make a living. In your own town or area, where do you see evidence of this kind of competition? Is this phenomenon good or bad, and what kinds of effects can it have on a society?
3. Imagine that you are going to write an article describing the "cityscape" where you live. What things would you write about? How would you describe them?

Text 3⁵⁸

“A British invasion for the digital age”

PRE-READING TASKS

1. Talking about the music industry. Check that you understand the meaning of the following words and expressions.

record label
independent label
debut album
talent spotting
music piracy
copyright
a demo CD
music forum

2a Which of the following band are British? Have you hear any of these bands?

Oasis
U2
The Beatles
The Arctic Monkeys
Abba
Blur
The Rolling Stones
The Beach Boys
The Doors
Pink Floyd

2b. Do you prefer to listen to bands from the UK, the U.S. or from your own country? Explain and discuss your musical preferences with a partner.

3. Have you ever visited www.myspace.com? If so, tell you partner about your reactions to the site.

READING FOCUS

Focus on the newspaper: FINDING KEY INFORMATION

Many writers put a lot of key information in the first two paragraphs. The remaining paragraphs are *amplification* and should include quotes, statistics or examples. The last paragraph should tie in all this information. It can, therefore, be a good idea to red certain parts of an article “intensively” and identify the important ideas, before reading the complete article.

⁵⁸ Sharma, P. *Reading the News*. Boston: Thomsom ELT, 2007.pp. 90-93.

1. Look at the following parts of the article: paragraphs 1 and 2; paragraphs 3-9 and paragraph 10. Decide whether this text conforms to the pattern described above.
2. Complete the Fact File below. Scan the article to find the missing information.

Fact File: Arctic Monkeys

Number of band members: _____

1. Formed in: _____, UK.
2. Year formed: _____
3. First record label: _____
4. Debut album title: _____
5. Copies sold in first week of release (UK): _____
6. Product manager: _____

“A British invasion for the digital age”

By Eric Pfanner

The back story for the Arctic Monkeys is vaguely reminiscent of the Beatles- four lads from a gritty city in northern England- but the resemblance ends there. These youths are from all-digital generation, born and bred on the Internet. For a business reeling from the effects of piracy and a dearth of successful international acts, a promising band like the Arctic Monkeys should be welcome.

Privately, however, some record company executives express a bit of ambivalence. Their unease stems not from the band itself but from the way it burst onto the British music scene. The Arctic Monkeys bypassed the record labels- for a time, at least- and used the Internet to help generate a following and to distribute their own music.

To some in the business, the experience shows how traditional functions of the record label- not just distributing CDs but finding and developing talent- are being changed by the Internet. Music companies are losing some control to specialists in online promotion, or even to the artists themselves.

“Bands have a much greater ability to get themselves out to the public, gain some sort of recognition and credibility and then sign with a record label”, said Guy Moot, managing director of EMI Music Publishing, which owns the rights to the Arctic Monkeys’ music. “The development part is also happening much more outside the record companies.” Scores of musicians have recorded their own music and posted it on “social networking” sites like *myspace.com* in the hope of being discovered. The Arctic Monkeys have demonstrated that they understand the power of the Internet they grew up with as a tool for communication and marketing.

The band was formed in 2003 in Sheffield, once the heart of the British steel industry but now, like many cities in northern England, a postindustrial capital of pubbing and clubbing. The band toured the region extensively, giving hundreds of live shows, plugging its Web site and giving away free “demo” CD singles.

On their Web site, the Arctic Monkeys also have away full tracks of some of their songs and encouraged fans to share them with friends, an activity the music industry considers a criminal violation of copyright. They gained a following on British online music forums like Drowned in Sound, and word spread via sites like *myspace.com*,

In time, “they had every A&R man in Europe chasing them,” one record company executive said, referring to “artist and repertoire,” the industry’s term for talent-spotting. The Arctic Monkeys

resisted until last summer, then signed with a London-based independent label, Domino, with the music publishing rights going to EMI.

The free downloads were then phased out by Domino, and the Arctic Monkeys began to look more like conventional product of the music industry machine. Their songs found a place on British radio, building anticipation for the eventual release of their album, “Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not.”

Jonny Bradshaw, product manager for the Arctic Monkeys at Domino says, “This great rock ‘n’ roll band... has touched a nerve with a lot of people.” While Bradshaw attributed the band’s success to old fashioned virtues of good music, knowing the powers of online buzz may have helped, too. Weeks before “Whatever People Say I Am” was set to be released in January, its contents had leaked out on the Internet, and some in the music business suspect that was no accident. It sold about 360,000 copies in its first seven days, the best performance by a debut album in Britain.

Once a band has been discovered, the Internet is also playing a role in developing the relationship with fans, with firms that specialize in online publicity grabbing some of the action. They work with Internet music sites to plant stories about a band can develop “viral” tactics- involving no conventional advertising- to spread the word.

COMPREHENSION WORK

1. Match the paragraph headings below with the correct paragraph in the text.

1. The new, digital generation.
2. “Record sales”
3. Everybody wants to be their label
4. By-passing the music execs
5. The times they are a-changin’
6. A more traditional approach
7. Net advertising for the fans
8. Roots
9. Word of mouth
10. Self-promotion on the web

VOCABULARY WORK

1. Find the following phrases in the article and match them to the most appropriate meaning:

1. **plugging** its Web (para.5) promoting / uploading
2. **violation** of copyright (para.6) breaking/ condoning
3. **conventional product** (para.8) a popular product/ a normal product
4. free downloads were **phased out** (para.8) limited /gradually stopped
5. online **buzz** (para.9) background noise / excitement
6. **has touched a nerve** (para.9) affected/ upset

2a. Re-word the phrases below, using phrases in the article.

1. a hard, realistic city (para.1)
2. started and grew on the Internet (para.1)
3. going to bars and discos (para.5)

2b. Writers often create effect through their choice of vocabulary. Look at the two phrases below. What effect do they create?

1. “invasion” (title)
2. “burst into” (the music scene) (para.2)

EXAM PREPARATION TASKS

1. Put the following events in chronological order.

- A. The band’s songs were played on British radio.
- B. A music company tried to stop the free downloads.
- C. Different record labels wanted the band to join them.
- D. The band joined Domino.
- E. The Arctic Monkeys gave away free songs and publicized a Web site.
- F. The band formed and toured in the Sheffield area.
- G. The band released their album “Whatever People Say.”
- H. Fans began to follow the band on British online music forums.
- I. The band’s debut album sold 360,000 copies in the first week.
- J. “Whatever People Say” song were released on the internet.

2. Circle the letter of the best answer choice.

1. What can be inferred about the music industry?
 - A. They don’t like the Internet for business.
 - B. They feel it is more important to tour than to put music online.
 - C. They fear the Arctic Monkeys will be an international success.
 - D. They don’t want musicians to distribute their own music.
2. Which of the following is NOT true according to the article?
 - A. The Arctic Monkeys are a digital band.
 - B. The band has an online following.
 - C. The Arctic Monkeys had many record company offers.
 - D. The band isn’t giving away free music now.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Morrissey, ex-singer of the Smiths, implied that one album is not enough to “prove” a new talent. How many albums does it take to become established? Give examples of established musicians.
2. Read the following phrase: “The Internet is a powerful tool for marketing and communications.” Can you give more example of this phenomenon?

Text 4⁵⁹

“Women’s work/ The wages of equality: A world of unfinished business”

PRE-READING TASKS

1. What is discrimination? Insert vowels in the following words which are used with, or form collocation with, the word “discrimination”:

g _nd_ r discrimination

s _x_ _l discrimination

to discriminate _g_ _nst

g discrimination

r _l_ g_ _ _s discrimination

r _c_ _l discrimination

2. Write definitions for the following terms, in your own words. Use a dictionary if necessary.

the gender wage gap

“gender politics”

wage inequality

3. Where does your own country lie on the following scales? Compare your answer with a partner.

WOMEN’S WAGES ARE HIGH <—————> WOMEN’S WAGES ARE LOW

THERE ARE MANY WOMEN IN THE FORCE <—————> WOMEN HAVE A VERY “TRADITIONAL” ROLE IN SOCIETY

MATERNAL LEAVE IS GENERAL/CHILD CARE FACILITIES ARE GOOD <—————> THERE IS LITTLE MATERNAL LEAVE/POOR CHILDCARE FACILITIES

READING FOCUS

Focus on the newspaper: Reading for details

In some articles, there are many details and facts. Understanding the details will help you understand the article better.

As you read, answer the questions.

1. What types of economies have drawn more women into the work force?
2. What is the main reason women get paid less than men?

⁵⁹ Sharma, P. *Reading the News*. Boston: Thomson ELT, 2007. pp. 28-31.

3. What are some social policies governments could look at to help lower this gender gap?
4. What does a free market do to wage inequalities?

Text: "Women's work/ The wages of equality: A world of unfinished business"

By Erika Kinetz

In the United States, there are more women in the work force at higher levels than their male counterparts. In Sweden, women's wages are high, but their role in the work force remains relatively traditional. In Germany, maternal leave is generous, but many women drop out of the work force once they have children. In Japan, the gap is not just in wages but also in the basic structure of the way men and women are employed.

In good times and in bad, women's wages have become an increasingly important component of household income and consumer spending. The shift toward service-based economies in the industrialized world has favored women in the work force- one reason they have poured into the labor market over the past three decades.

But what they find once they get there differs considerably throughout the developed world. That has less to do with gender politics than it does with macroeconomics, and it results -somewhat surprisingly- in women still being paid less than men in most places and for most jobs.

The reasons for this persistent inequity are complex, and they vary with geography. In many places, discrimination in education and hiring is responsible for a diminishing fraction of the gender wage gap.

These days, having and raising children seems to be a much bigger drag on a woman's earning power. Many women choose to interrupt their careers, working part-time or temporarily dropping out, to raise children. Such decisions can permanently disrupt earning power.

To the extent that discrimination contributes to the gap between men's and women's wages, the gender wage gap is a drain on productivity. And that, economists and labor experts say, could spell big trouble for a global economy struggling to shake off the past and cope with the challenges of the future.

Today, narrowing the gender wage gap is less a matter of empowerment than of economics, and getting women into the work force means paying attention to a host of social policies, like parental leave, taxes, and child care, as well as corporate attitudes and the practices they reinforce.

There has been progress, particularly in narrowing the gender wage gap. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in the late 1990s, the latest period for which broadly comparable global data are available, the gender wage gap was narrowest in Belgium, France, Sweden, and Italy, where full-time female workers earned 83 to 90 cents for each \$1 earned by men, and broadest in Japan, Austria, and Spain, where full-time female workers earned 63 to 71 cents per male-earned dollar.

The United States, which brims with egalitarian pride, sits near the middle of the pack. And left largely to its own devices, the free market has increased wage inequality. According to OECD data, wage inequality has remained relatively unchanged throughout much of Europe and in Japan over the last two decades, while it has increased in the United States. In the late 1990s in the United States, the wages earned by the doctors, lawyers, and high-level executives at the 90th percentile of the earnings distribution were 4.5 times higher than the wages earned by the domestics and burger flippers at the 10th percentile. In Sweden they were 2.2 times as high and in France and Germany three times as high.

Despite the head wind of wage inequality, women's wages have closed in on men's faster in the United States than anywhere else in the development world.

Outside the United States, the gender wage gap has narrowed more slowly. For one thing, real wages for men haven't stagnated as they have within the United States; also, some economists

say American women, in general, are better qualified and have made deeper inroads into traditionally male professions.

Among developed nations, Japan is an outlier. Despite women's high levels of education and experience, Japan has the highest gender wage gap in the developed world. According to the International Labor Organization, women in Japan earned, on average, 65.3 percent of men's salaries in 2001, up from 63.1 percent in 1997.

"There are sound economic reasons why governments have a case for intervening and making it attractive to more parents that they engage in paid work." There is no utopia. Each system has its own strengths and weaknesses. Sweden is often held up as modern nation, but it too has its drawbacks. There is no one right answer for how to most efficiently incorporate women into the work force.

COMPREHENSION WORK

Choose the best option for each question.

1. The shift toward service-based economies in the industrialized world has been bad/good for women.
2. The wage gap has more/less to do with economics than gender politics.
3. The gender wage gap in the USA is narrow/broad/nor broad nor narrow.
4. Wage inequality is highest in the USA/Germany/Sweden.
5. The free market economy benefits/does not benefit women.
6. Outside the USA, wages have increased/decreased in real terms.

VOCABULARY WORK

1. Complete the sentences with the adequate collocation.

1. In many companies, only 15 percent of the _____ are women.
2. In Sweden, fathers commonly stay at home when a baby is born, although _____ is more common.
3. It is very hard to change _____ as employers usually worry about women taking time off to look after the family.
4. The rise in _____ means it is very useful for women in households to generate an income.
5. Japan has the highest gender _____ in the _____.

2. Vocabulary expansion. What do the following terms mean?

1. macroeconomics
2. utopia
3. empowerment
4. drawbacks

EXAM PREPARATION TASKS

1. Decide which statements are true for each country according to the article. Write the number of the true statements under the correct country. Two choices will not be used.

1. This nation has the best wages for women.
2. Women makes less money because they are less qualified.
3. The wage difference between men and women is the greatest.
4. As a nation, they talk big about equality between the genders
5. Women are better qualified than men in traditional roles.
6. Men and women are employed differently.
7. This nation has the most women in higher professional positions.
8. Women remain in traditionally females roles even though the possibility to make money is better than most countries.

2. Circle the letter of the best answer.

9. Women's wages have become an _____ important component of household income.

- A. increasing
- B. increasingly
- C. increased
- D. increase

10. Narrowing the gender wage gap is less a matter of empowerment _____ of economics.

- A. than
- B. more
- C. as
- D. instead

11. Many women choose to interrupt their careers, working part time or temporarily dropping out, _____.

- A. for raising children
- B. than raise children
- C. to raise children
- D. raising children

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Why do you think that women continue to earn less than men?
2. Do you agree that women should always be paid the same as their male counterparts?
3. Do you think there are still some "traditionally male professions" disappearing? How is society changing in respect to attitudes towards women?