Re-framing gender stereotypes: the reformulation of gender notions using creative writing with tenth graders from a public school in Bogotá

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Abstract

Gender stereotypes are a social construct that influence people's behavior on a daily basis in different social aspects, these are imposed from early ages in family or school contexts. Thus, as school can be considered a reproducer of those notions, there are not enough spaces for gender perspective to be taken into account, including the English class, a space that has been focused on an instrumental approach to communicate, leaving aside the critical-transformative approach education is intended to follow. This action research attempted to re-frame those stereotypical notions of gender using creative writing activities in the English class, not just to improve English skills but, to get to a transformative result in the learner's gendered notions. This research followed a qualitative approach and developed a grounded theoretical analysis from collected data that included interviews, field notes and creative writings texts developed by the English learners during classes, all of the above to conclude that even if participants have stereotyped notions of gender, through creative writing sessions in English language teaching (ELT) spaces, those perceptions can and should be reframed.

Key words: Gender stereotypes, ELT, creative writing, action research.

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CHAPTER I: Contextualization

In this chapter, a contextualization of the research will be developed, starting with the statement of the problem where it is explained why reframing gender stereotypes using creative writing sessions was chosen to focus this investigation on. Secondly, a justification that discusses why it is important to take gender perspective to the English class and finally, the research question along with the general and specific objectives that guide the research will be found.

Statement of the problem

Gender stereotypes are defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, n.d.) as "the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other" (para. 1). Gender stereotypes could be referred to the role society expects you to play based on the biological sex you are born with, classifying people within binary norms, masculinity associated to male sex and femininity to females. It is true that gender interacts with sex, but it does not depend on it, it is deeply influenced by the individual's subjectivity and how they understand gender itself throughout their lives and experiences (Benitez et al, 2015). Occasionally, it differs from what is culturally established, those dissident gender identities are not usually accepted. Besides that, those stereotypes could be strictly followed too, and both situations could lead to discrimination, inequality or even drive to mental and physical health impacts.

Encinas-Martin (n.d.) states that the binary notions of individuals and their reinforcement through the gender stereotypes have driven to a restriction in how individuals evolve in society, the author also presented the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and concluded that "gender stereotypes influence girls' schooling and career choices. This has

certain consequences, with fewer women choosing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and fewer men choosing teaching, health and social work" (Encinas, n.d. para. 9)

In this context, gender could be defined also as hierarchical. It is known we live in a society mostly controlled by males, a patriarchal system, how it is often addressed, where men own most of the power in terms of social structure and women tend to be submissive. This hierarchical system supported by the stablished stereotypes in terms of gender have created a big gap regarding professional development, public health concerns, discrimination among other inequalities. To illustrate this, it is worth mentioning that the United Nations Women (UN Women) in a recent report has shown that women's income is 23% less, compared to their male partners worldwide. Furthermore, 35% of women have suffered from domestic violence and sexual abuse from their male partners. (United Nations [UN], par. 1, n.d.)

Gender stereotypes do not affect females only, men, due to the imposed notions of masculinity are encouraged to smoke or, they are prone to substance abuse, males are more restricted to express emotions, one of the reasons for them to be violent, "when gender norms are violated, it leads to gender role discrepancy stress, which is associated with dating violence perpetration" (Lee, 2021, p. 1). Masculinity celebrates risk-taking as a proof of power, contributing to men being more susceptible to suffer physical harm as a result of fights or resulting in a high rate of men dying in accidents, etc. Those are some of the reason life expectations for men is shorter than women. Robert Shmerling, Senior Faculty Editor of Harvard Health Publishing from Harvard University, states "In fact, 57% of all those ages 65 and older are female. By age 85, 67% are women. The average lifespan is about 5 years longer for women than men in the U.S., and about 7 years longer worldwide" (2020, par. 3)

So far, we have addressed, health, violence and inequality concerns related to gender stereotypes. Besides that, another big concern comes in the form of discrimination. When individuals do not identify themselves with the gender assigned to their biological sex, they could transgress these imposed heterosexual notions about gender identity. As a result, transgender people are one of the most discriminated minorities worldwide. In Colombia, data released by the Colombia Diversa movement in 2021 reveled an increase of hate crimes against this community going from threats to homicide. In 2019, 37 homicides were perpetrated against trans people, 35 of them against transwomen, by 2020 the rates increased to 53, and 45 of them once again, towards transwomen, which means an increase of almost 20% just in one year (Colombia Diversa, 2021, p. 3).

In Colombia, government has promoted programs and stablished different laws to encourage equality and protect diversity in terms of race, religion, culture and multiplicity of gender identities. Article 13 of the Colombian national constitution declares:

Todas las personas nacen libres e iguales ante la ley, recibirán la misma protección y trato de las autoridades y gozarán de los mismos derechos, libertades y oportunidades sin ninguna discriminación por razones de sexo, raza, origen nacional o familiar, lengua, religión, opinión política o filosófica. El Estado promoverá las condiciones para que la igualdad sea real y efectiva y adoptará medidas en favor de grupos discriminados o marginados. [All persons are born free and equal before the law, shall receive the same protection and treatment from the authorities and shall enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities without any discrimination for reasons of sex, race, national or family origin, language, religion, political or philosophical opinion. The State shall promote the conditions for equality to be real and effective and shall adopt measures in favor of

discriminated or marginalized groups..]. - Constitución Política de Colombia [Const]. Art. 13. 13 de junio de 1991 (Colombia).

The government considers gender identity and sexual orientation diversity as free expressions of autonomy and development of personality. This is why, the governmental entities also issued law 1482 of 2011 to guarantee the protection of individuals or communities rights violated by acts of discrimination in which it is declared:

Él que arbitrariamente impida, obstruya o restrinja el pleno ejercicio de los derechos de las personas por razón de su raza, nacionalidad, sexo u orientación sexual, incurrirá en prisión de doce (12) a treinta y seis (36) meses y multa de (10) a (15) salarios mínimos legales mensuales vigentes [whoever arbitrarily prevents, obstructs or restricts the full exercise of the rights of people due to their race, nationality, sex or sexual orientation will be subject to imprisonment of twelve (12) to thirty-six (36) month sand a fine of ten (10) to fifteen (15) legal monthly minimum wages in force]

It is important to highlight that the Colombian government has made improvements and efforts to protect and guarantee equity with gender-related issues. However, has it been enough to reduce the gender gap and discrimination rates towards people who do not fit into the mentioned gender roles or, identify themselves within the binary identities? On the other hand, a recent investigation by Benítez, Coronado & Galindo (2015) from Universidad Pedagógica Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá, has shown that this gender stereotypes are still being reproduced in both, family and school contexts.

Research developed by Benitez et al. (2015) in the rural context found that gender roles and stereotypes are still being imposed since early ages, mostly, through cultural norms where men are portrayed as the provider or the working hand and women, are restricted to home labor.

The fact that women in this socio-historical scenario are remaining linked almost exclusively to domestic work (...) is also closely related to the lack of academic training and socio-cultural level, because the horizon of expectations of these women is limited to their immediate environment. The influence of the macho discourse of some of the husbands who maintain that their work is sufficient, therefore, their wives do not need to "leave home" to look for another source of income, can be evidenced. (Benitez et al. 2015, p. 6)

It is well known that parents try to influence in the construction of their children's identities, if they are exposed to the gender stereotypes from early ages, they are also prone to reproduce the same thoughts and behaviors. For instance, in the same research by Benitez, et al (2015), investigators found most children felt identified with their parents' behavior depending on their sex. Male children used to work outside with their dads as they stated men must go outside and work to provide, equally, female children used to stay at home helping mother with home labor, researchers concluded.

This is not a pattern reproduced just at home or rural areas where it is believed is accepted due to people being "old-fashioned" but also in schools located in larger cities as Bogotá. School is a place most of us spent most of our time immersed in during childhood, and it is supposed to be a space for a free development of our identities, based on Colombian normativity and law. Nonetheless, in a second research also developed by Universidad Pedagógica Nacional de Colombia, it is shown how implicitly children are still being introduced to the same gender

stereotypes through a hidden curriculum in which depending on the sex, individuals are given with certain abilities, mathematical, philosophical, and science oriented for boys and humanistic or emotional oriented for girls. In addition, school has "manuals" in which gender guidelines appear, regarding the differentiated use of uniforms, bathrooms, and appearance, even for body concerns as body care and pregnancy recalls most of the times on girls. In addition, boys who do not fit in this prototype are bullied or usually called "maricas" or "afeminados" (Castañeda and Lozano, 2017). These are expressions of stereotyped dominant masculinity, implicitly giving feminine connotations to degrade someone. In 2014, Sergio Urrego, a student from a private school in Bogotá committed suicide after being systematically bullied and prosecuted by school staff stating he was not following the coexistence norms stablished in the school manual because of his sexual orientation, in response, the Constitutional Court of Colombia, issued sentence T-478 of 2015, in which government protects the diversity in scholar environments and allowed National Ministry of Education one year to revise all schools manuals in the country, to guarantee this norms and avoid new cases of discrimination.

Gender and creative writing in the English class

As stated before, gender stereotyped discourse affects population on a daily basis, concerning mental and physical health, and even influencing mortality rates. That is why it is highly important to work on gender-related issues, to support safe development of personality, identity and an egalitarian environment with equal opportunities and promote respect for each other, but why is it relevant to take the gender perspective in the English class? It is important to mention that the relation between gender stereotypes and second language learning has not been deeply theorized yet. Although, second language education can help as a big support to disrupt those stablished discourses, the English class, beyond teaching its communicative skills, is one of

those learning spaces which opens a window to the world, as through second language learning we are also being introduced to a different culture and perspectives, possibly even more when it comes to English, considered as a global language and the most studied by second language learners. Based on that, students tend to be more open to culturally different points of view, which makes the English classroom a convenient space to work on gender perspectives, topic which sometimes is seen as taboo. As an appropriate space, it could also lead to the creation of a comfortable environment for the second language learners to express their beliefs, points of view, or how they experience gender and its positive or negative impacts concerning their social and identity development. It is worth highlighting that, even if the relation between gender and English language teaching (ELT) have not been deeply studied, there are some authors who have found the importance of connecting these two concepts in order to develop a safe and inclusive learning environment and, they have developed different investigations about it. Escobar, cited by Castañeda-Peña (2021) carried out an investigation in which different English learners expressed the impact of normative gender notions in the English class:

> Andrés (2012) tells of a teacher who said that flirtation "obviously" occurs between a man and a woman and vice versa. The teacher not only ignored that a man might be attracted to another man or a woman to another woman but also said, according to Andrés that any other possibility would be *weird*'' (p. 89)

Moreover, another investigation developed in the English learning classroom by Farfán (as cited by Castañeda-Peña, 2021) concluded that:

> Con respecto a la categoría de discurso, se concluyó que los discursos que se reproducen dentro del aula de inglés potencialmente influyen en la forma en que los estudiantes construyen sus identidades sociales y de género, adquiriendo una posición al respecto [In

regards to the discourse category, it was concluded that discourses that are reproduced within the English classroom potentially influence the way in which students construct their social and gender identities, acquiring a position towards it] (p. 136).

Considering the previous features, it was decided to focus this study on gender stereotypes to develop an attempt in the reformulation of these conventional notions about gender roles implanted and reproduced cyclically since early stages in such contexts as the family, the English class and school in general. Moreover, this study was focused on the use of creative writing activities as a tool to achieve its objectives, but why creative writing? The term itself will be more detailed in the theoretical framework, nevertheless, creative writing is a process in which we are allowed to express ourselves and set our imagination free, however, it also involves reality and the writer's subjectivity (Rodari, 1996). Furthermore, through those creative compositions, writers are able to express their own vision of the world they are immersed in and how they would like to experience it. The advantage of creative writing is that it is an individual and subjective tool in which writers feel more comfortable to express their thoughts, unlike discourses or grouped activities, where learners could feel restricted by shame, fear or shyness to express themselves, through creative writing you can explore emotions and ideas, feeling safe whether you want to share them or not. For Bolton (1996) creative writing could be considered as therapeutic, allowing writers to experience a safe outlet for processing and releasing strong feelings and putting into words what cannot be said. Therefore, when discussing topics such as gender, which tends to be a difficult topic to talk about and a theme many people do not like to share opinions about, creative writing is the most appropriate tool to make English learners feel comfortable while expressing those gender notions and, at the same time, it is a support to the second language acquisition

classroom going beyond the conventional instrumental perspective of the English teaching-learning process.

Justification

Three features were considered to propose this research. First, the objectives of the languages department in Universidad Pedagógica Nacional that aim to favor the critical conception based on the social, economic and political conditions of the Colombian nation. Secondly, UPN educational values that are framed into the construction of teachers open to scientific, cultural, and social innovations to build pedagogical strategies in the teaching of native and foreign languages; and finally, the problematizations derived from gender stereotyping exposed in the statement of the problem, it was decided to focus the research topic on the reformulations of gender notions in ELT. Castañeda-Peña (2021) expressed how English tends to be taught as a structural tool to communicate, leaving aside those specific conditions each learner has as an individual immersed in a particular context, for example, gender identification. Moreover, through different investigations the author exposed that there is a lack of gender perspective in ELT and the necessity to apply it in the English curriculum in order to build a safer and more equalitarian learning space which contributes to a successful learning process. These points can be connected to the objectives Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN) has when instructing future teachers, to be capable to critically study and understand the context of the learning population and make use of investigation to get to transformations. Consequently, the present research seeks to approach that critical perspective proposed by UPN to contribute on the lack of gender perspective in ELT mentioned by Castañeda-Peña (2021) and contribute to the investigation of new teaching perspectives in ELT which take into account learners' identification and new perspectives that could possibly be implemented to improve the English teaching-learning process.

Reframing gender in the English class can greatly benefit the pre-service teacher's role by helping to create a more inclusive and diverse classroom environment. Furthermore, by addressing issues of gender representations, stereotypes, and inequality perpetrated through social and academical spheres, it will allow the pre-service teacher; first of all, to foster critical thinking, which is valuable not just in the language learning process but, in the entire educational field, as this critical way of thinking is one of the main tools to get to transformation; consequently, it highlights the important of the educator's role in society. Then, to promote empathy among students, while also empowering marginalized groups. This approach can also help students develop a better understanding of their own gender identities and those of others, which can be valuable in promoting respect, tolerance, and social justice, making the English learning space more fruitful and the teacher to improve his/hers teaching skills.

Research question:

How can 10th graders English learners reframe gender stereotypes while using creative writing tasks aimed at questioning gender notions?

General objective:

Describe how a group of 10th graders English learners reframe gender notions while using creative writing tasks aimed at questioning gender stereotypes.

Specific objectives:

1 Examine 10th graders's positions towards gender-related perspectives at CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza School.

2 Interrogate conventional gender stereotyped notions when using creative writing with this group of students.

3 Analyze the impact of creative writing learning tasks on the configuration of gender notions by this group of learners.

CHAPTER II: Theoretical considerations

In the present chapter the theoretical considerations that support this research will be exposed. First, an approach to the literature review in order to revise what has been previously investigated about the topic in question and secondly, the theoretical framework which establishes and reviews the three main concepts that support the investigation: gender stereotypes, gender in the school and creative writing.

Literature review

The following segment develops a discussion about the literary antecedents related to the research topic. Investigations regarding the reproduction of gender stereotypes at school, gender studies in second language learning and, the role of creative writing in the improvement of writing skills while reframing gender notions in English learners.

Throughout the study of existing literature, most of the authors state gender stereotypes have not been deeply studied in relation to the ambit of English teaching as a foreign language. However, based on their investigations results, they also agree they are closely interrelated between each other and highlight the importance to provide more research in relation to this topic.

First of all, regarding the gender stereotypes reproduction, Benitez, et al. (2015) and Castañeda and Lozano (2017) found that gender-biased discourse is implanted in children since early ages, starting in the family context where, discourses and attitudes, both directly and indirectly are transmitted the same heteronormative values. The gender-related concerns are permeated by an evident inequality between males and females, as in a social manner, more relevance has been assigned to the activities carried out by men, delegating to women only those activities in the private and domestic sphere they concluded.

Thus, not just the family has been found to be a gendered-discourse reproducer, Mojica and Castañeda-Peña (2016) developed an investigation having English teachers as the population observed with the objective of rising gender awareness in their second language classes. As a result, researchers identified "unfair situations, sexist discourses and behaviors, and asymmetry in class participation" (p, 9) this gender gaps were never noticed before by the evaluated in service teachers in their teaching-learning environments, leading to a reflection about their own role in perpetration of a gendered-stereotyped discourse. In the educational field, not only in-service English teachers through their discourse, class development or attitudes continue with the reproduction of gender stereotypes. Meral Şeker and Dinçera (2014) developed an exhaustive investigation in which they concluded English teaching textbooks reproduce gender roles stating that in academic material:

Males are more frequently referred to and had higher desired qualities when compared to females. Attributions for intellect and physical strength are almost used to refer only to males. According to the results, females have mostly desired features for sense of responsibility and social relationships. On the other hand, males hold desired qualifications regarding social relationships, physical strength and intellect (...) Females are sought to be only in educational occupations whereas males are frequently attributed professions in the fields of business, medicine, politics and arts. (pp. 94-96)

Furthermore, now that we have approached the language environment and more specifically English, it is pertinent to remark that English is now socially evolving from a gender-biased perspective to an inclusive one, the biased word is used because when talking, the generic masculine is used to address everyone, making invisible the rest of human beings, women or non-binary individuals. Gamboa, et al (2022) say: "[t]hat masculine forms are used to represent all

human beings is in accord with the traditional gender hierarchy, which grants men more power and higher social status than women" (p,11) that could also be a reason why, in our mental representations the businessperson, scientists, or philosophers are always males, while the house person, secretaries and kid's teachers are always females.

Going back to the educational field, Mojica and Castañeda-Peña (2016) as well as Vasquez et al. (2021) highlight the importance of school and the role it plays in the construction and reconstruction of one self and social identity in the students development process, and remarks how important and influential English class oriented towards a gender-perspective could be, in order to create an egalitarian and respect-based learning space where each one is able to think, behave and decide by their owns, contributing to a well fair society in terms of profession, rights access, free development of personality, etc. Most of this research points out to positive results in terms of English and self-development; however, it does not illustrate how working in gender perspectives can influence the class dynamics and relations, as it has been said, working about these topics can be controversial for some individuals, affecting directly the study results.

In these terms, how can the second language teaching-learning process be useful to reduce the gender gap? An investigation carried out by Peterson (2001) to examine the social pressure for gender conformity in students narrative writing determined that "classroom narrative writing is a tool for individuals' self-expression and self-discovery" as the creation of a safe space and through the writing process learners were able to express what they are not used to talk about in terms of gender development. In the same way, Quiñones (2016) concluded in its classroom investigation that based on the results, students showed a positive response to the impact of creative writing on written production, moreover, "students also developed the idea of the need for writing as a faculty to communicate" (p. 37). This is directly related with the methodology this research will use in

order to achieve the goal of reframing the binary gender notions through written texts, that will be further discussed in the methodological section of this investigation.

Theoretical Framework

In this section an approach to the main concepts and theoretical foundations that support this investigation will be developed. First, the notion of gender stereotypes will be addressed, initiating with the perspectives of Butler (1999) and (1993), moving to Lamas (2013) and Beauvoir (2015). Secondly, the topic of gender in school and language learning based on Castañeda-Peña (2021), Emilia et al. (2017) and Amruthraj (n.d). And thirdly, the concept of creative writing will be approached with a perspective from Ramet (2007), Harper (2010) and Rodari (1996), creative writing will be the tool students will use to express and reframe gender conceptions, these written texts will also work as a data collection instrument.

Gender Stereotypes

Since the past decades, the gender discussion has taken place in multiple debates where, there is always an attempt to define what gender is. Butler (1999) defines gender as a social construct that takes the materialization of bodies, what is usually called as sex, as its base, if an individual has a penis, he is categorized as a male, in contrast, a vagina makes an individual a female, dividing population within a binary conception. This notion also brings certain characterizations in terms of the development of the body, behaviors or expectations from society to each individual leading to stereotyping professions, appearance, behaviors etc. as a result and, setting up boundaries in terms of the development of identities, Butler (1999) says "these limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures that appear as the language of universal rationality" (p.13) Consequently, individuals almost

never express their real gender identity, but they "act it" in order to fit into the social expectations. This is what Butler (1999) calls 'performativity of gender'.

In contrast, for Lamas (2013), gender is also a cultural phenomenon. Although, it is not acted but imposed and accepted by each person because of the production of norms that are culturally appropriated regarding the behaviors of men and women, this is one of the main objectives of the social authorities and it is measured by a complex interaction of a wide spectrum of economic, religious and politic institutions, it means that, all of the social establishments shape our behavior and consequently, it results in the adoption of either a male or female conduct, even for people with a sex transition, who tend to adopt a specific gendered behavior connected with their real sexual identity that it is not the assigned at birth, causing the reproduction of the stereotyped behaviors and sustaining the binary settings that cannot be changed and as they were established by the power entities.

Moreover, Butler (1996) poses a question towards a different direction, if gender is a social construction, can it be rebuilt? As she proposed in the performativity of gender theory, which is usually attached to corporality, she states body is also a subversive tool in order to transgress the binary roles and stereotypes of gender "drag may well be used in the service of both the denaturalization and re-idealization of hyperbolic heterosexual gender norms" (Butler, 1996 p. 125). Considering drag as an identity breaks the dichotomous normativity of gender imposed by social institutions as it expresses gender in ways that cannot be completely framed into a male or female categorization in terms of their bodies, appearance, behavior, etc. Also, it works as a proof to support the proposal that binary standards and stereotypes can be rethought. Despite this, Lamas (2013) states that all societies structure their lives and build their culture around sexual difference. This anatomical difference is interpreted as a substantive difference that will mark the destiny of

people. For example, Beauvoir (2015) argues that in terms of gender, and specifically the women's role, is a result of the reproduction of stereotypes associated to the sexed body of females imposed through history, and being always associated to the reproduction and maternity, molding and setting boundaries to women's decision making, body care and role depending on the context, "one is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (Beauvoir, 2015, p. 330). It means individuals are not born woman but, with the idea of what a woman is, it is shaped by external forces or social institutions to sustain the relations of power and superiority of men in the hierarchical system we live in. Likewise, de Beauvoir's statements contrast with Butler (1993) who says sex, equally as gender is a social construct aimed to sustain the same relation of power and the patriarchal system:

> "sex" is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, "sex" is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize "sex" and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms (Butler, 1993, p. 2)

These norms, seen from Beauvoir's (2015) feminist perspective, are considered also a men's problem, as men is the power holder entity in society and problematizes women's identity in order to maintain control "women's entire history has been written by men. As in America there is no black problem but a white one, as 'anti-Semitism is not a Jewish problem, it's our problem,' so the problem of woman is a problem of men" (Beauvoir, 2015, p. 181)

Most of the authors conclude gender stereotypes and gender roles are social constructions built through time and depending on the context, Lamas (2013) states gender is usually attached to sex and individuals cannot go beyond that binary norm of men and women in terms of gender.

In contrast, Butler (1993) states both gender and sex are constructed and as a construction they could be re-built. Butler's idea fits more into the modern context where it has been shown individuals and bodies transgress those heterosexual impositions in terms of gender identity.

As the main objective of this study is the reformulation of gender stereotypes, this project reflects in how those socially established gender rules limit a free configuration when it comes to identities and bodies. Therefore, it is necessary to reframe them into new perspectives where corporality and its development do not need, necessarily, to fit into what has been socially imposed. Based on that, Butler's perspective suits better the purposes of this study as it allows us to re-think gender and its stereotypes beyond what it is considered as a society based just on males or females. Butler's (1993, 1999) perspective invites us to revise our bodies and embraces to make use of them as a transformative tool, being transformation a main objective in school curriculums. All this is quite useful to back up the critical approach to be followed in the classroom project of this current study.

Gender in school

Gender and school are two concepts that are not usually associated; however, these are strictly related with one another. For Castañeda-Peña (2021), "[w]e constantly have ideas about gender. Education in general does not escape from these gender ideas, which become stories and experiences. All classrooms are inhabited by gender stories" (p.41). Furthermore, for Emilia et al (2017). "Gender has been an emerging issue in education since it is involved in how teachers and students establish social commitments to teaching and learning practice" (p. 206), essentially, gender and school are both interacting but, gender tends to be subordinated by school and the educational context. Amruthraj (n.d) says:

Increasing concern has been expressed about the role of the formal education system in reproducing gender differences and inequalities. Research studies indicate that issues that impact girls' education include discrimination against girls in classrooms, interaction between boys and girls, effect of gender on education and other submerged hidden curriculum (par. 1)

It means that, even if the gender-school relation has not been deeply theorized, there is a background about how gender is shaped by school, most of the time, molding students into the binary conception of gender, Castañeda-Peña (2021) agrees with this statement when he says:

The school regulates the way bodies perform their multiple identities. The presentation of the self is often subjected to the gaze of the other, which is why language teachers and students with non-normative genders and sexualities become undesirable in the regulated school system. (p.157)

Based on these previous perspectives about school being a gender stereotypes reproducer, it is possible to argue that the school could be a space for indoctrination regarding gender identities, as school tries to delimit diversity into the heterosexual normativity. Further, now that ELT has been mentioned, it is also important to highlight how, through the English classroom and second language learning material, gender is represented. In their research about gender representations in English teaching textbooks Emilia et al (2017) found that "based on the result, males are considered more powerful agents than females as they dominate the presence of participants based on the total of occurrences" (pp. 210-211). Equally, Amruthraj (n.d) has concluded from his research that:

It is very much visible that boys are active and aggressive during play time, reflecting socialization patterns that demands aggressiveness from boys. On the other hand, girls are socialized towards a feminine ideal. Girls are praised for being neat, quiet and calm, whereas boys are encouraged to be active. (p.4)

This apparent indoctrination process has even affected classroom dynamics and interpersonal relations inside class; consequently, Castañeda-Peña (2021) and Emilia et al. (2017) highlight the importance of gender in the ELT classroom, it can be used as a tool to raise awareness in terms of gender, initiating from English textbooks as ELT materials, as they may have unconscious influence towards students, linguistic roles and may suggest cognitive and communicative empowerment for language learners (Emilia et al, 2017, p. 213). Also, the importance of gender lies in school in general, not just the second language class, the gender approach allows us to identify and re-configure the hidden curriculum and how its practice (conscious or unconsciously) delimits the perception and relation of learners with their selves and the others along with the process in which they develop their identity as a part of an active and evolving society.

School and ELT can go further from teaching the basic skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) aimed just to communicate, to make them instruments to approach different critical perspectives in education (as gender in the English class) in order to achieve positive changes in the class and society dynamics, while the competence itself is improved. That is why this project points out to an improvement of writing skills as well as gender-stereotyped notions can be reframed.

Creative Writing

Creative writing is defined by Ramet (2007) as "having the power to create an imaginative, original literary production or composition" (p.11). The author states creative writing is a tool, not just to express feelings and emotions but also to understand the world in different ways. For Ramet (2007), creative writing is a *process* we agree to get involved in and allows us to set free our imagination resulting in a diverse type of written compositions; additionally:

> Writing is all about escapism, original ideas, unusual situations, (…) Originality is a vital ingredient in any piece of writing, fact or fiction, but then so is realism. Without realism, you cannot have reader identification and it is this element that brings your work vividly to life. (p.8)

Basically, even if creative writing gives the opportunity to set our imagination free, no text is created from one hundred percent imagination, those compositions are always going to have reality as its base. On the other hand, for Harper (2010) Creative writing is not a *process* but an *act* "creative writing as acts and actions, grouped generically as activities, produces physical evidence of various kinds, as well as evidence observable and recordable as it emerges in and around the acts and actions that constitute creative writing" (p.88). Considering this statement, creative writing can be interpreted as an agreement between a conscious activity and an unconscious act we develop on a daily basis and, grounded in how we read and interpret our surroundings based on our understanding. As well as Ramet (2010), for Rodari (1996), creative writing is a *process* that involves reality and the writer's subjectivity, he states imagination is the instrument but, the writer's personality is the one that develops the creative act based on their context and experiences. Also, Rodari (1996) developed an entire guide in order to promote creative writing, having life experiences, observation and transformation of reality as a source of

inspiration. In other words, creative writing is a conscious and reflexive process. Nonetheless, it contrasts with Harper (2010) position of creative writing as a spontaneous act:

> By suggesting that the acts and actions of Creative Writing can be considered in terms of their function, there's equally a suggestion that those acts and actions that are unplanned, fortuitous, seemingly unsystematic (…) are elements of the way in which creative writing occurs. (p.88)

Unlike Harper (2010), Ramet (2007) argues that creative compositions are a result of the interaction between reality and imagination, daily and simple situations such as sex, romance, nature, people amongst others, can be taken to overstep the boundaries of reality and create free and innovative texts. Moreover, Rodari (1996) presents a similar proposal where elements from the writer's context such as family, school, personal relations, objects nature, physical aspects of people, etc. can be taken to a whole different perspective. Combining concepts that are not usually co-related in the writer's point of view and, often associated to fiction (for example: dog and fire) stimulating imagination and possibly leading to a solution of the rhetoric problem in writing which consists in the difficulty for writers when starting the writing process due to the lack of ideas or creativity.

Creative writing is an opportunity to let imagination and creativity work hand in hand in order to express ourselves in multiple facets, emotionally and idealistically and create what is in people's minds and sometimes could be restricted by social rules and the squared and normative academic compositions required at school and other spaces. In these terms, it could be a spontaneous act (Harper, 2010) but, it could also be a contract between people's reality and their imagination (Ramet, 2007 and Rodari, 1996), to express what sometimes cannot be expressed and it is usually well structured in people's minds awaiting to be taken out and exteriorized.

For this research, creative writing is addressed as the main tool to reconfigure gender notions because as Rodari (1996) exposes, it is a process in which the writer's reality is involved and it is capable to show how the context has shaped the writer's perception of their surroundings. Furthermore, it is also an instrument in which writers can manifest their opinions or feelings towards social conceptions they may agree or disagree, and how they perceive those conceptions should be, aligning to the main objective of this study, aimed to questioning gender-stereotyped notions through written compositions.

CHAPTER III: Methodological Framework

To achieve the goal of this research which aims to the reformulation of gender stereotypes through creative writing, a methodological procedure needed to be followed, in this section, a description of the methods that guided the development of the study will be discussed. Initially, the type of research and its approach. Secondly, a characterization of the population involved with an outlook of the context. Additionally, a detailed description of the data collection instruments and the data analysis approach that helped to achieve the objectives of the research to finally get to the ethical considerations contemplated as necessary to develop a safe and trustable research environment.

Qualitative research

This research followed a qualitative approach. For Merriam and Tisdell (2016) qualitative research is "inquiring into or investigating something in a systematic manner" (p.3) while for Shank (2002), cited by Ospina (2004), it is "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (p. 2). In other words, qualitative research is a way in which curiosity and specific interests lead to systematic research in order to question, find answers or understand, most of the times, behaviors, opinions or expectations from a specific population that are associated to our investigation interest, in the case of this study, gender stereotypes in the second language learning process of tenth graders in a public school in Bogotá, Colombia. In qualitative research the results or findings "might be presented in the form of narratives, field notes, and creative formats such as drama and poetry" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, pp. 13-14), it means that, as a response to the main objectives of the research, the conclusion will be presented focusing on a descriptive manner using words more than mathematical statistics.

In addition, the qualitative approach was framed within an action research method. In the words of Burns (2010), action research "involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts" (p.2). Moreover, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) said action research is "intended to solve a problem in practice and make something happen in the research process itself, whereas critical research is specifically intended to challenge power relations" (p.12). Authors make a special emphasis on the critical component while developing action research:

> In critical inquiry the goal of the study in its *findings or results* is to critique and challenge, to transform, and to analyze power relations. In most critical studies, the hope is often that people will take action as a result of the study. (Merriam and Tisdell, p. 59, 2016)

Consequently, action research is an approach to develop research amongst a defined context in order to identify a problem and, through the critical perspective and lead to changes or a transformation in that context. Placing this investigation as an example, the research antecedents show how gender stereotypes influence and affect the development of the identity in second language learners; additionally, supported in the theoretical framework it was highlighted how these gender notions can be reformulated within the English language teaching (ELT) classroom. Therefore, considering these aspects, action research was considered as the most pertinent approach to develop the current investigation as it includes the problematization of a particular aspect in the classroom and, at the same time, it seeks for a transformation in terms of gender-related notions of English learners, which is the main objective of the critical perspective in the action research process, the transfiguration of power relations (as the gender roles). In this line of thought, Giroux and McLaren (1989) as cited by Pennycook (1990) state that

Essential to pedagogy, then, is the realization of the need to empower teachers, to endow them with "emancipatory authority" as "transformative intellectuals", to view teachers as professionals who are able and willing to reflect upon the ideological principles that inform their practice, who connect pedagogical theory and practice to wider social issues, and who work together to share ideas, exercise power over the conditions of their labor, and embody in their teaching a vision of a better and more human life (p. 310).

The previous conception of critical pedagogy is aligned with the epistemological principles of the Languages Department of Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, where one of the central objectives is focused on "desarrollar en el futuro educador la capacidad de detectar, enfrentar y resolver problemas educativos, culturales y ambientales inherentes a su entorno a traves de la práctica pedagógica [to develop in the future educator the ability to detect, face and solve educational, cultural and environmental problems inherent to his/her environment through pedagogical practice]". (UPN, 2018) Moreover, the department of languages of UPN points out to the formation of languages teachers in which "training spaces aim to favor the critical conception, analysis and production of meaning based on the social, economic and political conditions of the Colombian nation in the 21st century" (UPN, 2018, my own translation). Based on these ideals, this project is also inspired by the critical pedagogy aims of emancipation towards a social issue as it is the perpetration of gender stereotypes in school and English language teaching.

Context of the study

This study was developed at district school CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza. This institution is an official educational establishment by the Bogotá's department of education. The school is located in the Meissen neighborhood, Ciudad Bolívar locality (72% of this locality is considered as rural) it is close to the Tunjuelito River, Meissen Hospital and Meissen Park. The zone is home

to population framed into social classes 1 and 2 and also known as vulnerable population. The institution can host 3.200 students divided into three different scholar shifts: morning, afternoon, and night. The main objective of the school is to provide high quality education to shape productive and successful citizens. That is why they offer primary education (grades 0 to 5), basic secondary (grades 6 to 9) and medium basic education (formed by 10th and 11th grades). CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza also has an agreement with Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA) in order to provide technical education for work, specialized in industrial design, food processing and accounting, this technical education is taught since ninth grade. Regarding gender-related concerns, the only mention in the coexistence manual is related to the respect of race, religion, beliefs and gender according to the national constitution. With reference to the English class, the district institution also has an agreement with the British Council whose objective is to improve the second language curriculum for all grades and get better results in English language learning.

In terms of infrastructure the institution has wide and open spaces such as football field, multipurpose auditorium, dance and a computer classroom, a big dining room and a parking lot. It is important to highlight that it does not have a library. Most of the classrooms have a working television and sound system, along with a laptop as a teacher's aid with access to internet as the school has free WI-FI network for everyone. Furthermore, the second language teaching classroom is set, with the same technological devises; besides that, the English classroom counts with an additional computer room linked to the main one, with thirteen (13) computers that are exclusively used for the English class development. Despite this, most of the devices are not properly working and they seem to be old. Therefore, the school is in process to update and bring more computer desks within the next months. The English curriculum is framed by an intercultural approach, they consider English language is the first step to create spaces for socialization and getting closer to

other cultures while promoting respect for diversity. For Guillermo Cano Isaza school, the second language classroom offers an approach to the modern reality characterized by the intercultural communication, scientific-technological advances and internationalization processes, aspects that are framed and can be accessed easier through the most used and common language in these fields, English. Consequently, students will have possibilities to improve their social, academic, economical and professional conditions.

Based on the district plan of bilingualism along with the British Council aid, the institution has developed a curriculum divided into 11 stages, one by grade, starting on 1st grade in primary school until 11th grade in medium basic education, where at the end of the process, the students should be able to:

- Employ language as a means of organizing thought, understanding and interpretation of the world.
- Manage language effectively, taking into account ethical principles.
- Participate actively in communicative processes.
- Produce short texts in accordance with the level, intentionally using strategies that ensure coherence, cohesion, structure, and appropriateness to the context. (Córdoba et al. n.d)

These goals to achieve are supported by material developed by British Council as Way To Go, Know Now workbook, digital interactive material found in Colombia Aprende website and diverse online resources.

The current research aims to go beyond these objectives because the objectives proposed by CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza school are oriented just to the communicative competences,

putting aside the transformative goal of education that seeks for a critical analysis of the learners'

contexts and pointing out to improvements not just in the academic field but, in the social

development of students which is one of the objectives for the National Ministry of Education

(MEN) in its national project, it states that: "La educación generará igualdad de oportunidades y

desarrollo económico, permitiendo la transformación social del país, mayor equidad y la

consolidación de la paz" [Education will generate equal opportunities and economic development,

allowing for the social transformation of the country, greater equity and peace] (MEN, p. 5, 2015).

In other words, education will be the instrument that will lead to changes and improvements in

Colombian society. The mentioned project also attempts to make of Colombia the most educated

country in Latin America by the year 2025, goal set to be achieved through a critical-transformative

approach of education, approach that will serve as a guide through this research to reframe gender

notions in 10th graders at CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza School.

Participants

The study was developed in grade 1003 of the morning shift, conformed initially by 40

students with ages between 14 and 16 years old. Most of the class population is formed by males

with 25 students and 15 females, two of them resigned, so finally there is a total of 13 females and

a grand total population of 38 students. It is important to highlight that all the students live within

the Ciudad Bolívar locality and close neighborhoods such as Mexico, Lucero Bajo or San Benito.

The research was carried out with 16 out of the 38 learners, due to the fact that they were the only

participants who accepted and provided a signed knowledge consent to be considered for the

research. From the sixteen students, 11 were males and 5 females.

The criteria to select the study population was based on two different factors: maximum

variation and convenience. First, maximum variation in terms of Merriam and Tisdell (2016)

"involves identifying and seeking out those who represent the widest possible range of the characteristics of interest for the study" (p. 98) CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza represented the widest quantity of population to be studied and also the most diverse one in terms of gender, as amongst the other population options available, there were exclusively feminine schools, that, would have limited the perspectives in terms of gender to a feminine notion of gender roles. Besides, a mixed population can bring up different opinions and a wider variety of points of view in order to fulfill the research objective. Secondly, the convenience approach consists of selecting the sample considering the location, distance, availability of options and time regarding the researcher (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 98). I took into considerations the distance between the school and my location, and most important the time to move from one point to another to save time and, take advantage of it for the development of the project.

Data Collection Instruments

In this section a detailed description of all the instruments used to collect data inside the classroom will be developed.

Field Notes

Initially, during the observation session in the class, it was necessary to record the information. There are multiple ways and tools to do it, such as voice or video recorders or laptops; however, videorecording was not possible due to the lack of technological devices and, considering the noisy environment, voice recording was not an option either. To record the information obtained the easiest and most appropriate method to do it was the field notes (see appendix a.) "what is written down or mechanically recorded from a period of observation becomes the raw

data from which a study's findings eventually emerge. This written account of the observation constitutes field notes" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 149). Along the observation sessions, information such as the classroom physical setting, class development, social relations, gender roles, conversations, activities, observers' thoughts, amongst others, was registered in the filed notes.

Interview

As the observation provides a general overview of the class development and group behavior, an individual outlook is needed so that an approach to the gender notions of each individual can be mad; this is the reason why person-to-person interviews were developed. DeMarrais (2004) cited by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defines a research interview as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (p.108) in conclusion, it is a conversation aimed to ask certain questions oriented to answer a research question, in this case, the interview will focus on the exploration of the existing gender notions and stereotypes expressed by the students of grade 1003 of CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza school in Bogotá, Colombia. Interviews were developed at the beginning of the project, being the identification of the current notions towards gender-related issue the main objective. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed to make a comparison between all data collected and get to a conclusion. This questionnaire had 20 questions divided into 4 different categories: strength and leadership, weakness, intelligence, and housekeeping (see appendix b.), each one of these categories have proved to be stereotyped fitting into females or males.

Since the objective of this study will not be explicit to the participants, the questionnaire was created to look like a general set of questions to check how the relationships amongst the classroom take place. Questions are aimed to check if depending on the category, the students

associate any of them leaning towards female or male figures, exposing the gender stereotypes they have.

Researcher-generated documents

Another data collection instrument in this research was the written compositions by the English learners. As explained in the theoretical framework, creative writings are texts which do not follow a specific structure, their base is reality and most important, imagination. English learners had the option to choose any kind of narrative (biography, autobiography, story tales, chronicles, poems, etc) and follow the structure or transgress it as they want in the process, adding new features or even combining characteristics between them. Hence, the objective is for them to compose texts without any restriction, having the objective of this study, the re-configuration of gender notions as its base. As a result, students will be encouraged to develop their documents about their gender-related beliefs and notions. Gender conceptions are considered as social impositions and require of freedom in order to express different points of view or ideals about them, and even more when it comes to their re-configuration. The English classroom offered a safe and free environment for learners to express themselves through their creative writings that will work as an instrument of expression and data collection at the same time, to fulfill the research objectives. This texts as a data collection instrument are defined by Merriam and Tisdell as research-generated documents these "are prepared by the researcher or for the researcher by participants after the study has begun. The specific purpose for generating documents is to learn more about the situation, person, or event being investigated" (p.174). These texts were written by the students and collected by the researcher; moreover, they were examined along with the initial interview to analyze how their perspectives towards gender roles and stereotypes evolved.

Approach to data analysis

The approach followed to carry out data analysis was grounded theory, it is a data analysis method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) which consists of codes that emerged from the data, categories that involves the codes subtracted from the information and finally, a hypothesis developed from the analysis itself. Its objective is to constantly make comparisons amongst the data collected, such as interviews, field notes and artifacts or documents collected along the research to reduce and conceptualize the data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that during a grounded theory analysis "comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated" (p. 228). It means, all the data together is always being contrasted to find points of connection, differences, concepts, to suggest an answer to the research question.

Most specifically, there are three steps followed in this research in order to manage data. As suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2015) and cited by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) grounded theory consists of three phases *open, axial, and selective.* "*Open coding* is what one does at the beginning of data analysis (…) it is tagging any unit of data that might be relevant to the study" (p. 229) In this research, open coding was used to find patters amongst the data collected (field notes, observations and the creative writings from the English learners) in order to organize those patterns into codes. From all data more than one hundred and twenty (120) codes came out (see appendix c.) Secondly, we have *axial coding* defined as "the process of relating into categories and properties to each other, refining the category scheme" (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 229). The codes from step one, were classified into 33 themes, furthermore, those themes were grouped into three main categories that involved the previous ones: *Adapting to gender norms, building spaces for free expression,* and *going towards more inclusive perceptions of gender*. Finally, we get to the

third step, *selective coding* where "a core category, propositions, or hypotheses are developed" (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 229). This means that, at this point, after codifying and categorizing we get to a deep analysis in order to answer the research question.

Timeline of activities

In the next table a timeline of the activities developed along the research is set, starting with the presentation of the project proposal by the end of the 2022-2 semester and all the activities programmed for the next academic periods 2023-1 and 2023-2.

2022 – 2					
Activities	**Dates**				
Consolidation of research proposal	August 8th - November 15th				
2023-1					
Activities	**February**	**March**	**April**	**May**	**June**
First interview design	▓				
First interview application		▓			
Transcription of interviews		▓			
First cycle of action research: Society					
First activity (professions)		▓			
Second activity		▓			
Third activity		▓			
First creative writing session			▓		
Second cycle of action research: Family					
First activity			▓		
Second activity			▓		
Third activity				▓	
Second creative writing session				▓	
Third cycle of action research: School					
First activity				▓	

Activities	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov
Second activity					
Third activity					
Third creative writing activity					
Retro alimentative session with a class discussion					
2023-2					
Activities	**July**	**August**	**Sept**	**Oct**	**Nov**
Data analysis					
Conclusions of the research					

Ethical considerations

Talking about sensitive topics such as gender notions or gender identification is not usually easy for most people, as private information can be revealed. In order to create the most comfortable environment; in the first place, from the potential population studied in this research (which is a total of 38), everyone was invited to participate; so, they were able to choose whether be part of the research or not, as well as if they want to participate but do not wanted their information to be considered. That is why a consent form was provided and signed by the participants who agreed to share their information, (see appendix d.). Additionally, they had the option to participate as anonymous if they did not want their identifications to be revealed. The options were available for them along the entire process if for any reason one or some of them changed their minds, in order to safeguard learners from possible impacts they along the process. Moreover, it was also important to highlight that the researcher remained as objective as possible to sustain a non-biased attitude, considering those personal beliefs, could drive to a negative impact in the development of the research and consequently, its results.

CHAPTER IV: Instructional design

This section discusses the theoretical support that holds up the methodological procedure of this project. It is constituted by the vision of language, of learning, the learner and finally the teaching approach which is framed into what is called the post-method.

Vision of language

In this pedagogical proposal, language was seen as an identity constructor. Bauman (as cited by Villegas, P, and Mora, I. 2018) states that "identity is a fluid process that can be considered as 'infinitely negotiable" (p.13) as identity is not set or stable, but it is also constantly changing in many ways. Consequently, for Norton (2013) who claims language is directly related to identity construction, language is not just a linguistic system but also a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated. In other words, language is the answer to a social necessity in which members of a collectivity not just communicate but, share their own vision of their context to establish and sustain their own personal and cultural identities. For instance, Villegas and Mora (2018) state that,

> identity is the result of our relation with the world in which our personal beliefs, expectations and experiences are also present. In this construction, language becomes a crucial element because it is the source that allows the definition of an identity (p.25).

This is supported by the study of Ibrahim (1999, as cited by Norton, 2013) referring to an English-learning group of French-speaking African immigrants in Canada. He argues that "the students' linguistic styles, and in particular their use of Black Stylized English, was a direct outcome of being imagined and constructed as Black by hegemonic discourses and groups" (p.11).

This means that language is the means in which people express their reality, and communicate with their environment, establishing a connection between them, their community and context; thereby, learners do not just learn the language but, they also use it and adapt themselves within the settings of the group they feel identified with. Furthermore, language permeates many spheres in term of identity, including, as this study emphasizes, gender. In this regard, Lakoff (1975 as cited by Jones, 2016) argued that,

> women had a subordinate position in a patriarchal society and that one way in which this was perpetuated was by socializing girls into language considered to be "lady-like" (…) which included the use of tag questions and intensifiers were thought to be culturally deficient because they indicated, among other qualities, hesitancy and uncertainty (p .212).

Language, in this case, is used as a tool to sustain the gender-relations of power as the patriarchal supremacy, making subjects identify within the binary gender identities and adopt behaviors related to them. Weedon (1997, cited by Norton, 2013) demonstrates that it is through language that someone negotiates their auto perception depending on the time and place. It is using language that a person is able to be accepted or denied approaching the power authorities that give them the opportunity to express themselves. Kumaravadivelu (2001) states that "language is not simply a network of interconnected linguistic systems; rather, it is a web of interlinked sociopolitical and historical factors that shape one's identity and voice" (p.72) Therefore, if language is capable of sustaining power relations and shape identity, it could also be a powerful tool to re-define them along with these established notions to create new ways for self-recognition which align more with identities in which subjects really identify themselves with. This vision of language fits into the purpose of this research project, which aimed to re-frame the stereotyped

gender notions in tenth graders from a public school in Bogotá. Taking into account all of the previous aspects in terms of how language is conceived in this project, the post-method allows us to connect the transformational approach to the English classroom, Kumaravadivelu (2001) conceives classroom as a "space socially constructed, politically motivated and historical determined" (p.73) It means that the classroom itself goes beyond teaching a language as it is permeated by a lot of these sociocultural aspects which are constantly changing and influencing the learning process. Thus, that space could be used more than teaching-learning a language, going from critically analyze and discuss these aspects to theorizing and putting in practice action plans that could potentially get into transformations, which is what this research's objectives point to.

Vision of learning

This project aimed to the reformulation of current gender notions in tenth graders. Based on that, the vision of learning in this research was framed within a critical perspective of pedagogy. Pennycook (1990) argues that there are two predominant elements to define critical pedagogy "a notion of critique that also carries with it a sense of possibility for transformation, and an exploration of the nature of and relationship between culture, knowledge and power" (p. 307) In other words, critical pedagogy explores different aspects of the context where the learning process is being developed and, looks for transformation within that context. Critical perspectives also "allow for the exploration of students' cultures and lives and of the connection between experience and knowledge" (Pennycook, 1990, p. 310). It means that, critical pedagogy aims to analyze the student's environment to link their context with the learning process to make of new knowledge something more meaningful. Based on this critical learning perspective, Kumaravadivelu (2006) incorporates critical pedagogy into the postmethod approach to language teaching. He argues that language teachers must be aware of the social, cultural, and political contexts in which language

is learned and used, and that they should engage students in critical reflection on these issues so, the previous knowledge from the learner is a very important factor. In consequence, the author highlights the importance of creating classroom spaces where learners are free to analyze, critique and transform their current knowledge and issues concerning language and communication, or even the learning process itself, these spaces, promoted by the teacher as "postmethod pedagogy demands is beset with more than the normal share of difficulties because it involves not merely changing attitudes and beliefs, but also creating and maintaining favorable conditions for change" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p.215). Thus, learning is a process in which teachers and learners support each other and are constantly theorizing, questioning, practicing and evolving.

Vision of learner

The vision of the learner in this research was framed within the vision of learning. Based on the critical pedagogy perspective and the post method approach, the learner is seen as an active participant in their language learning development. This active role of the learner fits into the description made by Piaget cited by Saldarriaga-Zambrano et al (2016) who say the learner is able to build their own knowledge based on their previous experiences, their environment and their context, supported by the content imparted by the teacher and the creation of accurate spaces by the educator, making of the learning process something meaningful. In the field of language teaching Kumaravadivelu (2006) say that "learners create learning opportunities for themselves and for other learners by seeking clarification, raising doubts, making suggestions, and so forth" (p.202) This vision indicates that learners are capable to create opportunities for the teacher to utilize them in the classroom space, even through their own difficulties, if a learner experiences troubles there may be other students with the same similar issues, not taking a particular learner

difficulty into the class shows a mistake made by the teacher to use a learning opportunity created by the learner (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Learners used to be considered passive agents in their language learning development, they were seen as kind of an empty glass waiting to be filled out by the teacher; however, framed into the post method perspective, they are considered a crucial part not just in the learning but, in the teaching process as they help the teacher theorize and evolve while they do it by themselves.

Teaching approach

Language teaching is commonly conceived as grammar rules or teaching to communicate but, it does not have to be unaffiliated to the context surrounding it. Furthermore, the language teaching class can be used in order to reframe aspects from the context where the language is being taught or, what Pennycook (1990) calls a critical pedagogy "the nature of second language education, however, requires us to understand our educational practice in broader social, cultural and political terms, and it is to critical pedagogy that I think we could most profitably turn to extend our conception of what we are doing as language teachers" (p.303)

Considering this critical perspective and the objectives of the project, the teaching approach that supported this pedagogical intervention was the post-method as it is "intending to cover not only issues about classroom strategies, instructional materials, curricular objectives, and evaluation measures, but also many historical, political and sociocultural experiences that more or less influence ELT'' (Chen, 2014, p. 18) which aligns to the transformative perspective of this research.

The post-method pedagogy has its origins as an answer to the requirements for a renewed vision of English teaching free from the conventional perception of the method-based

approach, which limited the pedagogical practice looking for uniformity in the classroom and forgetting individuality and different types of learning in the students. The conventional method authorizes theorizers to centralize pedagogic decision making, while the post-method condition enables practitioners to produce local, specific, and novel practices (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 29).

Post-method is conceived into three different principles as proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2001)*: particularity, practicality,* and *possibility*. The first one, considered as the most important for the author when it comes to the post-method pedagogy. *Particularity* "must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural mileu" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 538). It means that it is necessary to consider the sociopolitical context the language teaching classroom is taking place in, because as Elliot (1993) cited by Kumaravadivelu argues "a meaningful pedagogy cannot be constructed without a holistic interpretation of particular situations, and that it cannot be improved without a general improvement of those particular situations" (2006, p. 171).

Secondly, *practicality,* as its name suggests, refers to the practice, the teacher is a theorist in the language learning classroom, so, he/she theorizes while they exercise teaching and apply these theories to the classroom, it is a retro alimentative work, that is open to evolve or be changed during the process. Kumaravadivelu (2006) cited by Chen (2014) claims that "the pedagogy of practicality seeks to enable teachers themselves to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize" (p.18)

Finally, the last step on the post method-structure is *possibility*, Kumaravadivelu (2006) mostly based this parameter on Paulo Freire's position of pedagogy as a creator and sustainer of

social inequity and emphasizes "the importance of acknowledging and highlighting students' and teachers' *individual identity* and, encourage them to question the status quo that keeps them subjugated'' (p.174). Teachers, in this case, being the bridge in between the social reality and cementing the path where this reality can be reframed.

> The critical educator cannot think that, from the course he or she coordinates or from the seminar they direct, they can transform the country. But they can demonstrate that it is possible to change. And this reinforces in him or her the importance of his or her political-pedagogical task (Freire, 1997, p. 51).

This pedagogical approach in the post-method matches with Pennycook's (1990) perspective of critical education as both of them consider the learner's previous experiences, knowledge and context in order to create theories and put them into practice, theories which, at the same time, are aimed to make the students analyze, question and transform perspectives in regards to their environment.

Pedagogical intervention

Considering the critical approach this project is aimed to, the vision of learning is based into what Freire conceives as education as a means of change, he constantly insists on the idea that education by itself is not guarantee of transformation but, through the learning process, educators can show that change is achievable. Based on the previous arguments, this project proposed a series of activities linked to the CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza's English curriculum; moreover, the basic learning standards were considered in the process of class planification and setting up/complement the sessions objectives to be accomplished. The activities were carried out along the first semester of 2023 and divided into three cycles: gender roles in *society, family* and *school*

each one was developed in an estimated timeframe of 4 weeks, with class activities oriented to question and reframe gender stereotypes in their current field. Each cycle was compound by three classes, in those learning sessions different tools were used: for example, readings, videos, music or group activities like discussions or online games. Each cycle was followed by a creative writing session. For instance, there will be a further explanation about the cycles, the creative writing sessions and the tools below.

Society: This cycle started in March 2023 and was developed until the second week of April, just after the holly week vacation, when the first creative writing session took place. During this cycle, the project focused on gender stereotypes imposed and perpetrated by society, for example, through social media, in the labor environment and politics.

School: Began in the middle of April until the middle of May**.** In this cycle, the activities were aimed to make the learners reflect about how the school context through their possible gender-biased thinking, academic activities such as materials, discourses or workshops, and even students amongst them in their daily relations and behavior might perpetrate gendered notions and how these can be reformulated.

Family: The last cycle started in May and was developed until the beginning of June. As the last moment in the research process, it was oriented to analyze and question the gender roles perpetrated by the family since early ages, which involves the expectations imposed based and depending on if you are born a male or a female, the role played in family nucleus, and how all of this influences the perception someone may have about what a family is and what is not.

Creative writing sessions: These sessions were carried out individually and, as an open space for learners to express freely and write about their points of view, beliefs etc. in regards of the topics developed in the learning sessions.

Group discussions: Hasibuan (2004) cited by Darise (2018) define group discussion as "a way of delivering learning materials and teacher allows students to brainstorm, make a conclusion or making a variety of alternative solutions to problems. In other words, a group discussion is one of the learning strategies that enable the achievement of a comprehensive teaching purposes" (ps. 6-7). This method was used in the first session where, all the learners in the classroom were asked for their opinions or thoughts regarding gender notions in the labor market and their effect in terms of work access, expectations in a job and salary discrepancies, it is important to highlight that, due to their lack of vocabulary, they continuously spoke in Spanish along with English but, they were able to express their opinions.

The next chart organizes and explains the development of each session.

First Cycle: March – April				
Session	**General objective(s)**	**Skill(s) objective(s)**	**Content(s)**	**Activity(ies)**
1st	Reflect about the gender stereotypes in the professions.	Practice the professions in English.	Discussing the gender stereotypes in the labor environment	Class discussion on how gender-biased notions affect labor access, opportunities, and development
2nd	Discuss about gender identification	Review adjectives	Analyzing gender roles in multimedia content	Brainstorming in small discussion groups about gender-biased discourse in multimedia. Class discussion regarding gender identification

3rd	Debate about gender roles in politics	Implement physical descriptive adjectives	Debating gender notions in the political field	Small groups discussion about characteristics a leader should have. Then a class debate in regards of those characteristics in order to conclude into a reflection.
Creative writing	Create a description of how the perfect politician would be	Make use of professions, and physical descriptive adjectives	Creative writing activity	Individual writing activity: each student will describe how they imagine or consider a perfect politician or role model would be.
Second Cycle: April – May				
Session	**General objective(s)**	**Skill(s) objective(s)**	**Content**	**Activities**
4th	Identify gender stereotyped content in English teaching books.	Review descriptive adjectives of personality and practice physical descriptive adjectives	Analyze features associated to gender stereotypes in English books material.	Groups analysis and discussion about how men and women are illustrated in academic material, specifically English learning books
5th	Discuss stereotyping activities in the school and analyze how that may impact school relations.	Recognize different extracurricular activities in English language	Choose within twenty different extracurricular activities such as: baking, programming, dancing, gardening, cooking, auto repair, etc.	Class voting about extracurricular activities in school and how these activities can be attached to gender stereotypes, limiting what we choose.
6th	Represent characters to experiment with different gender perspectives.	Use the body in order to impersonate different characters.	Share opinions and feelings about representing different gender roles.	The group will be divided into 2 groups, each group will send someone or he/she will be chosen randomly to pass front and take a piece of paper from a bag which contains the name of the character to be represented

Creative writing	Write an opinion paragraph about gender related issues in the school	Use present simple and descriptive adjectives to build an opinion paragraph	Creative writing activity	Individual writing activity: each student will write an opinion paragraph about gender-biased discourses in the school.
Third Cycle: May - June				
Session	**General objective(s)**	**Skill(s) objective(s)**	**Content**	**Activities**
7th	Revise previous and learn new vocabulary about the family.	Review the different types of existing families.	Different types of family such as nuclear family, extended family, homoparental family, unpersonal family.	First, the teacher will show and describe the different types of existing families in society. Then, class discussion will be developed. They will be asked in which category of family his/hers fits and if that fulfills their initial ideas.
8th	Analyze gender stereotype multimedia content in regards of family portrayals.	Be able to discuss and provide opinion about family dynamics	Stereotyped content in multimedia such as movies, ads, music, etc.	To start, teacher will play two movie scenes where family is portrayed as in a daily basis, then, three different ads oriented to sell thing and finally two songs will be played where family is the main topic.
9th	Play a role within the family	Practice family vocabulary	Different types of family such as nuclear family, extended family, homoparental family, unpersonal family.	Learners will have to recreate family dynamics in groups, each individual will choose a role and play it within the family.
Creative writing	Write the story of your future family.	Use simple past and family vocabulary	Creative writing activity	Individually, write the story of your family. Students will have to take the role of grandparents to tell

				their grandchildren the story of their family.

Chapter V: Data Analysis

In this chapter, data analysis will be developed. The evidence will be discussed within three main emerging categories: *Adapting to gender norms, building spaces for free expression,* and *going towards more inclusive perceptions of gender*, it is important to recall that, as discussed in the previous chapter, the analysis was developed using the grounded theory approach. Then, the results and conclusions of the research.

Adapting to gender normativity

As explained by Butler (1999) gender norms are a social construct pointed out to categorize bodies in a binary conception, consequently, pointed out to stablish a frame in which men and women can develop themselves and their behavior. If an individual steps out from that frame, it would be considered as a violation to social normativity. Along the literature review and the theoretical framework, it was shown how those norms were reproduced in different social fields such as the family or the school. Benitez et al. (2015) and Castañeda and Lozano (2017) along their research demonstrated how heteronormative values were transmitted since early ages through the family bonds, and how to challenge those normative values was not accepted or well seen within the family. In the initial questionnaire learners appeared to be adapted to those gender norms. During the interview, it was seen how such categories as strength and leadership, or intelligence were way more associated with male characters. For example, in answering to question "who would more likely win at an athletic competition?" Fourteen (14) learners associated the answer to a male character, against two (2) females. Similarly, when answering the question "who do you think would be the best as a class monitor? Was a little bit more balanced with nine (9) associations to male classmates against seven (7) females, however, there is still a biased thought

amongst the students on over who resides the strength and leadership favoring males. In the question they had to answer in regards of who will get the best ICFES results in class, eleven (11) answers stated males would get better grades, compared to five (5) stating females would do better, it allows to see that, there is a positioning in the learners conception about males being more capable in the fields of those categories previously mentioned which fits with Butler (1993) statement of gender being used as a tool to sustain power relations and even more, the patriarchal system in which men tend to be placed hierarchically higher than females in basically all social spheres like politics or science.

Contrasting these results with creative writing activities (CWA) some students also demonstrated an adaptation to gender normativity as participant twelve (12) (male) who stated in the first writing activity "**the ideal person is to be a soccer player who has money to have several wives** and have 3 houses to have many cats and dogs and to eat a lot to be fun and die."
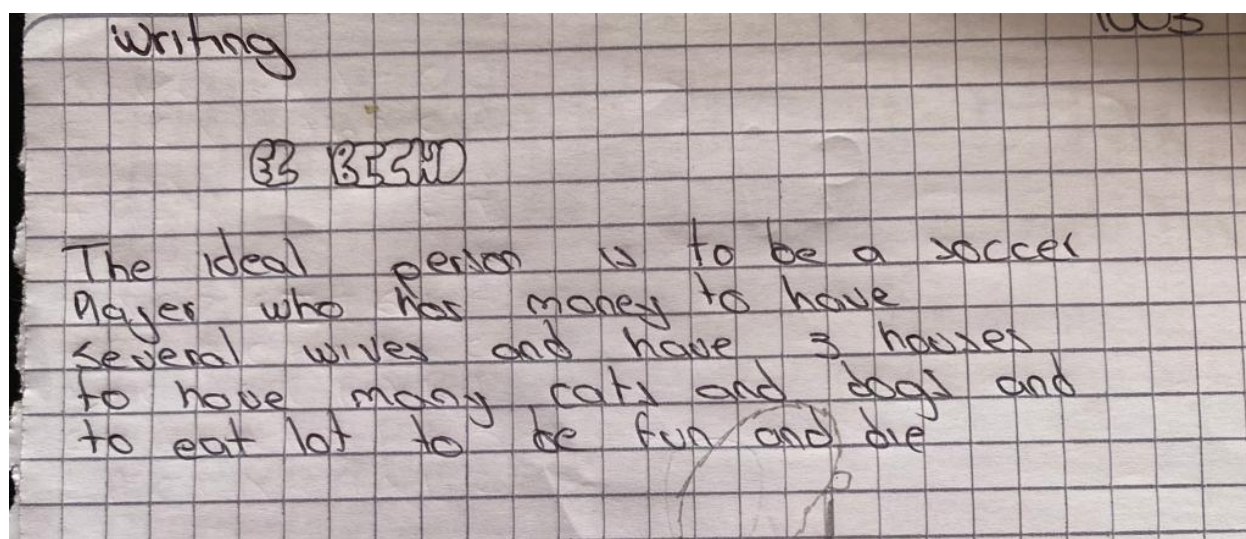
or subject ten (10) who stated:

> "**the perfect leader should be ambitious**, charismatic, polite, maginative, clever, **cruel,** and a**rgumentative**. I think the perfect leader should have these characteristics, for follow blindly, no doubt. I think the perfect leader not only

should have these characteristics" this participant also named his character as Adolf Hitler.

The perfect leader should be Ambitious, charismatic, polite, imaginative, clever, cruel, and argumentative. I think the perfect leader should have these characteristics, for follow blindly, no doubt. I think the perfect leader not only should have these characteristics. Ambitious
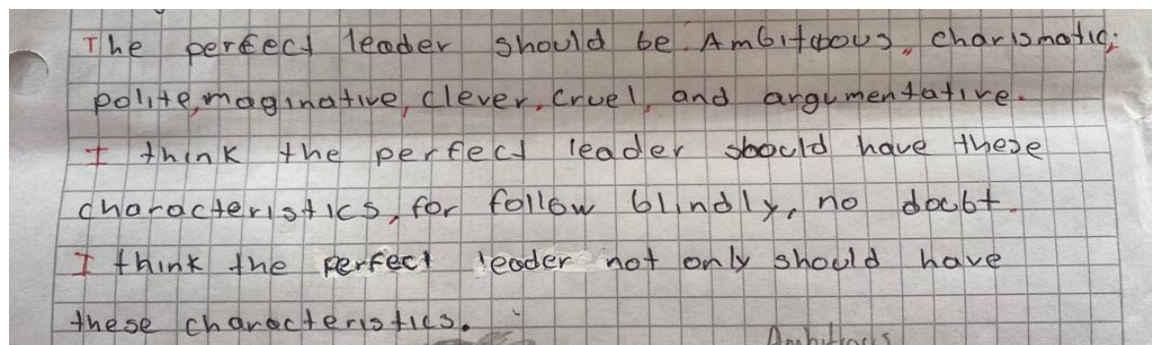
Here, it is very important to highlight some of my observation in the third session about gender and politics where students had to create the perfect president and name him/her/them in groups:

after everyone submitted their papers and analyzing them, from 11 groups not a single one named a female president. (field note # 3)

Therefore, English learners exhibit a biased thought regarding gender norms, appreciating males as the most adequate characters to fit in leadership and strength positions. On the other hand, when it comes to gender behavior, on the sixth session, in which objective was to play a character and guessing, some males strictly rejected to play female characters:

He totally refused to imitate Shakira, in his words he said "no voy a actuar como una mujer, esa Shakira baila como ella baila y eso no es de hombres" ["I am not going to act like a woman, that Shakira dances like she dances but, that is not for men¨] He requested to take out another paper or he will not play, he proceeded to take a new piece of paper and he got a male character this time, he smiled and proceeded with no doubt to imitate the character. (field note # 6)
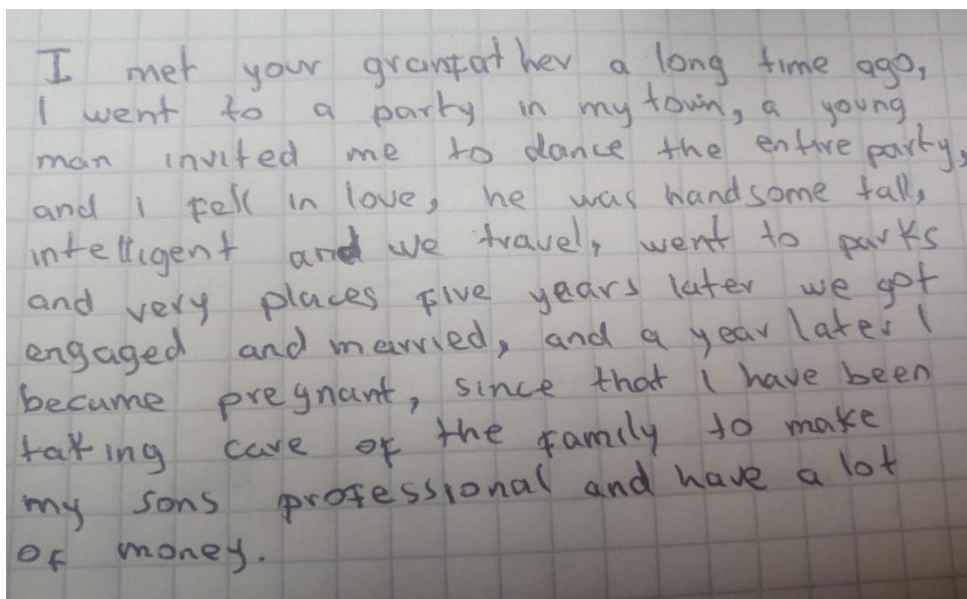
Moreover, another male learner refused at first to play Patricia Fernandez's role he said:

Yo sé que ella mueve el cabello y eso pero eso es muy afeminado" [I know she moves her hair and that stuff, but that's so effeminate] at the end he played the role, but he seemed to be very uncomfortable as he looked down, he was unable to look at the rest of his classmates who were laughing and screaming and he did it as quick as possible. (field note # 6)

It is remarkable that, when there was a male participant playing a feminine role, there were specific male participants who laughed most of the time and started to scream and making jokes about how "gay" he looked. On the contrary, when it was a female playing a male role, no woman appeared to be shy or uncomfortable, actually they seemed to enjoy the situation and the rest of the classmates found females playing males roles funny there was not any judging comment as there was with men. For instance, those experiences allow us to see how gender has been socialized for male individuals as someone strong, masculine, intelligent with no space for delicacy or weakness, and it was reproduced by the subjects in this research showing they are adapted to the gender normativity, that, based on Lamas (2013) is the result of the adoption of a female or male identity in order to fulfill social requirements imposed by social authorities.

Otherwise, when it comes to women, they were associated with the stereotyped women's role of housekeepers. In CWA # 3 where students had to tell the story of their family to her future grandchildren, four out of the five female participants expressed in their writings that, in the future they will find a husband to have children with and will take care of the family. As participant thirteen (13) stated:
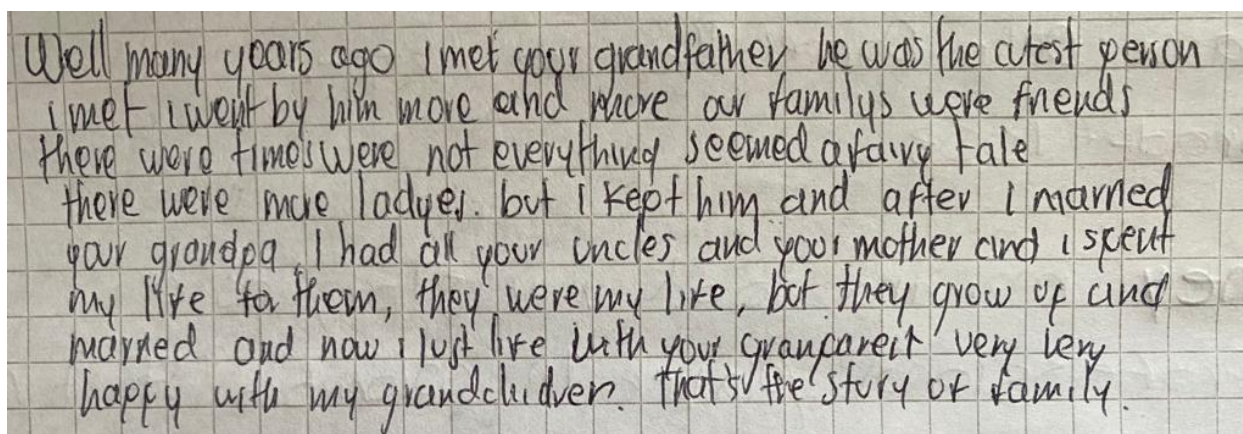
> I met your granfather a long time ago, I went to a party in my town, **a young man invited me to dance the entire party, and I fell in love**, he was handsome tall, intelligent and we travel, went to parks and very places **five years later we got engaged and married, and a year later I became pregnant, since that I have been taking care of the family to make my sons professional and have a lot of money** (CWA # 3)

In addition, participant six (6) wrote:

Well, many years ago I met your grandfather he was the cutest person I met I went by him more and more our familys were friends there were times were not everything seemed a fairy tale there were more ladyes. But I kept him and **after I married your grandpa I had all your uncles and your mother and I spent my life for them, they were my life**, but they grow up and married and now I just life with your grandparent very very happy with my grandchildren. That's the stury of family. (CWA # 3)

This, with the eighth activity, where learners had to make groups and play a role in a family, in the observations it was noticed that:

   They had the option to decide which role to play inside the family, however the majority of them, decided to play the stereotypical roles, women chose to be the mother and stay at home cooking and taking care of children, while men played roles of businessman, football players, workers in general who had to go out and get something to provide, none of them wanted to step out of those roles, looks like they did not even think about playing something different. (field note # 8)

Thus, following Castaneda-Peña (2021), this behavior is the result of school being a body and identity regulator, and the family reproducing the same gender-stereotyped notions. To illustrate this, in the initial interview, when they had to choose someone they would partner with if they had to take care of a baby, out of the sixteen (16) participants, thirteen (13) answered they would choose a woman to assist. Furthermore, while choosing someone from class to cook them a delicious meal, five (5) students chose a man, however, eleven (11) stated they would rather a female.

To sum up, it could be stated that, through activities, interviews and writings, English learners expressed, directly and non-directly, their positions and how adapted they are with regards of gender perspectives and normativity, and they seemed to have stereotyped notions about the roles females and males play and should play in different social contexts, no matter their own gender identity, associating men with power roles, more mental and physical capability and portraying women as a submissive character who does not have the same capabilities of men and are destined to accomplish their roles at home.

Building a space for free expression

The article 19 of the declaration of human rights defines free expression as "the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and

regardless of frontiers" (UN, n.d) Free expression is typically protected by law in many different countries, including Colombia whose constitution declares in article 20:

Se garantiza a toda persona la libertad de expresar y difundir su pensamiento y opiniones, la de informar y recibir información veraz e imparcial, y la de fundar medios masivos de comunicación. Estos son libres y tienen responsabilidad social. Se garantiza el derecho a la rectificación en condiciones de equidad. No habrá censura. [Every person is guaranteed the freedom to express and disseminate his or her thoughts and opinions, to inform and receive truthful and impartial information, and to establish mass media. These are free and have social responsibility. The right to rectification under fair conditions is guaranteed. There shall be no censorship]

Even though freedom of expression is defined as a right for everyone, expressing freely is still something difficult due to different factors such as social or cultural norms. There may be pressure to adhere to particular values and ideas due to those conventions. If you express opinions that are contrary to these norms, you risk social rejection, ostracism, or even violence, which is very common when it comes to gender-related opinions.

During the research, one of the objectives was pointed out to make students freely write and express their opinions in terms of gender, so, a safe and comfortable environment was needed. Throughout the activities, they started interrogating those notions through the class activities and exercises.

In the fifth activity, that, pointed out for students to choose different extracurricular activities at school, at first, most women stated they would sing up for gardening, crafting, and baking activities; on the other hand, men decided for football, gaming and programming. However,

one participant (male) stated he would sing up for sewing, instantly most classmates started to

laugh, and said:

> "¿se imaginan a (nombre) de costurero? JAJAJA, quien lo ve, [can you imagine to (name)
> as a dressmaker? HAHAHA, if you look at him]" there were such comments as: "yo no le
> mandaría a arreglar mi uniforme, [I wouldn't have you fix my uniform]" or, "mi mama le
> puede dar trabajo [my mom can offer you a job]". Participant did not take those comments
> seriously as he did not seem to be uncomfortable and laughed with them, and said: "ay,
> pero sí es chimba [but, it is nice]" (field note # 5)

In addition, during the interview, answering the question about choosing someone to design the

new uniform in the school, out of the sixteen (16) ten (10) participants associated this skill to

women. At this point it is necessary to highlight again Encinas-Martin (n.d) statement about how

gender stereotypes frame the way people evolve in society influencing possessional path choices,

inclining women to positions such as social workers, nurses or teachers and men to sciences,

political and mathematical fields. Taking advantage of the moment, this question was proposed:

why a man cannot be a dressmaker? Most of them remained silent but these were some of the

answers:

> "es que es raro ver a un man trabajando en eso [it is weird to see a man working on that]"
> or, "uno usualmente va a que le arreglen algo y son como las mamas y las abuelitas las que
> trabajan en eso, tal vez es costumbre de uno, [we usually go to get something fixed and
> moms or grandmas are the ones who work on that, maybe we are used to it]. One of them
> even said: "creo que son los estereotipos que uno tiene, [I think it's the stereotypes we
> have]" (field note # 5)

That drove to a quick discussion and reflection on why some activities should not be

exclusively for men and other for women, after the discussion, they were told to choose a new

activity as a second option, if it is true most males stated in the same line choosing programming,

auto repair and football; though, some men dared to sing up for bakery and gardening. In regards

of females, in the second round most of them changed mind, and decided to sing up for programming, gaming, dancing, and football.

Moreover, in the nineth session that proposed a role play activity where students had to recreate family dynamics, it is true most of them chose to play the typical roles as explained before, besides that, there was one specific case registered in field note # 9, a participant self-identified as a male which usually comes to class with long painted nails and make up on, stated he wanted to play the family's rebel daughter role, he started to act in a " mean girl" manner, screaming and not following instructions from the participant who was playing a mom, there were some laughs in the room but, there was not any judging comment like in previous session when this type of behavior was taking place.

In addition, during the 3rd session, focused on debating gender roles in politics while making a presidential poll in class, it was shown how almost all of the students (males and females) stated men were the ideal political leaders as they were strong and were not so emotional, as shown by participant seven (7) who is a male in CWA #1, said:

> the perfect leader as a man that is: my perfect leader is so goot at organizing everything in any situation, he knows how to keep calm, **he's so intelligent and takes good decisions, he takes care of his body and every is fit**, he know so much things and is preparing for any adverse situation. **He's so danger when he's angry. But is too calm almost always. He's is black belt** really he have so much qualities and he every get the want. He is very wise.

My Perfect. leader is good at organizing
Everything in any situation, He knows how.
to keep calm, He's so inteligent and takes
good decisions, He takes care of his body,
and every is fit. He know so much things
and is preparing for any adverse situation.
He's so Danger when he's angry. But is
too cool almost always. He's is black belt.
Really he have so much qualities and He
Every get all the want. He is very wise

 Participants were always relating physical strength with being a good leader, and physical strength with male figures. This conception brings us again to Butler (1993) stating these preconceptions are set up to maintain men hierarchically higher than women, in this case in the political field where men are prone to hold majority of power. Moreover, it was noticed how male leaders were often described with adjectives such as arrogance, cruelty, ambition and aggressiveness and those features were considered as appropriate to be a good leader. Following Lee (2021), these notions about masculinity are emotion restrictors and violence perpetrators amongst men.

 Nevertheless, after showing the results of their poll and making comparison between a male leader who showed all these characteristics as Vladimir Putin and a female leader as Jacinda Ardern who was even pregnant while leading a country, the group started to talk about more about female perceptions. These comments were registered in field note # 3

> "las mujeres también son fuertes, no solo los hombres, en otras cosas como que son más disciplinadas. [Women are strong too, not just men, in other things like, they're more disciplined]" or "es que uno ve a los presidentes todos serios y poderosos, como que nada les afecta, pero es cierto que también hay que tener emociones para tratar a la gente como le toca al presidente y las mujeres son mas así [one can look at the presidents and all of them are so serious and powerful, like, if nothing affects them, but it is true that they need to be emotional to treat people like the president has to do and women are more like that].

It is true that, they still seem to relate power to male characters and emotions to females, however, they were able to start associating those notions in a positive manner, as those features were being considered as women weaknesses.

Finally, it was demonstrated how crucial for many reasons it is to allow students to express themselves freely while talking and writing about gender issues in the classroom. It promotes inclusivity by recognizing the different experiences and viewpoints of every student, regardless of gender identification. In addition to empowering people to share their experiences, this open discourse informs everyone about the complexity of gender and promotes empathy and understanding. Also, it is a tool to reframe those stereotyped perceptions. These spaces for free expression could help to pave the way for a fairer society in which people are not restricted by preconceived notions of what they have to be based on their gender and we can make sure all voices are heard.
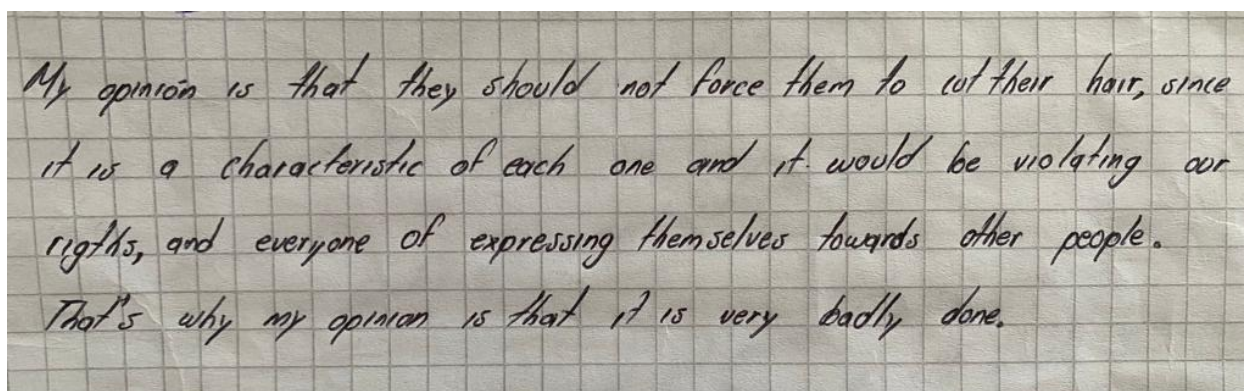
Going towards more inclusive perceptions of gender

In words of Butler (1990) gender is performative and also a social construct imposed by many different factors like, economic, social or political contexts, however, in her work she expresses that, gender is way more complex than the conceived binary conceptions, furthermore, an inclusive gender perception advocates to the acceptance of differences such as diversity of bodies, sexuality and individual expressions.

The main objective of this research is to reframe binary conceptions of gender, also conceived as stereotypes. As an example, participant (7) (male) in field note # 2 is described as part of a group of 4 males who sit on the right bottom corner of the classroom, they are always

using their cellphones, it is very difficult to catch their attention in class, they seemed to be always talking about football players and video games, such as Call of Duty and Fortnite. Also, in activity # 1 when assigning professions to classmates, when someone was asked which profession would fit for a male student who always spends time and spaces with a group of three girls he screamed "gay". This same participant wrote in CWA # 1 that, to be a leader, "*he* has to be tall, has to like soccer and being a Real Madrid fan, over 35 years old, have short straight hair, to be athletic and has to have brown eyes". He described an ideal leader as a male character with the stereotypical characteristics assigned to a man, which brings back Lamas' (2013) statement of gender being imposed and accepted by individuals. However, in CWA # 2 where learners had to write an opinion paragraph about one discriminatory behavior at school, he chose an intolerance case against a male with long hair and, showed a new perspective regarding those gender stereotyped notions, he wrote:

> My opinion is that they should not force them to cut their hair, since it is a characteristic of each one and it would be violating our rights, and everyone of expressing themselves towards other people. That's why my opinion is that it is very badly done.

At the same time, after the third activity that discussed leadership and, in which majority of learners associated male characters to this concept, leading to a class discussion, by the fourth activity regarding gender stereotypes in English textbooks, it was found that they started to rethink

those leadership roles, and stated stereotyped jobs assigned to women could be also for men, looking for a more equalitarian society:

> "I would change the image, that wome(n) are also entrepreneurs, that men, can also do the housework, that the man was the waiter." Group # 4
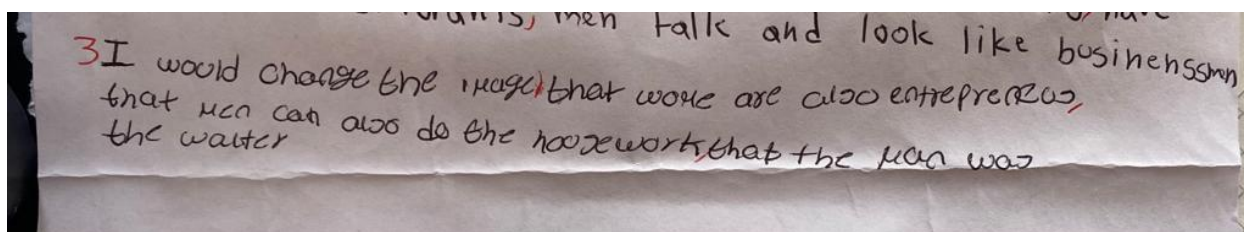
> "We would change that women are represented in more authoritarian roles like men, likewise men in jobs which women represent" Group # 2
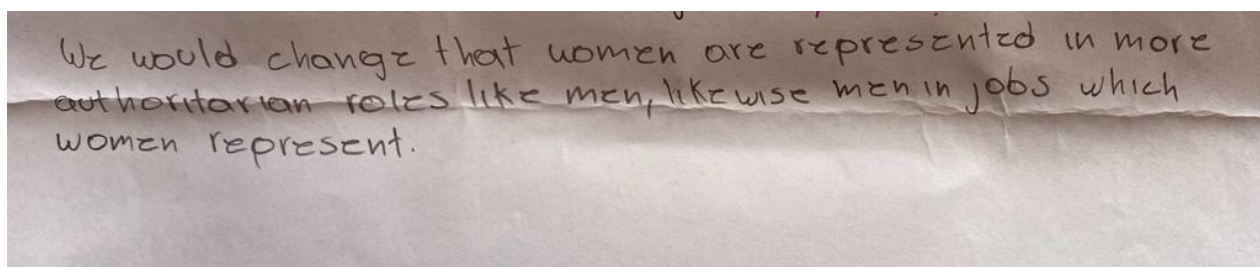

From the previous observation, it is necessary to recall Castaneda-Peña's (2021) position about gender experiences in the English class, he stated, second language class and school in general could be a regulator of identity, perpetrating stereotyped ideals about gender as it is for example, through English learning books, however, as it could work as a reproducer of these ideals, the English class can be used to re-define them, as showed before, by establishing a setting that is safe for expression.

Additionally, in session seventh that was carried out in order to show differences in family types, at first when they were asked what the family is and how it is conformed, participant # 6
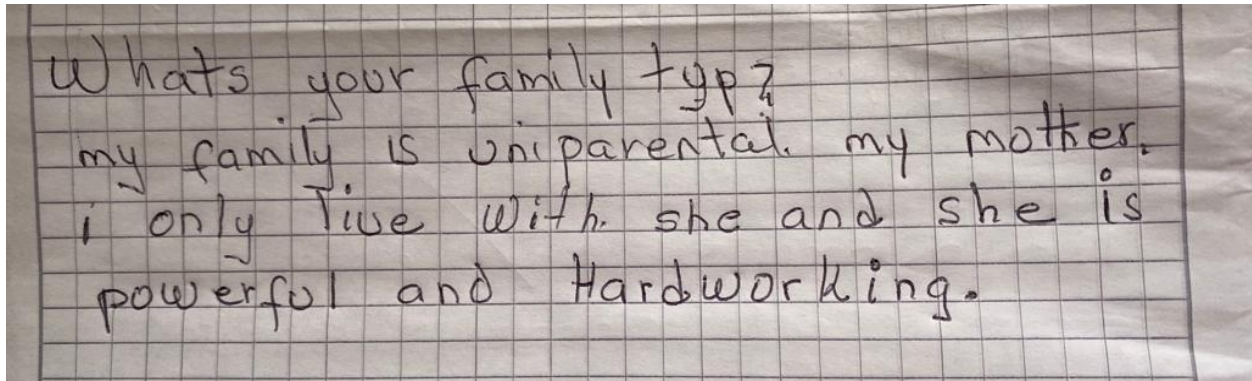
answered to the question "what is family for you? My family is my loved ones, and those who support me in what I decide."
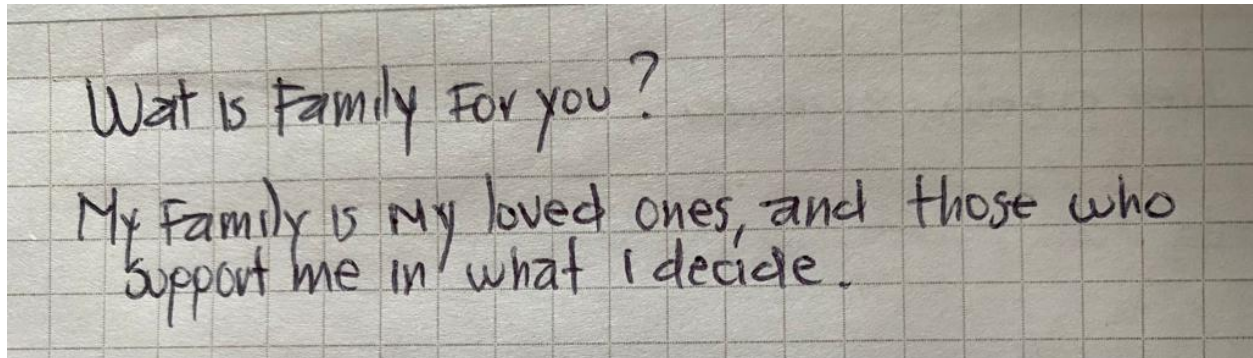
Then, he answered to the question "how is family conformed? Family is conformed by mom, dad and sons."
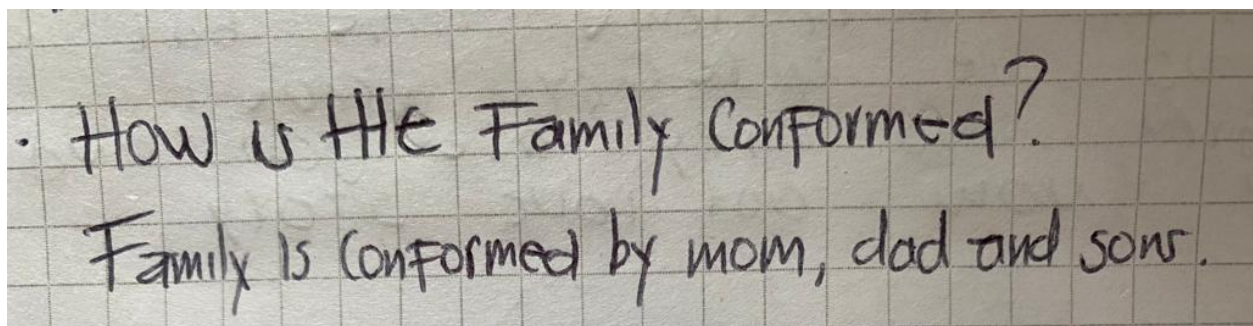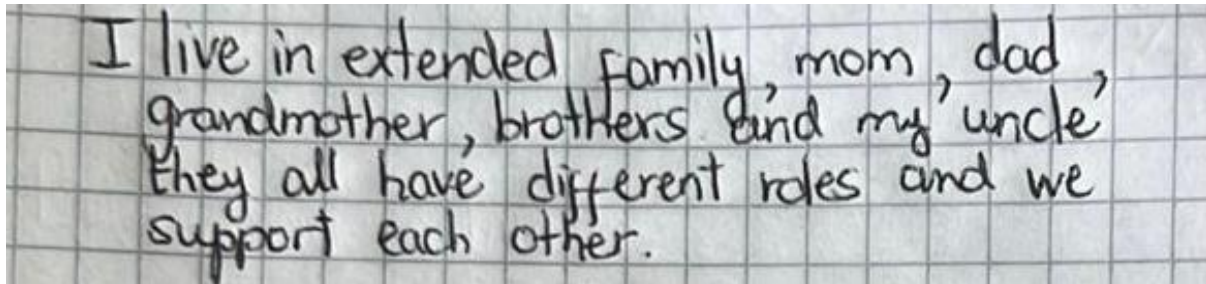
As this participant, all of them wrote the same in this first moment of the class. After the reflection about the multiplicity and diversity of families, they showed to start rethinking those roles. Participant # 8 answered to question "what is your family type? my family is uniparental my mother, I only live with she and she is powerful and hardworking."
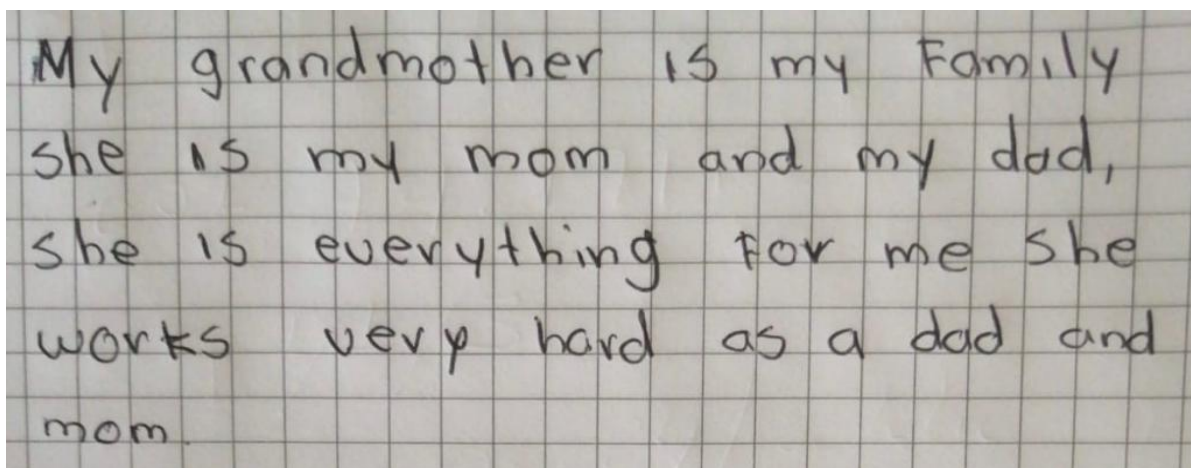
> Whats your family typ?
> my family is uniparental. my mother.
> i only live with she and she is
> powerful and Hardworking.

Participant #13 wrote: "I live in extended family, mom, dad, grandmother, siblings and my uncle, they all have different roles and we support each other.

> I live in extended family, mom, dad, grandmother, brothers and my 'uncle' they all have different roles and we support each other.

Participant # 15 stated that: My grandmother is my mom and my dad, she is everything for me she works very hard as a dad and mom".

> My grandmother is my family she is my mom and my dad, she is everything for me she works very hard as a dad and mom.

Through this class and writings, they were able to express and understand different visions of the world they inhabit which is the objective of creative writing (Ramet, 2007). Also, it was noticed how gender has become a topic of concern in education because it affects how teachers and students form social commitments to the practice of teaching and learning and how it could evolve (Emilia et al., 2017)

Hence, along the research stages, it was observed that, class activities with creative writing exercises have demonstrated to be an effective way of helping students develop more gender-inclusive perspectives. Students were able to explore a variety of gender identities and experiences via storytelling, discussions or debates working on prejudices and promoting empathy. These exercises promote communication, introspection, and a better comprehension of the complexity of gender, supporting a tolerant and inclusive society.

Conclusions

This project followed an action research approach to explore the relation between creative writing, gender perspectives, and language learning, in order to examine and challenge common gender-stereotyped notions, as well as to analyze the transformative effects of creative writing learning tasks on the configuration of those gender perspectives.

Recalling Butler (1993) and Beauvoir (2015) statement that gender stereotypes have their foundations in the sexed body of all human beings and, based on that, people are assign physical and behavioral aspects to be followed throughout their lives, limiting gender to a binary conception that usually defines men as a provider and fits women in the role of a caregiver; at first, it was found that through the interview and class activities English learners had a stereotyped gender

perspective, associating specific roles and qualities in social and familiar contexts to determined gender (females or males).

As explained in the analysis, leadership, mental capability and strength were widely associated to males, being characterized like entrepreneurs, scientists, athletes, politicians, head of household etc. and weakness and housework concepts being linked to females who were often portrayed (also by women) as babysitters, social workers, servants, etc. These fits into Butler (1993) and Beauvoir (2015) description of the gender-stereotyped conception in society. In addition, some of them showed denial to step out of those specific roles due to shyness or fear to be judged. Lee (2021) states people are subject to experience discrimination and social rejection after transgressing those norms and this behavior was noticed in the participants, stereotypes caused males to be more restrictive in terms of emotions and expression, as well as to be more aggressive amongst them, males used to make jokes and judging comments against those other males who even for a moment, did not fit into those "masculine standards". On the contrary, females showed to be more comprehensive and relaxed in the same activities and conditions towards their female classmates.

However, while setting up a comfortable environment where gender issues could be discussed and reflected about, through class activities and creative writing sessions participants showed class after class, more confidence to interrogate and talk about the topic in question, as it was registered in the field notes gathered by the researcher and the writings created by the participants, they did not feel observed and judged while commenting about gender in their texts, they were able to express opinions freely. Castañeda-Peña (2021) highlighted this possibility to transform ELT into a safe space to re-define those conceptions, making an opposite to the usual stereotyped discourse reproduced in school. Moreover, aside from a safe space for free expression,

using creative writing allowed learners to express their reality and use their imagination to get to more natural productions Ramet (2010), making of writing an appropriate instrument to develop the research, English learners were able to establish an interaction, through their creations, between their own visions of gender, gender in their contexts, beliefs and desires about it Rodari (1996), demonstrating positive results in the reformulation of those perspectives along the research due to learners becoming more open and acceptance towards those different gender notions that at first could have been difficult to understand or accept, pointing out to re-define the ideal of men being more capable than women in different fields such as profession, family roles, mental capability amongst others, changing minds to a more equalitarian vision. Consequently, it can be concluded that creative writing sessions have a positive potential impact on forming and reshaping learner's perspectives on gender, contributing to the lack of research mentioned by Castañeda-Peña (2021) about gender in ELT and demonstrating that creative writing in the English learning process works as a tool to establish a connection between these two aspects that are not commonly related in the school.

Furthermore, when it comes to ELT and learning, it was clear that there was an improvement of their confidence using a second language in terms of writing and speaking, even though sometimes it was difficult for them, they showed to be more interested in getting involved in the activities and the writing sessions compared to the usual classes focused on the instrumental use of language. The results of this study describe how participating in writing-related learning activities can result in a more informed, and progressive perspective of gender, which in turn helps to create a more egalitarian and inclusive society.

Moreover, it is very important to highlight that, it was demonstrated how the English language teaching class can go beyond the instrumental objective it commonly focuses on, which

usually seeks to improve communicative skills like speaking, writing and listening, ELT can also be pointed out to a critical perspective at the same time to improve those skills and get to a transformational space to improve social-related concerns, as in this case, the positive impact of creative writing tasks in gender stereotyped notions in 10th graders from CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza school, fostering a better understanding and empathy towards such differences and gender diversity as well as supporting their own gender identity development.

Implications

Throughout the creative writing activities, it was observed that the mentioned activity has a positive impact when expressing ideas, thoughts and experiences in ELT and school in general; therefore, English teachers should advocate for the future of English education to support the inclusion of gender perspective and creative writing exercises in the curriculum to encourage conversations, workshops and spaces for free expression that dispel gender stereotypes and give students plenty of chances to write about and explore a wider range of gender experience.

Additionally, this research proves the importance of implementing a critical perspective in ELT because school in all its fields is a place for human development, not just intellectually but personally and English should not be indifferent to this transformative perspective, an opportunity to transgress imposed notions, questioning our environment, and supporting the development of a critical perspective in learners is being missed because the second language class is being limited to teaching English to communicate, when all these skills can be worked in the same space, even more, taking into account that English is a global language that opens a window to different

perspectives, cultures and diversity making the relation between ELT and the critical approach something more important than we think it is.

Limitations

Along the research there were some limitations that could have had an impact on the results. First of all, the sample size, during the observations in the beginning of the investigation, there were a total of forty learners that, was reducing during the process with some learners quitting school and less than half of the remaining ones accepting and providing a signed consent to be taken into account for the research, resulting in a total of sixteen (16) participants studied. Also, most of the learners whose results were analyzed were males, just 1/3 of them were females, potentially biasing the result of the investigation to a male perception. Secondly, the low English level students had during the research. It is true most of them were able to manage basic vocabulary concepts such as family or occupation terms; however, when talking about denser situations that required more complex grammar such as tenses, they were unable to manage the situation, resulting in very short and meaningless texts. This brings to a third situation, the smartphone usage in class and the lack of attention. Almost all participants used their phones all the time during the class activities, making use of them to play videogames, listen to music, chat, surf on the web or check social networks, when not using the phone for this purposes, sometimes they did it as a support for the creation of their texts, even though they were all repeatedly requested to use their own knowledge, no matter the results, in the creation of their writings. Additionally, possibly affecting their process of creating meaningful texts and the results of the research.

Further research

This research was focused on English learners at school; however, as stated before gender stereotypes are reproduced since early ages in school and family contexts. Consequently, it should be valuable to develop new research where not only students are the main participants but, the community itself, getting parents, siblings, close friends etc. engaged in projects that try to challenge gender stereotypes to foster mutual understanding and collaboration among all parties involved. Additionally, an investigation addressing teacher's training in regards of gender perspectives would offer a great overview to evaluate the impact educators may have in reproducing and reframing those stereotypes.

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Appendix A

Title	Professions
Research question	Are there professions exclusively for men and others for women?
Field note #	1
Date	March 17th 2023
Location	CEDID Guillermo Cano Isaza
Session objective.	Reflect about the gender stereotypes in the professions.
Criteria	**Observation/ Reflection**
Development of activities proposed	All students worked proactively, most of them seemed to already know the professions in English. There is a group of females who seem to enjoy the activity more than the others as they scream and are always trying to get engaged in the activity of assigning professions to their classmates. However, there is another group of 4 males, who do not like to participate that much, they are always chatting in their phones or to each other, I had to request for their attention and participation a lot of times, but it was difficult. In general terms, they look like they were participating with some interest.
Issues related to gender	During the session it was quite clear how students have gendered notions about professions. When couples were pointing out to their couples, they always associated females in the roles of hairdressers, flight attendants, secretaries, or models. Just one female was assigned with the role of engineer, which was most assigned to males, along with pilots, firefighters, scientists, or doctors. At some moment, as a joke because it did not look like they were trying to follow the activity but just making fun of the situations, some of the males assigned another male the role of secretaries or hairdressers, in those situations everybody laughed, when they were asked why he would not be a secretary some participants expressed that that was a very "soft and delicate" profession to him or those are not "masculine professions". On the other hand, females looked like were taking the activity seriously and there was not this kind of behavior amongst them. In general it makes me feel like males want to get attention.
Effectiveness of used materials	In this case just a power point presentation was used. At first, the instruction to practice pronunciation while slides were passing on was followed and then it was nice to see how proactively they repeated words without request and tried to guess the profession that was showing on the screen, which make me think most of them were paying attention on the activity.
English language learning aspects	Looks like most of them already know most of the professions showing up in the screen. I just saw a couple of girls, including the so called "nerd" by the rest of the class taking notations of the occupations that they did not know before. At the end of the class the teacher told them the vocabulary would be evaluated in future sessions and most of them started writing them very quick and taking photos of the classroom.
Other aspects	90% of the class was making use of their phones while in the activity, teacher had to call out them to get the attention. Also, it was notorious

	how the majority of participants did not use the uniform correctly, they all had different types of shoes, and half the uniform, as if they had the pants, they did not have the shirt because they had a hoodie or something like that, also most of them were using hats and colorfull hoodies.

To revise the rest of field notes, follow this link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mfnw-p2PWvITwR4QeNYgwIPjuhNxrVid?usp=drive_link

Appendix B.

	Question	Female	Male
Strength and leadership	If you had to choose someone to fix the damaged desktop, who would it be?		
	Choose someone in class you would go to practice extreme sports with		
	Who do you think would be the best as a class monitor?		
	Who would you pair with if you had to create a project for the science class?		
	Who would more likely win at an athletic competition?		
Weakness	Who would not be able to fix the damaged desktop?		
	Someone you would not go practice extreme sports with		
	Who would be terrible as a class monitor?		
	Who would be last at the athletic competition?		
	Someone you would never pair with for a project in the science class		
Intelligence	If someone here would get to be president, who would you think he/she would be?		
	In this class, tell me someone who definitely would win the robotics fair of the school		
	Who will be the best in class in the ICFES results?		
	If you are told someone in the class won a scholarship at the university, who do you think he/she is?		
	Who do you consider to be the best at giving a conference of any type?		
Housekeeping	If you had to choose someone from class to cook you a delicious meal, who would it be?		
	Choose someone you would partner with if you had to take care of a baby		
	Choose someone to design the new uniform in the school		
	If you go to a high etiquette dinner, who would you invie?		
	In your opinion, who would be the best at solving problems by being calm and speaking kindly		

Appendix C.

Student	Creative writing 1	Creative writing 2	Creative writing 3
Participant 1	Supporting	Not to force	Caution
	Serious	Self characteristics	Fascinating
	sympathetic	Rights violating	Nervous
	Good heart	Express themselves	Carefully
	Relaexed		Destiny
Participant 2	Leadership	Discriminatory	Unfortunate
	Focused	Bad taste	Decisions
	Persistance	Not mandatory	Survive
	Commitment	Learning	Significant
	Motivation		Happiness
			Succesfull
Participant 3	Fulfill dreams	Learns the same	Youth
	Study		Learning
	Kind		Discipline
Participant 4	Worry for people	Decide	
	Fighter	Do what you want	
	Noble		
	Take care		
Participant 5	Selfaware	Forcing	
	Communicate effectively	Decide what he does	School
	Strategic thinking	Respect	Love
	Be an example		We could do everything
	Make decisions		
Participant 6	Fight for rights	Free	Afraid
	University	Make own decision	Attacks
	Honest person		Inheritance
	Perfectionist		
Participant 7	Experience	Should not prohibit	Special
	Respectful	Have it like he wants	Wise man
	Motivation		Fascinating
	Help everyone		Brave
			Values
			Life lessons
			Imagination
			Funny moments
			Full of life
Participant 8	Good job	Do what he likes	
	Professional	Seems wrong	
	Work	Feel bad	
	Sport		
	Being succesfull		
Participant 9	Fulfill dreams	Learns the same	
	Know how to teach		
	Ambitious	No problem	Analysing

Participant 10	Charismatic	Do not interfere	Decisions
	Polite	Other's life	Enchanted
	Cruel		Fascinating
	Follow blindly		Relationships
Participant 11	Intelligent	Free expression	Decisions
	Pleasant	Respect	Wedding
	Sense of humor		Hardworking
	Friendly		Sensible men
	Talkative		
	Hardworking		
Participant 12	Make money	Not critizice	War
	Have several wives	Not judging	Strenght
	Cats and dogs		Attacks
Participant 13	Respect to people	Bad idea	Fell in love
	Honest person	Respect tastes	Travel together
	Self confident	Retroagressive	Get engaged
	Do not doubt		Get married
	Understanding		Get pregnant
	Intelligent		
Participant 14	Empathetic	Do what she likes	Unforgettable
	Beautiful	Be satisfied	
	Judicious		
	Intelligent		
	Want to be like her		
Participant 15	Responsible	Bad idea	
	Well being		
	Mental capacity		
Participant 16	Strong	Unfair	Strange
	Good personality	Limitating	Fairy tale
	Arrogant	Follow their interests	Problems
	Athletic	Develope their skills	Energy
	Confident	No gender bias	Fight

Fiel Note 1	Fiel Note 2	Fiel Note 3	Fiel Note 4
Occupation	Multimedia content	Politics	School
Career	Gender roles	Leadership	Participation
Employment	Characters	Representation	Gender biased
Job market	Representation	Inequality	Organization
Professional skills	Media influence	Perceptions	Sports
Work experience	Masculinity	Political campaign	Discrimination
Job opportunities	Sexism	Women in politics	Inclusion
Resume/CV	Stereotyped	Goverment	Diversity
Job satisfaction		Discourse	Social norms
Networking		Expectations	Equity
Looking for a job		Decisions	Neutral activities
Career goals		Participation	Cultural influence
		Patterns	

	Fiel Note 2	Fiel Note 3	Fiel Note 4
	Multimedia	Political representation	Inclusive education
	Gender representations	Decision making	Social biases
		political perceptions	Activities
		Traditions	

Fiel Note 5	Fiel Note 6	Fiel Note 7	Fiel Note 8
Representation	Convivence	Family content	Family portrayal
Role play	Hiding	Family dynamics	Gender roles
Empathy	Values	Parenting	Media influence
Social norms	Stress	Household work	Stereotypical roles
Identity	Free expression	Labor	Expectations
Empowerment	Safe environment	Patriarchy	Analysis
Shy	Adults	Communication	Values
Angry		Traditions	Family diversity
Unconfortable		Behaviour	
Deny		Family structure	
Relaxed			
Funny			
Enjoyable			
Difficult			
Willingness			

Categories

Fiel Note 5	Fiel Note 6	Fiel Note 7	Fiel Note 8
Identity empowerment	Free expression	Family developement	Stereotyped family
Emotional responses to social norms	Attitudes	Social norms	Gender expectations

Fiel Note 9
Representation
Laughs
Ridiculous
Shyness
Embarrassed
Denial
Getting confortable
Stereotypes
Emotional responses
Representation

Appendix D.

Signed conscent file:

To review the signed consents, follow this link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1433Ej3bRJvbkviLJ2PsPfvAJp1Z4KvZW?usp=drive_link