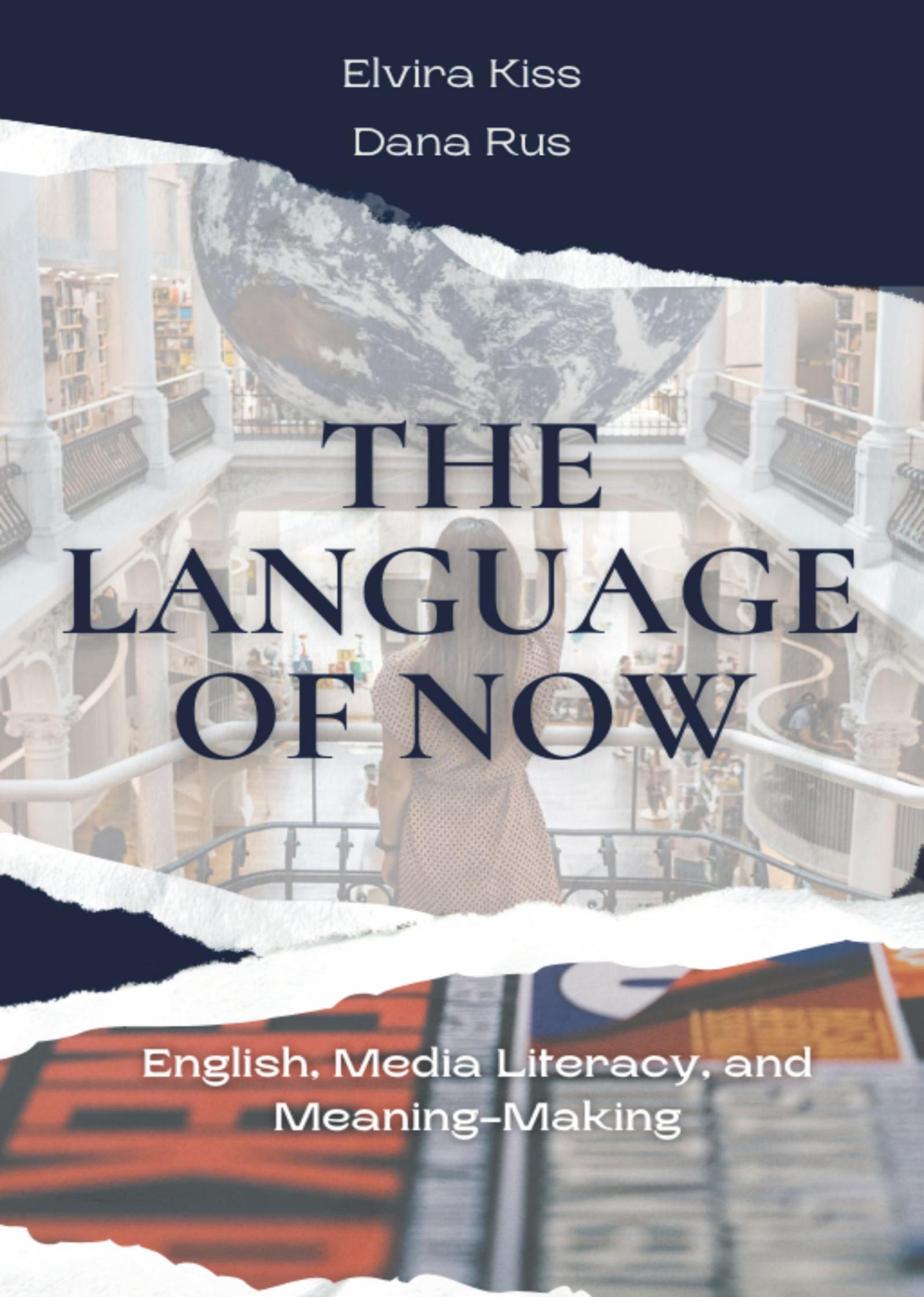


Elvira Kiss

Dana Rus



**THE  
LANGUAGE  
OF NOW**

English, Media Literacy, and  
Meaning-Making

Elvira Kiss and Dana Rus

# The Language of Now

English, Media Literacy,  
and Meaning-Making

PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

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## Chapter 1 – LANGUAGE, LEARNING AND THE WORLD TODAY

"The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge," said Daniel Boorstin as early as 1984, in anticipation of a phenomenon which is profoundly shaping our world today. The emergence of media prevalence in modelling public attitudes, with deep, long-lasting effects on society, the illusion of reality, and the empowerment of the public as actors, rather than spectators, have all contributed to a complex landscape in which fact, opinion, and manipulation often coexist indistinguishably.

In this context, media no longer merely reflects social reality; it constructs it. The constant flow of constructed narratives, selective visibility, and algorithm-driven amplification have blurred the lines between authentic knowledge and perceived truth. As a result, education must now take on a dual responsibility: not only to transmit knowledge, but also to equip individuals with the critical tools to interrogate it.

In a world where the media dictates trends of thought, shapes opinions, and triggers societal polarization, the most essential role of education must change to address the new reality. Old patterns mainly centered on informative scopes must be replaced with newer paradigms prioritizing formative potentials and the development of skills, such as critical and analytical attitudes, active involvement, and independent, unbiased thinking. In an age marked by information abundance and media saturation, learners must be equipped not only with knowledge, but also with the capacity to question, interpret, and apply that knowledge in contextually meaningful ways.

The present book is an attempt to respond to these challenges. Grounded in the contextual framework of English language methodology, *The Language of Now: English, Media Literacy and Meaning-Making* aims to touch upon some essential contemporary features of applied linguistics. The book explores the possibilities of reimagining language education to meet the demands of the digital age, equipping learners with the skills to critically engage with media, construct meaningful interpretations, and participate fully in democratic dialogue.

The term 'now' in the title refers not only to the status of English as a lingua franca, which has been well established over the last few centuries. The 'now' is meant to reflect what the authors perceive as a shifting paradigm of linguistic discourse triggered by mediatic (mis)representations. The usual discursive features of language gain new complexities due to mediatic discourse particularities and the cognitive skills required from the reader to decipher the reality behind manipulative rhetoric. In this context, 'media literacy,' the second concept in the title, refers to the vital needs of modern society. Being literate in media discourse, specificity is an advantage for understanding and tackling the complexities of contemporary communication channels. From an educational standpoint, the focus on media literacy aims to equip learners with tools to resist the seduction of the digitally propagated illusion of knowledge.

As for the concept of 'meaning-making,' semantics usually associated with language discourse must be doubled by what authors see as an essential skill, moving from passive reception of the media message to an active analysis and interpretation. The process involves seeing language not only as a tool for communication but also as a dynamic resource shaped by context, culture, and power relations. In the authors' view, this competence is particularly relevant in English language education, where language acts as both a medium and a message in the globalized, digital world.

The object matter of the book is language discourse in general, and media language discourse in particular, using methodological perspectives. Deciphering the composing elements of media discourse, analyzing its specific discourse marks, and exploiting its potential for cognitive

development are not merely academic exercises; they are powerful didactic strategies. When approached pedagogically, these practices reveal language as a structured, purposeful system that can be taught, deconstructed, and rebuilt to foster deeper understanding. They offer learners concrete tools for engaging critically with texts, identifying persuasive techniques, uncovering implicit messages, and recognizing the interplay between form and function in communication.

Coming back to the opening quote, this book aims to challenge and fight ‘the illusion of knowledge’ encapsulated in media discourse through didactic means. It aims to frame the relevant theoretical concepts regarding media discourse by discussing them in the broader concept of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Ultimately, it aims to concretely prove methods in which media literacy can be approached in English language classes and the results yielded by them.

Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become a challenge for all teachers, regardless of the subject they teach. The world is shifting to new technologies, changes, and transformations that educators need to keep up with. Pandemics have brought a turn in the whole world; the globalization of the economy and the increase of the population are posing new and demanding challenges to individuals and societies alike. The knowledge and abilities that students will need in the future are being re-evaluated by school systems, and research has shown that both practices and policies need to be completely revised.

American writer and futurist Alvin Toffler stated that “the illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn” (Toffler 1984). The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a time when we are discovering that we need to relearn how we think about what is learned, how it occurs, and who is learning. For example, some schools are implementing project-based learning that incorporates technology and collaboration to prepare students for a future that is increasingly reliant on innovation and problem-solving. Teachers also incorporate cultural competence and empathy into their lessons to prepare students for diverse workplaces and communities. This requires teachers to constantly adapt and evolve their teaching methods to ensure that they meet the changing needs of students. However, there are still schools that cling to traditional teaching methods and that do not prioritize skills such as critical thinking and adaptability. These schools may produce graduates who struggle to keep up with the demands of the rapidly changing world.

Although all countries believe that the knowledge and skills required by students in the twenty-first century are different from those required in the past, terminology and emphasis on knowledge, skills, and values differ across countries. We used the term ‘21<sup>st</sup> century skills’ because we believe it is the most widely recognized and used term internationally, although any term could be used in its place. Critics accuse the term of being vague and overused, endorsing the idea of teaching skills in addition to knowledge, and promoting skills that have been encouraged for centuries but are now emphasized with a new sense of urgency, potentially leading to rapid and ineffective reforms.

The term ‘21<sup>st</sup> century skills’ encompasses a broad set of knowledge and skills that are not easy to define because, as mentioned above, the term is often inconsistent. These skills are generally considered as follows: making decisions, setting goals, problem-solving, critical thinking, effective communication, collaboration and creativity, use of technology, and moral and ethical behavior. These skills were developed because it was felt that the standards and competencies were not enough to reach the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners’ full potential and help them develop a future career. In the USA, the framework developed by The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills was integrated into the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This plan promoted the inclusion of fundamental academic knowledge, critical thinking, and social skills in teaching and learning to aid students in developing the

multifaceted skills necessary for the twenty-first century (Button, L.). These skills include common core academic knowledge and the 4Cs: creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. By integrating all these into teaching, students can learn how to solve challenging problems in the real world and develop a deeper understanding of the subject.

According to Linda Button, adopting a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum can result in a blend of knowledge, thinking, innovation skills, media, literacy, information, and communication technology, as well as real-life experiences and authentic learning that are integrated into academic subjects. The main objective of the curriculum in the twenty-first century is to place a strong emphasis on knowledge construction, which encourages students to produce knowledge that benefits them personally and develops new skills. Encouraging student participation and assisting them in comprehending the knowledge rooted in the core subjects are two additional benefits of creating a curriculum that is based on real-world experiences. Students will have the chance to develop their civic, financial, environmental, health, and global awareness skills as a result of this (Button, L.).

Regarding teachers and students in the twenty-first century, there may be some issues because there is much more diversity now than there was previously, and we can no longer think that a "one-size-fits-all" classroom is appropriate. One must inquire as to what the purpose of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning is, or how the roles and responsibilities of teachers have evolved. What design considerations should educators make when developing curriculum or lessons for their students? How is it possible for the student-teacher relationship to have such a positive impact on the students' perception of themselves, and how can it impact their future? How can we, as educators, accommodate each student's needs? (Button, L.)

Unfortunately, in Romania, there has not been a significant change in the National Curriculum, except for some proposals for introducing some 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and media literacy as potential high-school optional classes. This perceived gap served as the primary impetus for the present book, highlighting the need to address media literacy endeavors in current educational practice. This was doubled by author Elvira Kiss's recent participation as a Fulbright scholar in the "Fulbright Teaching and Excellence" Media Literacy program at Kent State University, an experience that facilitated familiarization with the concept of media literacy in a didactic environment.

Returning from the USA, Elvira felt a need for change and decided for a shift in her teaching methods, as she was eager to teach her students and colleagues about everything she had studied. Therefore, she brought articles, used different apps and platforms in the classroom, and saw how students gradually cultivated their skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, as well as their digital literacy skills, through interacting with media, information, and technology. She continued to gather and research for more information on media literacy, which became the focus of her teaching experience.

Elvira's Fulbright experience continued in September 2021, as she was invited by the Romanian U.S. Fulbright Commission together with her Fulbright colleagues, Corina Mitrulescu and Corina Moise-Poenaru, to share their experience in the U.S. and to participate as teacher trainers in the two-day training workshop entitled "Teaching Excellence: Promoting Media Literacy and Critical Thinking in the English Class". The event took place at the National Library of Romania in Bucharest, and brought together 43 middle and high school teachers from around the country. Corina Moise-Poenaru and Elvira Kiss presented the workshop "*Ten Creative Ways to Integrate Media Literacy in the EFL Classroom*" with different interactive methods that teachers could use in their classrooms. An additional workshop, "*What's for sale? The Role of Advertisements in EFL Teaching*" developed the theme of advertisements in teaching media literacy in the classroom. At the end of

October 2021, Elvira was invited to present her Fulbright experience to fellow teachers in her hometown, Targu Mureş, in the format of a workshop on media literacy.

This combination of motivation and experience ultimately informed Elvira's choice of topic for the research paper required to obtain the First-Degree Teaching Qualification. Her thesis, titled *Mediated Discourse in English: 21st Century Challenges and Strategies*, was mainly focused on the topic of media literacy in the language class and was successfully defended in 2024. The process of writing the thesis offered a more in-depth approach to teaching English for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, and also facilitated excellent feedback from students. The results of the practical study showed a significant improvement in students' English levels, but also in terms of personal skills.

The present book builds upon the thesis *Mediated Discourse in English: 21st Century Challenges and Strategies*, which provides both the conceptual foundation and the initial impetus for the exploration of media discourse within the framework of contemporary language education. The structure and thematic progression of the book closely follows the original research paper, while further developing its core ideas through updated pedagogical approaches and practical applications.

The content of the book is structured into five chapters. The first chapter presents the background and context for studying media discourse in the language classroom, introduces the conceptual framework regarding 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and explains the motivation behind choosing this theme.

The second chapter offers a more theoretical perspective on the role of the teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century trends in education. It has five subchapters that include 21<sup>st</sup> century education trends, a definition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the need for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the EFL classroom, one subchapter that describes the flaws and the challenges to change something in the curriculum, and it ends with the role of the teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century EFL class.

The third chapter focuses on creative resources in English language teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the 4Cs in English class, information, media, and technology in the English class, and the last subchapter presents creative ways to introduce media literacy to students.

Chapter Four is the practical part of the book, which aims to present concrete results obtained through the integration of media discourse in the language classroom. The experiment yielded the expected results, confirming the hypothesis that engaging with authentic media texts can significantly enhance students' critical thinking, media literacy, and communicative competence.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, brings the study to a close by presenting and interpreting the results and key findings of the experimental part. It reflects the outcomes in relation to the initial objectives and hypotheses, offering insights into the impact of media discourse in the language classroom.

## Chapter 2- LANGUAGE AND 21ST CENTURY TRENDS

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education Trends

The world in which we live is fast and dynamic, and changes remain the only constant. Therefore, for change, the attitude toward learning is important. In a way, rather than accumulating information, we must be prepared to do away with (unlearn) old methods and adopt (relearn) new ones to boost our career growth. Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who cannot read; he will be the man who has not learned how to learn.

The field of education faces several challenges. This is why opinions about it and the goals of education vary not only in the field itself but also in society. There are debates on what the goal of schools should be, whether to prepare citizens for the world, train them to become efficient workers in society, or cultivate a spirit of competition so that students can reach a high position in society. If we add to all these political interests and differences in ideology, new trends in technology, and scientific discoveries, we can name only a few challenges in education. (Memisevic et al, 2023: 258)

In a recent research study entitled *Exploring current trends in Education: A Review of research topics in the Problems of Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Journal*, the authors tried to summarize the main research topics to help researchers find the content and the topic much easier (Memisevic et al, 2023: 258). The authors considered all articles from 2018 to 2022 and a 5-year time frame was used for the relevance of the research. A total of 285 abstracts were retrieved from the Web of Science database and analyzed to identify the most common research topics and contributing countries. The top ten research topics identified were self-efficacy, distance education, professional development, critical thinking, foreign language, thinking skills, Covid-19, academic achievement, emotional intelligence, and special education. The authors of these papers came from 62 countries, with most of the papers coming from Türkiye, South Africa, Indonesia, Brazil, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Malaysia, Sweden, Lithuania, and Serbia. The findings should be accounted for, as educators can use the information to reach a better decision about educational policy and practice, and stay current on the latest trends and topics.

The present book will further develop in the chapters to follow some of the topics mentioned above, such as professional development, critical thinking, teaching English as a foreign language, thinking skills, and academic achievement. Professional development plays a key role in the implementation of educational reform, including curriculum reform, new teaching methodologies, and the replacement of textbooks (Memisevic et al, 2023: 263). The benefits of the workshops and courses are numerous for the English classroom, as teachers need to stay up-to-date with the new technologies, new methodologies, and new aids that an English teacher can use with the students: implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, how to use educational platforms in the classroom, the benefits of blended learning, and so on.

Critical thinking is a part of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and it is essential for education. This is the process by which students objectively analyze information, data, and resources to form a judgment or solve a problem. Fisher stated that critical thinking involves questioning assumptions, logical reasoning, and considering multiple perspectives (qtd. in Memisevic, p.263). There are multiple ways in which critical thinking can be introduced in English class, but the topic will be addressed later in the paper.

Teaching a foreign language, more specifically teaching English as a foreign language in schools worldwide, has become both a challenge and a call to action. Studies show that alongside teaching language content and the four core skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—we need to foster a positive perception of the language among learners. We need to be able to respond to the student’s needs and to educate ourselves first to be able to educate our students and enhance students' English level of performance.

Thinking skills could be easily connected to critical thinking skills, but studies have found that they treated the topic distinctly (Memisevic et al., 2023:263). An argument was a study of Indonesian students’ weak performance on the TIMMS and PISA tests, which could be an indicator of their low performance on higher-order thinking skills. Students experienced difficulties in task comprehension, transformation and process skills, and encoding. (Memisevic et al, 2023: 263) Thinking skills include “the ability to take in and make sense of new information and connect, apply, and transform that information into unique and novel ideas.” (Cash, 2017:2) And if we continue this idea, it means that students can analyze information, to find and solve problems, to evaluate through critical thinking and then to generate creative ideas to generate new knowledge.

Academic achievement can be affected by many factors, such as mental health, state of well-being, academic adjustment, socioeconomic status, student motivation, and parental support. In other words, a positive environment has a much greater impact than does content knowledge alone. In English teaching, learning through collaboration and communication has shown much greater productivity than in expository teaching.

One of the largest trends in education is the recognition that it needs to serve a world that is rapidly changing and becoming more digitized than ever. Classrooms that exist as technology-free zones are slowly but certainly falling behind in preparing students for a future that requires appropriate skills. Therefore, classrooms should change their focus from facts and information to teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, using up-to-date technologies. In the classroom of the future, the student should be able to research, find, evaluate, and process information from a wide variety of sources. They should also be able to fact-check information, use their critical thinking skills, and solve the problems they face. As English teachers, we can help students to find appropriate information, as most of it is in English. We can also help them to access and understand the digital world. We should also consider how to make our classrooms, 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms, better prepare our students for the digital world and digital jobs of the future.

The reality of a competitive, challenging world is all about 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, especially for people from underprivileged backgrounds or nations with weak economies. Without having access to the best educational and job opportunities, how can students realize their full potential? We as educators fall short of preparing our students for the modern world if we stick to out-of-date curricula, techniques, and resources. We might say that we are not moving in the right direction if a student's skills do not match those expected of colleges and potential employers.

As stated above, we live in a world of change and wherever we come from, whatever we have learned, and wherever we are going, the major constant factor will be the change. The first skill that we, teachers and students, need to embrace is the skill of learning how to deal with change and how to collaborate and communicate with those around us about change. In English language teaching, we need to prepare people for change as well.

Understanding English as a multifaceted and evolving system, Carrier emphasizes: “The English we use, the English our learners want to be able to use, is not immutable. It is not just a single language, a body of knowledge you can learn - it is a complex interactive communication system, with many varieties. The English learners need to use will vary from context to context, from job to

job, from social group to social group, and from professional to professional.” (2020: vi) English Language Teaching can be a means of preparing students for the world.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century trends or themes are not meant to be taught explicitly in the classroom. As an alternative, English teachers, or any other teacher, can incorporate them into their lessons or extracurricular activities in the classroom or at school.

Teachers can use classroom activities to promote students’ global understanding. For example, have students read English-speaking materials that do not belong to the English-speaking world, use a virtual tour on Google Maps, or use Oculus for VR experience of exotic places around the world. Another way to bring global awareness into the classroom is to help students read news around the globe with a focus on real/fake news, understanding that news is targeted, debate on current topics around the world, and many more ideas.

Students’ ability to innovate and create using the knowledge they learn in class is a key component of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. This necessitates teachers to switch from more conventional assessment methods such as tests and quizzes to more flexible assessment techniques such as student portfolios. Instead of simply testing students’ knowledge of grammar or vocabulary, portfolios are meant to encourage them to use the target language in context. In the classroom, this can entail assigning students to make videos, journals, podcasts, or stage plays in English. A concrete example: for last Thanksgiving Day, November 2022, our school celebrated with a students’ play “*A Thanksgiving Radio Drama*” where students wearing specific costumes used their English language and creativity to render the story behind Thanksgiving.

Today’s world has transitioned from an industrial economy to one that is more digitized and information-based. The old economy was more concerned with producing goods, whereas the new one is more concerned with creating and gaining access to new information via computers and technology. Teaching students how to access information and evaluation skills is crucial in the information age. Media literacy, digital literacy, and transmedia literacy are just a few of the literacies that can be mentioned here because they assist students in accessing, comprehending, and connecting information. In the English language classroom, for instance, students might read a news article in English and watch a video on the same topic before taking a quiz on the content, as well as the similarities and differences between the two stories. Students are allowed to consider various media types, exercise their critical thinking abilities, and comprehend the advantages and disadvantages of each.

The shift in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills complements the English language classroom because it encourages students to interact with a globalized society. By including more interactive activities in our classrooms, we can better prepare students for this globally connected world. Students can practice their language skills while simultaneously learning technological skills through assignments that require them to create videos, audio journals, or web-based writing.

According to an article on the blog [teachtrends.com](http://teachtrends.com), there are seven emerging trends in education: personalized learning, digital citizenship, project-based learning, blended learning, gamification, augmented and virtual reality, and STEAM education (“What Are the Emerging Trends of 21st-century Education?”). The article states that some of these trends are seen daily in some classes, although they require appropriate technology, open-mindedness, professional development, and that teachers should focus more on developing a growth mindset in students rather than piling up information and knowledge and achieving good scores in standardized testing.

A changing world, rapid global transformations, acceleration of progress, openness to innovation, globalization and interculturality, social digitization, and facilitating access to resources through entrepreneurship must all be reflected in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. Throughout their development,

the various scenarios for a changing world are related to the theme of education. (Ilie 2020: 65) Hence, a few directions in education are worth to be mentioned: access to mechanisms to succeed in the contemporary world, personalized education which is becoming a must if one wants to become successful, establishing connections with the community, interaction with people of different cultures, an active and efficient communication at all levels, and lifelong learning. (Ilie 2020: 66)

Marc Prensky made a very interesting statement in his book *From Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom* when he described his vision of education: “My vision is bottom-up—it begins with the students—what *they* need and how we can give it to *them*” (Prensky 2012: 1). He advocates for listening to students’ opinions and ideas and to envision our classrooms and our teaching differently, considering that students’ educational needs are very different from ours. Once teachers understand the new needs and the goals of their students, they should be able “to invent their paths to reach them.” (Prensky 2012: 5) Prensky argues in the introductory chapters of his book that the problem in the educational system is not the system itself but the education the system provides; or, simply put it is not *how* but rather *what* we teach. He claims that we exist in an environment in which an outdated curriculum fails to prepare individuals for a dynamic and changing professional world. Prensky challenges educators of the twenty-first century to reinvent learning to better prepare students for careers in the twenty-first century, where, frequently, nothing is constant. (cf. Prensky 2012)

It seems that everywhere in the world, a change and the emergence of new trends in education is a signal that educators need new premises, new ideals, new ways of reaching the students, and listening to their needs. Only through communication and collaboration will we manage to prepare our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **A Definition of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**

The literature review reveals that there is no international definition of ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills’ that is distinct and clear. Numerous skills are referred to and listed as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and given the ambiguity surrounding what exactly constitutes a 21<sup>st</sup> century skill, the literature also lacks a clear definition of how these skills differ from other related skills. ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills’ is a term that analysts frequently use to refer to various skills or skill subcategories.

In general, infrastructure, pedagogical approaches, and actual curriculum materials have not been developed concurrently in education systems to prepare students for the present and future worlds they will enter and lead. To prepare students for the complexity of today's global and knowledge-driven economy, new skill sets related to the larger global challenges we face are required. In other terms, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are not necessarily new, but they received new importance. According to Chu et al., while some skills, like language proficiency and critical thinking, have been the focus of educational institutions all over the world for decades, other skills, like digital literacies, have only recently begun to emerge. The three main knowledge domains that make up twenty-first-century skills are *creative thinking, information, media, and ICT* (information, communication, and technology) *skills* (also known as "digital literacies"), and *life and career skills*. (Chu et. al., 2017: 8)

In *Teaching and Learning 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: Lessons from the Learning Sciences* (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012: 4), the authors state that the ATC21S consortium organizes 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, knowledge, attitudes, values into four categories:

1. Ways of Thinking: creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision making, and learning to learn (or metacognition);
2. Ways of Working: communication and teamwork;

3. Tools for Working: general knowledge and information communication technology (ICT) literacy;
4. Living in the World: citizenship, life and career, and personal and social responsibility, including cultural awareness and competence.

The following framework is inspired by the work of Binkley et al. (2012), but is adapted and reinterpreted for this publication.

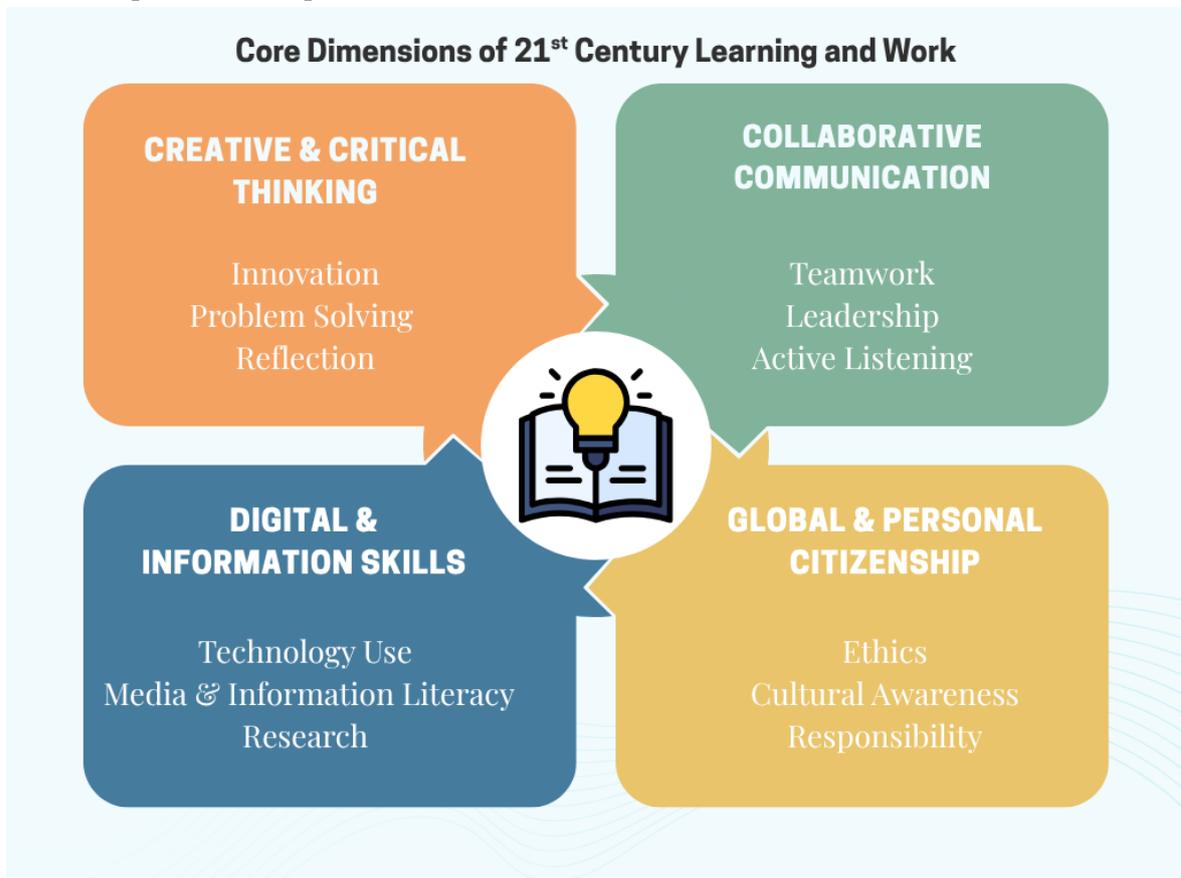


Figure 1. Core Dimensions of 21st Century Learning and Work

We read in Binkley et.al, (2012) that the KSAVE (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and ethics) model from Assessment & Teaching of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (ATC21S) considers ten skills beyond subjects. They are 1) creativity and innovation, 2) critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making, 3) learning to learn or metacognition, 4) communication, 5) collaboration, 6) information literacy, 7) ICT literacy, 8) citizenship, 9) life and career, and 10) personal and social responsibility (Binkley et al., 2012).

Voogt and Roblin (2010, 2012), who reviewed a wide range of analytical discussions, defined 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as ‘new competencies’ that society is increasingly demanding of the existing workforce and, in terms of education, of the youth who need to be trained now for future jobs and careers. According to them, ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills’ (also known as ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies’) is "an overarching concept for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that citizens need to be able to contribute to the knowledge society" (Voogt & Roblin, 2010, p. 16). To highlight the ambiguity in the terminology used to describe 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, Voogt and Roblin (2010, 2012) offer a summary that condenses the names and types of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills adopted by a variety of different frameworks. They point out that it is challenging to compare the various skill sets and skill types that are frequently mentioned in the existing frameworks for analyzing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. They

conclude that the ambiguity in terminology and definitions makes it difficult to teach these skills (Voogt and Roblin: 2010, 2012).

The term '21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills' is defined by Scott (2015, p. 8) as "the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be competitive in the twenty-first century workforce and participate appropriately in an increasingly diverse society, use new technologies, and cope with rapidly changing workplaces." By analyzing various 21<sup>st</sup> century skills frameworks, including those mentioned by Lippmann et al. (2014), Wagner (2010, cited in Scott, 2015), and Barry (2012, cited in Scott, 2015), Scott provides a summary of the "essential competencies and skills for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning." (Scott, 2015:8)

Finally, Chalkiadaki (2018: 5) defines 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as encompassing a wide range of skill sets and professional attributes in her systematic review of studies on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. They include creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, work autonomy, developed cognitive and interpersonal skills, social and civic competencies, responsible national and global citizenship, the consciousness of interdependence, acceptance, and understanding of diversity, recognition, and development of personal attributes, interactive use of tools, communication in mother tongue and foreign languages, mathematical and science competence, digital competence, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, accountability, leadership, cultural awareness and expression, and physical well-being (Chalkiadaki, 2018: 5).

Chalkiadaki uses the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation's (APEC) definition of "21<sup>st</sup> century competencies," which is more succinctly stated as "the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce, participate appropriately in an increasingly diverse society, use new technologies, and cope with rapidly changing workplaces" (APEC, 2008, cited in Scott, 2015). Many 21<sup>st</sup> century skills frameworks are mentioned by Chalkiadaki, including the P21 (2007; cited in Chalkiadaki, 2018); OECD DeSeCo (2005; cited in Chalkiadaki, 2018); EnGauge (2003; cited in Chalkiadaki, 2018); and ATC21S (2012, cited in Chalkiadaki, 2018). In her report, she lists various frameworks' definitions of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as well as the skills that each one emphasizes.

The extensive range of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are divided into four major categories in Chalkiadaki's (2018) systematic review:

1. *Personal skills*:
  - a) self-development and autonomy (emotional intelligence; self-management, self-organization, self-regulation, self-direction, self-reflection, independent thought, autonomous acting, capacity to create and carry out life plans and projects, and capacity to defend or assert rights);
  - b) creativity (curiosity, imagination, playfulness, artistic creation, collaborative creativity, and innovation);
  - c) problem-solving and critical thinking (analytical thinking, the evaluation of evidence, the capacity to solve problems when they arise, higher-order thinking, sound reasoning, thoughtful decision-making, and innovation in authentic learning environments);
  - d) presence in the globalized environment (adaptability, agility, managing complexity, risk-taking).
2. *Social skills*:
  - a) communication and collaboration (effective teamwork, particularly in diverse environments, open-mindedness, and conflict resolution skills in both the mother tongue and other languages, as well as oral and written communication);
  - b) cultural and global awareness (the capacity to value different cultures and purposefully create cross-cultural relationships and networks);

- c) leadership (self-motivation, taking initiative, entrepreneurship, and leadership by example).
3. *Information and knowledge*: a) learning (self-analysis, self-evaluation, self-improvement, metacognition, e-learning, self-directed learning, independent learning, knowledge construction, social and collaborative learning, intellectual risks);  
b) information management (information literacy, data access, and analysis, managing multiple streams of information at once, knowledge application in novel contexts, knowledge generation, content knowledge).
4. *Digital literacy* - according to Chalkiadaki's analysis, digital literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century refers to an individual's comfort level with using media and ICT, proficiency with using digital tools, as well as interactive digital skills, critical use of digital tools (analysis, critique, evaluation, and creation), and the capacity to attend to ethical obligations necessary in participatory culture in technology.

There are many additional and diverse approaches to classifying 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as either attributes, competencies, or skills throughout the literature reviewed by Chalkiadaki (2018) and by Joynes et al (2019).

### **A. Critical Skills**

Several commentators (Joynes et. al, 2019; Scott, 2015) frame 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in terms of 'critical skills,' which are defined as a set of personal and professional attributes, competencies, and technical skills that are presented as essential for the twenty-first century.

We can find a brief summary of a study by Lippman et al. (2014) in Joynes et al. (2019: 11), which identifies five critical skills that are thought to increase success in the workplace. According to employment, performance, income, and entrepreneurial success, these skills are described and reported as follows:

- *Social skills* - the capacity to respect others, act in a way that is appropriate for the situation, and be able to resolve conflict. According to reports, social skills are a reliable predictor of success across all four workforce outcomes in both formal and informal work sectors.
- *Communication skills* - oral, written, non-verbal, and listening skills; they are seen as other ways to develop 'soft skills' (Joynes et. al, 2019: 11)
- *Higher-order thinking skills* - decision-making, critical thinking, and problem-solving. At its most fundamental, this entails the capacity to recognize a problem, gather data from various sources, analyze options, and come to a reasonable conclusion. Regarding their effect on finding successful employment, these skills are not well-researched.
- *Self-control* - an intrapersonal ability that facilitates effective decision-making, conflict resolution, and coherent communication.
- *Positive self-concept* - self-esteem, a sense of well-being and pride, self-efficacy, self-awareness and beliefs, and self-confidence all fall under this category. It has been identified as an intrapersonal skill linked to achievement across all four workforce outcomes.

Scott (2015) cites Wagner (2010) who together with the Change Leadership Group at Harvard University identified a complementary set of competencies and skills. He underlines the fact that students need seven survival skills to be prepared for 21<sup>st</sup> century life, work, and citizenship:

1. Critical thinking and problem-solving;
2. Collaboration and leadership;
3. Agility and adaptability;

4. Initiative and entrepreneurship;
5. Effective communication;
6. Access and analyze information;
7. Curiosity and imagination.

### ***B. The 4Cs: Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity***

The '4Cs' model is based on the idea that the challenges of the twenty-first century will require a broad range of skills, with an emphasis on an individual's abilities in core subject skills, social and cross-cultural skills, language proficiency, and an understanding of the economic and political forces that shape societies.

The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> century Learning (P21) is a national organization in the USA founded in 2001 and based in Washington, D.C. It serves as a 21<sup>st</sup> century education movement aiming to work with businesses, students, parents, educators, and the government to ensure that students are equipped with the subject knowledge and curricula that they will need for their college and career. This movement also proposed a number of skills considered to be crucial for students' success in both their personal and professional lives, leading to the creation of the Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning. (P21, 2019)

These abilities were thought to be too complex and numerous, so Roekel (2017) condensed them into four abilities: communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. Since all of these abilities begin with the letter C, they are referred to as 4C skills. They will be further developed in the third chapter of this book.

According to the Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (P21, 2019), student success requires mastery of key subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> century themes. Key subjects include English, reading, or language arts, world languages; arts; mathematics, economics, science, geography, history; government; and civics. Furthermore, schools need to integrate interdisciplinary themes from the 21<sup>st</sup> century into the core subjects to foster a much deeper understanding of academic content: global awareness; financial, economic, business, entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; health literacy; environmental literacy. (P21, 2019)

*Learning and innovation skills* differentiate students who are prepared for today's increasingly complex life and work environments from those who are not. These skills include creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving, communication, and collaboration (P21, 2019).

Today's world is dominated by technology and media, with easy access to a wealth of information, quick technological advancements, and an unprecedented level of collaboration and individual contribution possible. Students and future citizens must be able to demonstrate a range of functional and critical thinking skills, such as information literacy, media literacy, and ICT (information, communication, and technology) literacy, all known as *information, media, and technology skills*.

Today's students must acquire critical-thinking abilities, subject-matter expertise, and social and emotional skills to succeed in today's complex social and professional environments. P21's essential *Life and Career Skills* include flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cultural skills, productivity and accountability, leadership, and responsibility. (P21, 2019)

# A Modern Framework for 21st Century Learning

Inspired by P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning

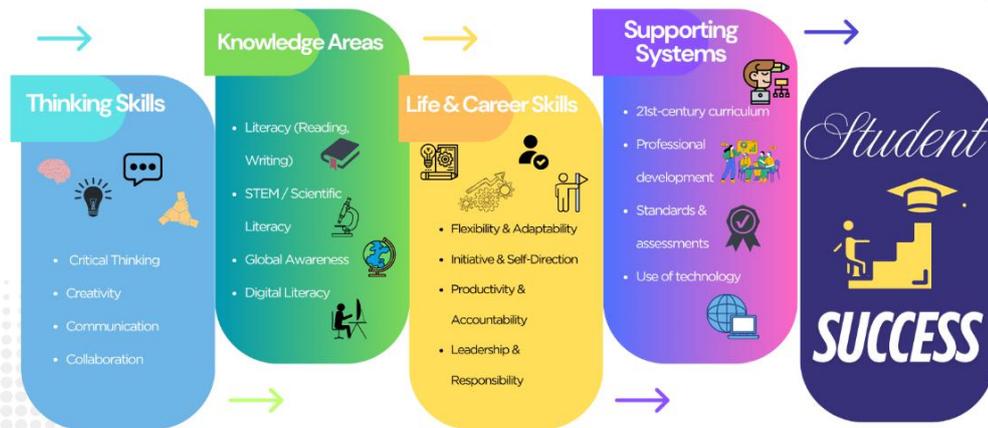


Figure 2. A modern Framework for 21st Century Learning

Voogt and Roblin (2010, 2012) examined five 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills frameworks in support of P21's "4Cs" model for categorizing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, including Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21), EnGauge, Assessment and Teaching of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (ATC21S), National Educational Technology Standards (NETS/ISTE), and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). They observe that while "creativity" and "critical thinking" are present in most of the frameworks, "collaboration" and "communication" are mentioned in every framework that was examined. Additionally, all of the frameworks examined by Voogt and Roblin (2010, 2012) emphasized the value of several skills that span these four categories: ICT literacy, social and/or cultural skills, and citizenship.

## C. Soft Skills

Joynes et. al (2019: 14) offers a definition and a description of the soft skills that are seen as personal attributes that are assumed to create positive outcomes, based on the study by Gates et. al (2016) as quoted in Joynes. The definition presented affirms that "soft skills refer to a broad set of skills, behaviors, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, relate well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. These skills are applicable across sectors and complement the acquisition of other skills such as technical and academic skills." (Joynes, 2019: 14)

A more detailed description of these skills, based on Joynes et. al study (2019), would refer to:

- *Positive attitude* - an emotional component where a young person is joyful and enthusiastic; a social component where they support others; and a cognitive component where they value their work or education and have a positive outlook;
- *Responsibility* - the capacity to recognize one's place in the world, to perform tasks reliably in that role, and the conviction that one's choices and actions can have an impact on events and produce favorable results;
- *Goal orientation* - the drive and capacity to develop workable plans and carry them out in a way that will achieve desired results;

- *Empathy* - the capacity for both affection and cognition to perceive and comprehend the emotions of others;
- *Communication* - the capacity to communicate ideas and knowledge effectively. Listening and the ability to communicate verbally, nonverbally, and in writing are all parts of communication. It includes the capacity to bargain, persuade, communicate, and interpret information;
- *Social skills* - a group of abilities required to get along with others, such as showing respect for others and expressing appreciation for them, acting in situations that are appropriate for the situation, being able to act under social norms, and using a variety of conflict-resolution techniques.

According to Joynes et.al, 2019 the term ‘soft skills’ refers to a broad set of skills, behaviors, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, relate well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. Other terminologies used for ‘soft skills’ include ‘life skills’, ‘socio-emotional skills’, and ‘transferable skills’ (Scott, 2015), (Joynes et. al, 2019: 15).

#### ***D. Life Skills***

“The use of ‘life skills’” (Joynes et. al, 2019) as a formal framework for defining key skills, competencies, and capabilities has emerged almost exclusively from within the sphere of international development and is currently reflected in the objectives and indicators across many areas featured within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, it operates as a model of definition for ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills’ that is of particular note for those parties operating within that sphere.” (Joynes et. al, 2019: 15)

The phenomenon of failure to thrive is related to a variety of mental health and personal development issues, such as, for example, cognitive impairment, emotion and behavior regulation difficulties, and neuropsychological abnormalities (Joynes et.al, 2019: 15). It is a result of studies into public health in international development settings and is based primarily on the observed net effects of malnutrition on individuals and communication (Joynes et. al, 2019: 15). The author states that these cognitive deficits are thought to affect areas like attention, memory, and information processing, relationship issues (such as not being able to assert oneself and having poor parenting skills in adulthood), emotion regulation issues (such as being highly sensitive/insensitive to stress, lacking the ability to self-soothe and calm oneself, experiencing extreme and inappropriate emotion, and perceiving this as uncontrollable), and behavioral issues (e.g. self-harm, aggression, social withdrawal, avoidance of challenging opportunities, and absconding). Young people may also acquire attitudes and beliefs that prevent them from participating in an achievement-oriented world due to deprived environments, diverse social norms, and the deficiencies already mentioned (Joynes et. al, 2019: 15).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines on life skills instruction for kids and teens in schools, "life skills" are described as fostering psychosocial competence. (Kennedy et. al, 2014) WHO offers the following ten essential life skills based on an analysis of the life skills research field: decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with emotions, and coping with stress.

The traits listed above are generally closely related to the more personality-driven range of traits listed under "soft skills." While Kennedy et al. (2014) have improved these to reflect a specific set of personal competencies needed to succeed in the professional sphere anticipated in a

development context, this process has also largely bypassed the globalized, highly connected, and knowledge-driven contexts associated with other frameworks for the conceptualization of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

## **ICT and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**

Voogt and Roblin (2010) examine some 21<sup>st</sup> century skills frameworks and note that each one emphasizes the connection between ICT and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. First, they provide a comparison between the various components of ICT and information literacy through these frameworks, such as the ability to communicate and collaborate as well as access information quickly and effectively. Second, they emphasize that using ICTs for this purpose necessitates the capacity for critical and competent information evaluation as well as accurate and innovative information use (Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning, 1998, cited in Voogt & Roblin, 2010). They conclude by saying that ICT has the potential to support the development and assessment of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, thereby recognizing the significance of ICT.

Van Laar et al. (2017) (qtd in Joynes et. al, 2019: 17) concludes that the combination of digital skills and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is not yet sufficiently defined, although commentators have both cited these skills as essential qualities and that there is some significant conceptual overlap between the two. In this context, they introduce the idea of "21<sup>st</sup> century digital skills," which are defined as (1) the ability to master ICT applications to solve cognitive tasks at work; (2) skills that are not technology-driven, meaning they do not involve the use of any specific software program; (3) skills that support higher-order thinking processes; and (4) skills related to cognitive processes favoring employees' continuous learning. Additionally, operational components are included in comprehensive conceptual definitions of "digital skills for the twenty-first century." They advocate the importance of these skills for individuals and organizations to stay current with trends and develop novel goods and procedures. (Joynes et. al, 2019: 17)

Most frameworks refer to three types of literacies when defining ICT-related competencies in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills:

1. *Information Literacy* - the ability to use information accurately and creatively, evaluate information critically and competently, and access it quickly and effectively. (Joynes et. al, 2019: 18);
2. *ICT Literacy* - ICT literacy primarily focuses on how to utilize digital technologies effectively and efficiently. The emphasis placed on the skills required to function in a knowledge society is the primary distinction between ICT literacy and technological literacy. Technological literacy emphasizes the interaction between technology and society as well as the significance of comprehending the technological principles required to solve complex problems and meet the challenges of a knowledge society. (Joynes et. al, 2019: 18);
3. *Technological Literacy* - In its traditional sense, ICT literacy refers to the technical abilities needed to use technology. The use of networks, communication tools, information literacy, and/or digital technology to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information in order to function in a knowledge society is another, much broader definition of this term. (Joynes et. al, 2019: 18).

When examining definitions of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, we discovered a wide range of literature available discussing these skills, including several important synthetic studies. There is broad agreement among the commentators (Joynes et.al, 2019) in the literature under consideration

regarding the necessity of new educational paradigms for addressing global challenges. Despite this general agreement, literature does not present a singular definition of '21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills' or models for framing these within the context of educating students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Joynes et. al, 2019: 18)

Multiple sources have identified a range of competencies and skills labeled as '21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills' as it was demonstrated above. Scott (2015), Voogt and Roblin (2010, 2012), and Chalkiadaki (2018) compared various frameworks, pointing out key similarities and differences. The reviews show the wide variety of different characteristics, abilities, and skills that have been taken into account when defining 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Similarly, these reviews also highlight a wide range of efforts to group these into categories and/or analytical frameworks.

In addition, the literature review reveals that despite some notable differences across a range of personal, professional, and practical attributes, other terminologies associated with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills - most notably, 'life skills' - can be frequently regarded as synonymous with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. To illustrate this, let's look at the definition of 'soft skills,' which is a broad set of skills, behaviors, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, perform well, and achieve their goals. Even though this definition could be easily applied to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the most notable difference stems from the fact that 'soft skills' fail to mention current and upcoming challenges related to globalization, the global labor market, and the developing knowledge economy.

The existing literature (Voogt & Roblin, 2012) investigates the degree to which particular technologically oriented skills are viewed as a core component of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Many people are interested in concepts like "digital skills," "ICT skills," and "digital literacy." Even though the majority of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills frameworks consider ICT skills to be essential, their exact place within those frameworks is still according to literature. In this regard, it should be noted that some frameworks (P21 and ATC21S) place a strong emphasis on ICT-related competencies as distinct domains, while others (NETS/ISTE framework) draw attention to more integrative approaches where the development of ICT skills is embedded within other cited 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration (Voogt & Roblin, 2012).

The study by Joynes et al. (2019) concludes that there is a lack of an analysis of the relationship between the contexts assumed by these various definitions after looking at the range of challenges connected to the wide range of definitions of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. It also emphasizes the necessity of making sure that terms and definitions related to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are not used carelessly when discussing regional or national priorities, and that the realities of national and sub-national socioeconomic status need to be taken into consideration when defining future skill requirements for the workforce and labor market. It might also suggest that policymakers and programmers should actively criticize any frameworks for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills developed from the viewpoint of rapidly globalizing industry leaders, especially when those frameworks are used for applications in the context of international development. (Joynes et. al, 2019: 20)

These findings also point to the need for research into the creation or adoption of a definition for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that combines the challenges of current and future globalized employment with other types of resilience that are frequently needed in the context of international development and are currently referred to as life skills. To address this, it is recommended that any institution wishing to engage in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills programming across a variety of global settings adopt whichever pre-existing model offers users the most adaptable and output-focused framework rather than creating another framework of definition in an already diverse and potentially crowded field.

## The Need for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

Our society has undergone several significant changes over the past few decades, which has led to the need for a new set of specialized skills to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The "globalization and internationalization of the economy, as well as the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT)," according to Voogt and Roblin (2012:299), justifies our society's ongoing and significant transformation.

Additionally, the development of a so-called knowledge society is directly related to the need for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. According to Anderson (2008: 5–6), a knowledge society is one in which concepts and knowledge are valued as commodities. In general, a knowledge society is "an association of people with similar interests who try to make use of their combined knowledge" (Anderson 2008:6). While knowledge is required in a knowledge-society tactic, the definition of knowledge in the educational context frequently includes the replication of facts or declarative knowledge (cf. Anderson 2008:6). Tactic knowledge, which includes things like judgment, experience, and intuition, is the knowledge that is "difficult to codify and reproduce" (Anderson 2008:6).

The discussion of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is also influenced by the evolving nature of the job market and workplace standards. Thus, "generating future workforces" is a key topic in the discussion of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Care 2018:3). While repetitive work and routine production tasks will probably be done by machines in the near future, a rise in the demand for in-person service providers and symbolic analysts is anticipated (cf. Voogt & Roblin 2012:300). Both job types require "a particular understanding of information" (Voogt & Roblin 2012:300) in addition to "the ability to communicate, to solve problems, and to mediate information" (Voogt & Roblin 2012:300). As a result, the majority of the skills included in a collection of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills "generally fall within the cognitive and social domains" (Care 2018:4) and revolve around information, communication, and technology (cf. Care 2018:3).

There is critique among researchers and educational organizations (Wilson et. al, 2018) about the discrepancies between the job requirements on the market and the real practices in school. There are several aspects worth mentioning concerning educational practices and assessment which are considered out-of-date. One aspect is related to the demands of trans-disciplinarity, where one can argue that while school subjects are taught traditionally, applying knowledge from different fields to real-world problems is necessary when dealing with them in the workplace (cf. Wilson et al. 2018:182). Additionally, when projects and tests must be completed individually, the subject of collaboration is frequently treated as secondary in schools, in contrast to the workplace, where it is typical to "work both alone and in groups to share complementary knowledge and skills and achieve common goals" (Wilson et al. 2018:182) Another problem is that ICT tools are not frequently used in schools, which does not match the expanding demand for such tools to support the creation of innovative and effective solutions in business (cf. Wilson et al. 2018:182). Last but not least, unlike many tasks and testing formats in school, problems in a work setting "are contextualized in particular situations that are not structured to be addressed by simply recalling knowledge or working through simple algorithms" (Wilson et al. 2018:182).

The discussion of "what people need to function effectively in society" (Care 2018:3) is a topic that is covered by a number of conceptual frameworks, and as a result, it is important to consider which specific skills are included in a comprehensive list of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Voogt and Roblin (2012) examined eight frameworks that categorize 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in order to assess their interdependence. The following frameworks were included in the study: Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> century

skills (P21), EnGauge (by the Metiri Group), Assessment and Teaching of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (ATCS), National Educational Technology Standards (NETS), Technological Literacy Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competences for new millennial learners (by OECD), Key competences for lifelong learning (by EU), and ICT competency framework for teachers (by UNESCO) (cf. Voogt & Roblin 2012:302-303). The purpose of these definitions of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is to encourage the incorporation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into national curricula. They were produced by various institutions and academics (cf. Voogt & Roblin 2012:300). The study revealed that collaboration, communication, ICT literacy, and social and/or cultural competencies are essential and are emphasized by all frameworks (cf. Voogt & Roblin 2012:308–309). Creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and "the capacity to develop relevant and high-quality products" are additional abilities emphasized in the majority of frameworks as being crucial (Voogt & Roblin 2012:308).

According to the same authors, Voogt & Roblin, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are generally characterized as being transversal, meaning they are relevant across many fields, multidimensional because they include knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and associated with higher order skills and behaviors that represent the ability to cope with elaborate problems and unexpected situations. (Voogt & Roblin, 2012: 300)

All of these traits point to the high complexity of the necessary competencies, which frequently rely on qualitatively different skill sets or multiple processes (cf. Care & Kim 2018:22). The former, for instance, would apply to collaborative problem-solving, which is frequently presented as an integrated skill and combines the individual skills of collaboration and problem-solving, thus both social and cognitive skills (cf. Care & Kim 2018:22). Additionally, each of these comprises "more precisely defined subskills" (Care & Kim 2018:22), making this and other 21<sup>st</sup> century skills collectively a complex skill set. Even competencies that only call for a single quality of skill, such as individual problem solving that only uses cognitive skills, involve several processes and subskills (cf. Care & Kim 2018:22).

With all these positive aspects and considerations, why are so many students not learning 21<sup>st</sup> century skills? The first answer is that the dominant teaching strategy around the world is the traditional model in which students get their knowledge through lectures or textbooks. Most countries use the same model as teachers follow the standards and the testing is done through recall-based assessments. Students learn information from the teacher but they don't necessarily have the practice in applying the new knowledge in new contexts, they do not use their communication and collaboration skills, and most times, creativity lacks in the answers the students offer or they never use it to create something new, and they do not use their critical thinking skills to solve a real-world problem. Though many countries have made changes in their educational systems, the traditional model still prevails for at least two reasons: the first reason is that the educational system is difficult to change and the second reason would be that the new model based on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, requires disciplinary and pedagogical expertise from teachers but also an active involvement from students to get new skills and knowledge.

A second limitation would be the fact that the students might not learn if not explicitly taught. According to Richardson, the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are not taught separately as a course throughout the years, although teachers tend to shift toward constructivist pedagogy, a pedagogy where students are encouraged to construct their own knowledge through experiences and activities versus being lectured on different concepts. Students are asked to form an opinion and draw a conclusion based on their own discoveries. (Richardson 2003: 1624) Teachers in 22 of the 23 participating countries, the majority of which are Northern or Eastern European, favor constructivist pedagogy, according to

the OECD's 2008 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2008). Even when teachers employ active learning techniques like debate and planned classroom discussions, the TALIS also shows that 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are not always clearly highlighted. (OECD 2010)

Thirdly, it is more challenging to evaluate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills than factual retention. Teachers frequently prioritize their classrooms less when they are not evaluated on exams with high stakes for certification or accountability. Therefore, the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills needs explicit attention.

## **Implementing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills in the Curriculum**

Some people might ask why we have to reinvent curricula or do something new if it served so well in the past. Are the knowledge, skills, and situations different for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Will they be relevant for a long time? How should the curriculum requirement for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competencies be planned, carried out, and evaluated? How important is the English language in educating the students of the future?

According to David Nunan the renewal of the curriculum must start with the question of the purpose of education. (Nunan 2020: 2) The Greek philosophers Aristotle and Socrates had something to say on this topic: Aristotle believed that it was the state's responsibility to educate its citizens as a way to serve whereas Socrates had a completely different perspective and he claimed that education is only the igniting of a flame; it is not the filling of a vessel. These two opposing aims of education - to serve the state but also to empower the individual, have organized discussions on education's goals. (Nunan 2020: 2)

As it was mentioned above in the previous chapters, globalization, the emergence of new technologies but also knowledge society call for curriculum renewal. The belief that in one way or another, the educational system is failing in preparing its students for the 21<sup>st</sup> competencies and somehow educators cannot meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is not something new. Jerome Bruner, one of the most prominent educators of the previous century, declared: "Each generation must define afresh the nature, direction, and aims of education to assure such freedom and rationality as can be attained for a future generation. For there are changes both in circumstances and in the knowledge that impose constraints on and give opportunities to the teacher in each succeeding generation. It is in this sense that education is in constant process of invention." (Bruner 1966: 23) He affirmed this in a post-war society where the explosion of knowledge and the need for renewal were crucial (Brunner, 1966).

Today, a similar argument is advanced. As we read in Nunan's article, government and business executives contend that factors such as immigration, competition, technology, and market changes necessitate a greater focus on educational systems that are outcomes-driven. Schools feel the pressure to produce graduates with appropriate knowledge, skills, and competencies for 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements, a request that is generating great challenges in pedagogy and assessment. (Nunan 2020: 3)

Sir Ken Robinson asked a very pertinent question: "How can we create a curriculum that will prepare our children to survive and thrive in a future world that is currently unknown?" (qtd in Nunan 2020:3) We don't know what the future holds, yet one of the greatest challenges for educators is the great volume of information and the pace of change. The students that we have today will get a job in the next ten-fifteen years, so how can we be sure that the skills we try to implement today will still be up-to-date in the future? The British educator, Ted Wragg, brought forward a way out -

he predicted that the technology and all the 21st century resources would facilitate independent learning. (qtd in Nunan 2020: 3) Hence, one aim of education would be to prepare such creative and resourceful individuals that have a great spirit of inquisitive knowledge who could work independently, and who could cooperate and collaborate easily.

Butler-Kisber states that there are three interrelated themes (qtd. in Nunan 2020:4) that prevail in the current thinking in education:

- a) The focus on the skills that are necessary for individuals to meet the requirements of the 21st century: how to access the information, how to develop investigative skills in order to solve real-life problems.
- b) The significance of creating citizens who can collaborate, communicate and who develop creativity, and solve problems ethically and responsibly.
- c) The need to cultivate digital literacy so that individuals can make use of online information with integrity.

Linda Button in her book *Curriculum Essentials: A Journey*, offers some definitions of the curriculum and she urges her readers to find their own definition of the curriculum that best defines their teaching practices. She provides some insights throughout the first chapter: “A good curriculum meets the needs of the students”; “Students have ideas about what and how they should learn and it is our responsibility as educators to listen to those needs”; “Curriculums can change in response to the needs of students and their learning potential”; “Meeting the needs of students should be a critical factor in developing or choosing curriculum”; “Good curriculum is more than a single text or series”. (Button, L.) The word “curriculum” originates from the Latin word “currere” which means “to run/ competition/ to run a race”, therefore if we are to give a definition based on its original word, it would be a course of subjects covered by learners in their race to achieve a certain educational goal. The first classical definition was that the teaching-learning process is defined basically by its content. Many educators, says Button, see curriculum as a plan, program, or course of study, whereas a broader definition would consider that the curriculum should include elements such as aims, goals, objectives, content, strategies, methods, and organization of learning experience. (Button, L.)

Richard Cash has a very interesting perspective on the curriculum and his book *Advancing Differentiation: Thinking and Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* provides ideas for optimizing curriculum and instructional practices to increase student achievement. The author defines the essential elements of the curriculum for the twenty-first century but also provides ways to increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process. He reinforces the idea that by knowing and understanding our students' needs we should direct the curriculum and students' instruction to ensure their success. According to Cash, five key competencies have been identified by the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, a national advocacy group in the United States, as being necessary for citizens and workers to succeed in the twenty-first century. They include adaptability, self-direction, cross-cultural skills, productivity, and leadership. Additionally, the organization has identified the five main interdisciplinary themes that will probably be the focus of these thinking skills: global awareness, financial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, and environmental literacy. (Cash 2017: 2)

The Global Digital Citizen Foundation states that students need to be proficient in skills of problem-solving, creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, ethics, action, and accountability (Cash 2017:3). Cash concludes that the foundation for our students' present and future success is a challenging curriculum that fosters high-level thinking abilities. This curriculum must be delivered in a classroom setting that is student-centered and authentically differentiated (Cash 2017: 3).

This innovative curriculum concept focuses on the fundamentals of what students need to know, be able to do, and comprehend in the twenty-first century. Cash specifies that there is a hierarchy of knowledge considering the way the brain learns: “*factual* (knowing the facts), *procedural* (doing the tasks), and *conceptual* (understanding the concepts) knowledge”. (Cash 2017: 29) As we know and we have probably experienced, most classrooms tend to be grounded in factual and procedural knowledge, but the missing element from the twenty-first-century curriculum is the conceptual knowledge “the creative idea generation and critical reasoning that is grounded in conceptual levels of thinking”. (Cash 2017: 30)

Many educators working on the development of the curriculum have included Bloom’s Taxonomy in the curriculum because they found it helpful when establishing competencies and creating new lessons. In 1956, Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues published the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*. The purpose of the study was to establish a taxonomy, or classification system, to assist educators in creating hierarchical learning objectives and addressing curricular and evaluation issues. The taxonomy was later referred to as Bloom’s Taxonomy. The framework elaborated by Bloom and his collaborators consisted of six major categories: *Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation*. “The categories after *Knowledge* were presented as “skills and abilities,” with the understanding that knowledge was the necessary precondition for putting these skills and abilities into practice”. (Armstrong 2010)

The taxonomy was altered in 2001 by researchers Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl to realign the top two levels and add a second dimension. Anderson and Krathwohl, two of Dr. Bloom’s students, contend that synthesis is the highest level of mental activity because it requires more complexity than evaluation does. The initial taxonomy was created within a specific range of cognitive operations. The knowledge dimension, which includes the three primary types of knowledge—factual, procedural, and conceptual—as well as metacognitive knowledge—is the second interrelated dimension that Anderson and Krathwohl have added. (Armstrong 2010; Cash 2017: 148) The authors of the revised taxonomy underscore this dynamism, using verbs and gerunds to label their categories and subcategories (rather than the nouns of the original taxonomy). The graphic below presents a reinterpretation of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Cognitive Learning, redesigned for this publication. It outlines six levels of thinking, from remembering basic facts to creating new ideas.

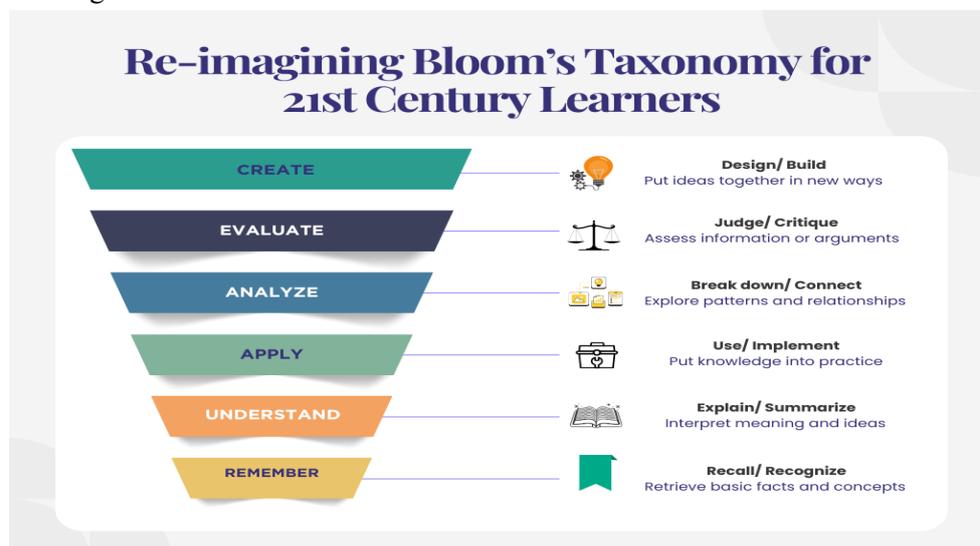


Figure 3. Re-imagining Bloom’s Taxonomy for 21st Century Learners

Why should we use Bloom's Taxonomy in curriculum development? The authors of the revised taxonomy offer a multi-layer response to this query to which Armstrong brings some clarifying points:

- a) To ensure that both teachers and students are aware of the purpose of a pedagogical exchange, it is crucial to establish objectives (learning goals);
- b) Organizing objectives helps to clarify objectives for teachers and for students;
- c) Having an organized set of objectives helps teachers to: "plan and deliver appropriate instruction, design appropriate assessment tasks and strategies, and ensure that instruction and assessment are aligned with objectives."(Armstrong 2010, Button, L.)

Having all these strategies and educators that advocate for a change in the curriculum, one of the most controversial issues of the implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is defining their role and place in the curriculum. The implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills does not only involve changing the current objectives and content to those that are crucial in the knowledge society but also redefining the curriculum (Voogt & Roblin 2012:300). A better understanding of the requirements for the curricular integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is the goal of the conceptual frameworks discussed in the previous chapter (Voogt & Roblin 2012:301).

The different frameworks demonstrate "different ways of conceptualizing human characteristics and the human condition" (Care 2018:4), but they also demonstrate a high degree of consistency when it comes to identifying specific skills and competencies. The importance given to a particular set of competencies within the scope of what all frameworks agree to call 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies, varies as a result of the different focus (Voogt & Roblin 2012:306).

The overview of the primary objective and the sponsors of the various frameworks reveals that three of the frameworks were developed by international organizations, specifically the EU, OECD, and UNESCO, while the other five were started by non-governmental organizations (Voogt & Roblin 2012:304). This can be interpreted as a sign of societal interest in fostering the acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Voogt & Roblin 2012:305). While individual frameworks are also or exclusively concerned with the implementation or assessment of these skills, the majority of frameworks place a strong emphasis on identifying and defining 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and competencies (Voogt & Roblin 2012:304). ICT-related skills and digital competencies are clearly emphasized in frameworks like NETS and the Technological Literacy Framework (Voogt & Roblin 2012:304).

For Romania, the most relevant framework is the European Reference Framework *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*. The publication of the European Commission, lists eight competencies that are "crucial to citizens for personal fulfillment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship, and social inclusion" (European Commission 2019:4). The publication's goal is also stated to be the support of stakeholders in education and training. The eight competencies listed below are considered key competencies for lifelong learning by the European Commission (2019:5):

- Literacy competence;
- Multilingual competence;
- Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology, and engineering;
- Digital competence;
- Personal, social, and learning-to-learn competence;
- Citizenship competence;
- Entrepreneurship competence;
- Cultural awareness and expression competence.

While it is noted that certain skills such as "critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, creativity, negotiation, analytical, and intercultural skills are embedded throughout the key competences," this segmentation does appear to differ in some ways from other frameworks (European Commission 2019:5). Making decisions and dealing with complexity are also discussed in relation to various key competencies.

For instance, literacy competence entails being able to communicate both orally and in writing in a variety of contexts as well as observing and adjusting communication to the demands of a situation (European Commission 2019:6). The ability to use various languages appropriately and effectively for communication is defined as a core component of multilingual competence (European Commission 2019:7). The framework claims that multilingual competence includes not only linguistic knowledge and language-related skills but also favorable attitudes and interests toward cultural diversity and cross-cultural communication (cf. European Commission 2019:7).

The presentation of digital competence in relation to several other skills supports the idea that ICT has taken on a central role in many topic areas and influences the characteristics of various competences. Information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation, problem-solving, and critical thinking are some of the skills mentioned in the framework (European Commission 2019:7). The framework also emphasizes the importance of using technology to foster innovation, communication, and creativity while being aware of its opportunities, risks, and limitations (European Commission 2019:7). The ability to use digital technologies to support one's active citizenship, social inclusion, teamwork, and creativity toward one's own, other people's, or one's own commercial goals is referred to as digital competence (European Commission 2019:7).

The document *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* once again demonstrates how certain skills are interconnected and how crucial they are for successfully navigating through various aspects of one's personal and professional lives. Additionally, this framework emphasizes how the development of particular skills is crucial for both personal development and well-being in addition to being important in work-related situations.

In Romania, a document on educational politics entitled *Reference Points in Design, Upgrade, and Assessment of National Curriculum* appeared on the official website of the Ministry of Education, in 2019. The proposal was reinforced and approved through the Ministry of Education Order no. 3239 on 5 February 2021, and published in the official gazette *Monitorul Oficial* on 15 February 2021. The document follows the eight key competencies recommended by the European Commission. The real application in schools is still at the beginning, as teachers need training and support to ensure they are taking their students on the right track for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the purposes of the present book, a survey was applied to different groups of English teachers in Targu Mures. The theme of the survey was teaching practices that might support students' learning of the following 21<sup>st</sup> century skills:

- Critical Thinking;
- Collaboration;
- Communication;
- Creativity & Innovation;
- Self-Direction;
- Making Global Connections;
- Making Local Connections;
- Using Technology as a Tool for Learning.

The results and the interpretation of the survey will be further developed in chapter five of the present book.

The Romanian National Curriculum defines competencies as organized collections of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are developed and trained during the educational process. They make it possible to recognize and address particular issues in any industry as well as general problems in various settings.

The specific competencies are taught for a school year; they are derived from the general competencies and serve as intermediate goals for the general competencies. Learning activities based on learning strategies and methods are organized to go along with these particular competencies. Examples of various learning activities that combine didactic methods with actual student experience are provided in the school-level curriculum. In order to accomplish the educational goals, the teacher is free to use the curriculum's examples, enhance them, or modify them. The official documents on the national curriculum guarantee their contextualized application along this route, guaranteeing a customized educational path for each student following their unique developmental needs.

Several potential strategies for incorporating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into the national or school curriculum are mentioned in the frameworks examined by Voogt and Roblin (2012). One possibility is to expand an already existing curriculum by including new subjects or content that are intended to reflect developments in the twenty-first century (cf. Voogt & Roblin 2012:310). Another strategy is to include 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as cross-curricular competencies "that both support academic subjects and emphasize the acquisition of wider key competencies" (Voogt & Roblin 2012:310). The third choice is the creation of a new curriculum with the intention of changing conventional structures to recognize schools as learning organizations (Voogt & Roblin 2012:310). The second strategy is advised in the majority of frameworks because the topic is complex and cross-trans-disciplinarity (Voogt & Roblin 2012:310). However, these changes are also related to "the need for restructuring the curriculum to make room for 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies" (Voogt & Roblin 2012:310).

In addition to curriculum reform, pedagogical and assessment-related approaches must change for current educational systems to move away from the predominate content focus and toward the promotion of transdisciplinary and transversal competencies (Care 2018:7). Assessment is not only an essential component of implementing curriculum change to assess whether expected learning results were attained (Voogt & Roblin 2012:301) but formal assessment is also mentioned as an important technique to support the acquisition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Voogt & Roblin 2012:310). Given that assessment can boost students' academic performance, it must be coordinated with the goal of the specific teaching strategy (Care & Kim 2018:22).

According to a study on transversal competencies in the Asia Pacific region, policymakers and educators recognize the value of assessment, "but implementation was hampered by a lack of teacher understanding about the skills and relevant materials and resources" (Care 2018:4). This had a close relationship to the false assumption that transversal competences could be evaluated using current assessment tools (Care 2018:4). Furthermore, Voogt and Roblin (2012:312) confirm that traditional assessment models are ineffective for evaluating complex competencies because they concentrate on the evaluation of discrete knowledge. Instead, challenging assignments are necessary to "give students the opportunities to apply and transfer their understanding to real-world situations, to solve problems, to think critically, and to work collaboratively" (Voogt & Roblin 2012:312). Furthermore, there is a need for appropriate application of these competencies in a variety of contexts and circumstances (Voogt & Roblin 2012:312).

The element of assessment is typically presented in current research on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills as a work in progress and as a significant challenge for educational practice. Care emphasizes that it is

"unrealistic to assume that curricular shift and innovation in assessment to reflect current teaching and learning associated with that shift will all happen at once," but also calls for practical solutions for appropriate assessment measurements. (2018:15)

Additionally, the emphasis of assessment should be on genuine tasks that "reflect the characteristics of long-term professional work and life behavior" and mimic the demands of real-life situations (Care & Kim 2018:24). Additionally, the assessment must now focus more on the learning process than the learning outcome, demonstrating how formative assessment and student-centered approaches are consistent with the ideas of skill development (Care & Kim 2018:24).

For instance, a complex assessment strategy is needed for problem-solving, a goal-oriented and high-level cognitive process. Flexible tools and platforms are therefore required for testing problem-solving abilities in contexts that are constantly changing in order to provide a valid assessment of problem-solving processes (Care & Kim 2018:28). Therefore, computer-based performance assessments that require students to identify causal relationships and "interact with and navigate through an unfamiliar system or situation" (Care & Kim 2018:28) are appropriate for evaluating such complex skills in a situation that simulates real-life problem-solving. Despite the difficulty of capturing and measuring social processes in online environments, Care and Kim (2018:28) emphasize that in order to assess collaborative problem-solving, students must work together to solve a problem.

All in all, it is important to consider the student's learning process, including how knowledge naturally progresses from simple to advanced, when assessing 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies. These tools and tasks should be used in conjunction with assessments that reflect real-world scenarios. Additionally, it was discovered that implementing effective and appropriate assessment measures requires teachers to have a thorough understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and task progression.

In conclusion, the disciplinary subject areas should not be obliterated, but rather be seen from the perspective of the 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies. Building communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking skills as well as autonomy is not just the responsibility of the mathematician, biologist, or historian, but also of the linguist, musician, or artist. (Nunan 2020: 7) "If the ideals of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning are to be realized, there needs to be a radical reconceptualization of the curriculum." (Nunan 2020:7)

## **The Role of the Teacher**

What a difference a century makes! The twentieth century saw significant advancements in technology and educational practices. However, with the arrival of the twenty-first century, there have been significant changes in the way we learn. Education has become more dynamic and adaptable to changing times as technology and globalization have advanced.

The reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century makes teachers' work a subject of great changes and realities to be noted. "Bringing technology into schools, the increasing complexity of learning and teaching in diverse classrooms, the growing societal expectations of raising students' achievements, and the need for tailoring and implementing innovative teaching practices are just some of the factors driving this change. In this situation, teacher education and professional development arise as a substantial means to prepare teachers to confront these and other challenges to the teaching profession." (Kowalczyk-Walédziak, Marta, et al., 2019: 15)

A variety of factors, including institutional constraints, educational issues, administrative issues, political issues, and cultural considerations, can have an impact on educational innovation at

different levels (Wong 2013:248–249). But it's important to recognize that "with these complex and dynamic systems, the decisive factor for effective and successful change is humans" (Wong 2013:249). When it comes to balancing the implementation of curriculum innovations in the classroom, teachers are crucial players. More specifically, "teachers' attitudes, beliefs, competencies, and practices are determinant factors in the realization of change in teaching and learning," as Voogt & Roblin (2012:311) further emphasize. Additionally, Wong emphasizes that teacher beliefs are "key influences in the extent to which an innovation is adopted." (Wong 2013:259) Teachers' beliefs influence how teaching is planned and organized, as well as how decisions about classroom practices are made, which is why the implementation of innovations is dependent on the individual teacher's perspectives and attitudes toward the specific innovation (Wong 2013:249). For these reasons, this topic should be prioritized in discussions about implementing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and teachers should be included.

The teacher's active participation in the general discussion of 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies is low at the level of curriculum policy, which may have a detrimental effect on the development of a sustainable curriculum (Voogt & Roblin 2012:305). The analysis of frameworks by Voogt and Roblin (2012:311) revealed that while the importance of teachers is widely acknowledged, only a few frameworks provide information on the content of teacher training programs or the necessary skills.

The role of the teacher has significantly changed in terms of the needed skills and methods as a result of ongoing innovations in national and school curricula. The following are two skills for teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that are frequently mentioned in the frameworks:

- a) the need to train teachers to use a variety of teaching techniques;
- b) the necessity of enhancing teachers' capacities to use ICT tools' affordances to design learning environments that support 21<sup>st</sup> century learning (Voogt & Roblin 2012:311).

The organization of learning processes "in such a way that learners learn [...] how to become more or less the architect of their own learning process" can motivate students to engage in active learning, which is crucial for them to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Nieveen & Plomp 2018:264). In such a situation, the teacher assumes the role of a qualified coach (Nieveen & Plomp 2018:264). A focus on each student's unique interests and needs, the creation of a flexible learning environment, and the support of the student's learning process by providing feedback, promoting reflection, and evaluating the learning process are more specific aspects of the new role of teachers (Nieveen & Plomp 2018:264).

The role of the teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has shifted to a new paradigm; the teacher is no longer seen as a provider of knowledge, breaking it into bite-sized chunks and spoon-feeding the students. The new role is more complex and more demanding. They are seen to be well-informed about how students learn and understand the available resources, including the use of ICT tools. Offering individualized instruction is not only feasible but desirable because students have different personalities, needs, and goals. When students are given the freedom to make their own decisions, they take ownership of their education, develop greater intrinsic motivation, and exert more effort, which is the perfect formula for improved academic performance.

The teacher should build productive relationships with students that encourage them to participate in their learning. Teachers ought to consider exercising differentiated instruction that includes distributed learning, diverse assessment, and diverse groupings. Today students have the latest and the greatest tools, yet in many cases, communication rarely goes beyond family and friends. Even if they are seen as digital natives, they rarely produce digital content. They have expensive tools at their disposal that can create blogs, infographics, books, how-to videos, and tutorials, to name

a few, but in many classes, they are still required to turn those tools off and work with handouts and worksheets. Unfortunately, after being graded, these papers are frequently just thrown away. Many students don't even want to complete them, much less keep them or come back to them later. When given the opportunity, students can create stunning and imaginative blogs, movies, or digital stories that they are proud of and want to share with others.

It will be helpful to have one's own practical experience and expertise in order to be able to give students options. Learning a tool only once and for all is not an option because technology is constantly evolving. The good news is that everyone can get started right away because new technologies are novel for both beginner and more experienced teachers.

Once more, students begin using their devices as such when they are urged to see them as priceless resources that support knowledge (as opposed to distractions). Looking back, it is striking how common it once was to forbid smartphones in the classroom and to insist on explaining every new vocabulary word or supplying answers directly to every student—approaches that would be unthinkable in today's teaching practice.

It has become clear that students require varying levels of support when dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary or questions, making it inefficient to offer explanations that may benefit only a few. The classroom dynamic changes significantly when learners are taught to be independent and equipped with strategies to find their own solutions. Viewing students' devices as useful tools has also been linked to noticeable improvements in engagement and learning outcomes.

Wong (2013:249–250) acknowledges that the implementation of ICT necessitates a change in teaching and learning concepts as well as teachers' perceptions of their roles. Wong claims that the major challenges that teachers face are philosophical and pedagogical in nature. Teachers' perspectives on technology's capabilities for successful integration in the classroom must be in harmony with their beliefs about language learning and teaching if lasting change is to occur (Wong 2013:249).

Going paperless and utilizing technology to organize teaching materials and activities on one's own website can raise the quality of students' learning experiences, which is another crucial quality. Students can access and share class resources more efficiently by exchanging links and providing digital discussions rather than a steady stream of paper.

Teachers and students can collaborate thanks to technology. Classroom activities will resemble real-world experiences by co-creating digital resources, presentations, and projects with other educators and students. Collaboration should go beyond sending emails to share documents or make PowerPoint presentations. It is a great loss when brilliant ideas are only ever discussed or written down. Our entire experience can be altered by global collaboration. Connect with others who share your interests. Once more, we can connect with anyone, anywhere, at any time thanks to modern technology.

Teaching with textbooks is very 20<sup>th</sup> century because modern students have access to real resources online, experts everywhere, and peers learning the same subject elsewhere. Today's students should come up with their driving questions, do their own research, speak to experts, and produce final projects to present using the devices they already own. All they require from their teacher is direction.

Teaching students critical thinking skills has become more important in the twenty-first century. This implies that students are urged to think more deeply about the issues they come across rather than simply memorizing facts and figures. In order to generate original ideas, they are expected to analyze, assess, and synthesize data. They must also be able to apply the skills they learn in one class to another. For instance, if a student learns how to build an argument in English class, he or she

should be able to use this same skill when solving a math problem. Learning how to solve problems critically can help students think more independently and solve problems in the real world.

Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires committed teaching professionals who are constantly updating their teaching methods and skills and applying these in everyday teaching. The teacher is seen not only as a learning guide, an educational facilitator, or a broker of learner opportunities but also as a “learner” himself. Innovations in teacher training programs are required, as well as proper follow-up training for teachers in the classroom where appropriate teaching methods, learning tools, and assessment strategies are presented, to effectively meet the demands outlined above.

The quality and character of the activities used within the program are important in teacher training as well as other learning processes, because epistemologically, "what is learned will fundamentally be shaped by how it is learned" (Johnson 2013:75). According to research on teachers' cognition, their own instructional learning history has a significant impact on their perspectives on learning and teaching, which comprise their everyday concepts about language learning and teaching (cf. Johnson 2013:75). When novice teachers are exposed to current research in their teaching programs, they adopt new scientific concepts that frequently contradict their everyday beliefs (cf. Johnson 2013:75). Additionally, when innovations are added to training programs, the emphasis should be on the activity structure so that inexperienced teachers can participate in real teaching activities and get the feedback they need (cf. Johnson 2013:76).

One must be aware of the difficulties that come with shifting roles. In addition to having a large amount of responsibility for integrating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into the various curriculum subjects, teachers must also learn new teaching techniques, methods, and assessment procedures to successfully implement 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (cf. Voogt & Roblin 2012:311).

## Chapter 3 – ENGLISH FOR 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY EFL LEARNERS

While many English teachers, particularly those teaching English as a foreign language, still struggle to successfully implement the integrated skills approach, they are also faced with the challenge of encouraging students to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Although the idea of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills was first developed in the USA in 2007 to better education outcomes and prepare US citizens for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace, many other countries have started to improve their educational systems by incorporating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into the learning outcomes. (Pardede, 2020: 71)

The ability to function proficiently in the digital world, sort through information, and adjust to a new work environment are all 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that students and employees must possess. English teachers need to incorporate these skills into their classrooms because English has taken over as the dominant language on the global market. Let's see some applications of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills:

- a) *Sorting information* - It may be challenging to separate the wheat from the chaff in today's constant stream of information. However, students can be helped in this challenging task if they have adequate critical thinking and digital literacy skills.
- b) *Consider novel ideas* - In today's job market, having creative thinking skills is highly valued. Opportunities have increased along with market expansion, but so have the challenges that need to be overcome. Therefore, it has become crucial for job seekers to possess the capacity to think creatively and outside the box.
- c) *Effective communication and collaboration* - People no longer need to work together in the same physical location thanks to the digital revolution. They do, however, need to learn effective cooperation and communication skills. The classroom is where these skills are first learned.
- d) *Cultural awareness* - Today's workers frequently interact with people from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, so they must learn to be flexible and accepting of different beliefs and values. In order to help students prepare for their future careers, teachers should foster these skills in the classroom.

How can one incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English language classroom? English foreign language (EFL) students come with different backgrounds and achievement levels, with different learning styles, which impact their ability to learn and use the English language appropriately. These students care about acquiring formal academic skills as well as having a strong command of the various language skills required in social contexts. It can be easily said that the English language classroom needs to be very distinct from what it looked like twenty or thirty years ago. Today's English class requires the understanding and practice of literacy in depth. English teachers must accept the evolving and flexible nature of literacies that cover topics as diverse as technology, multimedia, relationships, and culture in place of an all-encompassing single literacy (Albahlal, 2019: 145). As a result, the English classroom needs to be a setting that can address the multiplicity and integration of different meaning-making modalities, where the textual relates to the visual, the audio, the spatial, and the behavioral. The explicit but crucial use of what experts have dubbed the "21<sup>st</sup> century skills" is one potential strategy for responding to the fresh demands and interests of our students and society (Albahlal, 2019: 145).

English language teachers must create lessons that involve students in the kinds of real-world tasks and problem-solving exercises that they will require in the future. According to Warschauer as

quoted in Albahlal (2019: 149), engaging students in complex project work that involves goal-setting, negotiation, collaboration, and meaningful communication as well as the creation of difficult products can help increase student engagement. Therefore, students need to learn how to acquire a wide variety of English language literacy skills, including new online technologies for reading, writing, and communicating. English teachers must specifically employ learner-centered collaborative projects in which students collaborate with others from around the world and their classmates while utilizing a variety of technological tools. (Albahlal, 2019: 149)

EFL students should not be required to work alone on assignments that emphasize short-term content memorization, nor should they complete assignments that emphasize translation or permit haphazardly put-together fragments of model phrases and sentences from the textbook. Project-based learning (PBL) is recommended as a substitute to assist students in problem-solving, problem-analysis, and investigation of potential solutions. PBL, on the other hand, promotes students' ability to work largely independently over prolonged periods to produce realistic products or presentations as a result. Instead of giving students the right answers up front, instructors take on the role of facilitators and offer feedback while guiding them through the learning process. Therefore, PBL appears to be a viable alternative for integrating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into the teaching of English. (Albahlal, 2019: 150)

Moreover, English language learners need activities based on new technological tools and it is reckoned so far that these tools offer students not just the possibility to develop language proficiency but also digital literacy and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The use of smartphones, educational platforms, websites, digital storytelling, and media redesigning with EFL students, will simply engage them in artistic manipulation of well-known cultural and literary artifacts.

After examining how to incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into English language learning, it can be concluded that this is a multifaceted process that requires contributions from all of the students, the teacher, the curriculum, the community, and the school administration. Further on, we will investigate ways to integrate the 4Cs, media literacy, and technology in the English language classroom.

Critical Thinking. Communication. Collaboration. Creativity. The four C's of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are essential for success in the workforce today, and as English teachers, we can assist our students in developing these skills right in our English classrooms (on-site or online).

## **Critical Thinking**

Socrates introduced the questioning method, later known as the Socratic Method, as a strategy for enhancing the quality of human reasoning skills about 2,500 years ago, which was the first time the concept of critical thinking was acknowledged. Descartes brought the idea back to life in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and Dewey developed and encouraged it, making it a central element of western educational programs by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Pardede, 2020: 75)

There have been initiatives (Ur, 2020) to categorize thinking skills, one most common being 'lower order' and 'higher order' thinking skills. Lower order thinking skills need little effort and involve basic identification of information. Higher order thinking skills require some mental effort and involve contrasting, applying, categorizing, synthesizing, etc. (Ur, 2020: 10)

It is worth mentioning Bloom's taxonomy which was explained in the previous chapter, which identifies six cognitive skills: knowledge, understanding, analysis, application, synthesis and evaluation. A later development by Kratwohl sets aside 'knowledge' as a state, and rearranges this

time six verbs that express thinking: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create. Critical thinking is clearly a higher order thinking skill, whose purpose is to evaluate the truth, implications of a statement, new ideas that generate from it, etc. Therefore, “we teach critical thinking in order to raise our students’ awareness of when the text they read or hear...is inaccurate, biased, or makes unwarranted assumptions of insinuations”. (Ur, 2020: 10)

P21 Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (P21, 2019) defines critical thinking and problem solving as follows:

- ❖ Reason effectively:
  - Use various types of reasoning (inductive, deductive, etc.) as appropriate to the situation;
  - Use systems thinking;
  - Analyze how parts of a whole interact with each other to produce overall outcomes in complex systems;
  - Make judgments and decisions;
  - Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs;
  - Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view;
  - Synthesize and make connections between information and arguments;
  - Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis;
  - Reflect critically on learning experiences and processes.
- ❖ Solve problems:
  - Solve different kinds of non-familiar problems in both conventional and innovative ways;
  - Identify and ask significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions.

Nowadays, online communication via the internet serves as the primary medium for information transmission, primarily in the English language. We are swarmed with an unprecedented amount of information in the English language, but given that not all of it is trustworthy, it is crucial for students studying English in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to develop a critical mindset when interacting with media texts. By fostering higher order thinking abilities in the learning tasks and implementing a critical approach to texts, English teachers can support such an approach.

Language teachers, in general, are strongly encouraged to ensure that their students include in their learning digital literacy and they use advanced technology, they work collaboratively in pairs or groups/teams, they make use of the higher order thinking skills, including critical thinking.

A conversation in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade English class stood out: one student claimed that flamingos turn pink when they fly, while another confidently disagreed, asserting that flamingos are already pink. The first student insisted the information was accurate, noting that he had read it 'on the internet.' The class had been tasked with choosing an animal, researching it, designing a poster, and presenting relevant information. Most students chose lesser-known animals and uncovered engaging facts. However, the first student overlooked the fact that his source was a blog post written by a fiction writer, not a factual resource. There is a lot of information to choose from and maybe students take it for granted, consequently as English teachers we need to equip students with appropriate skills to discern true information from false information.

There are a number of variations of a definition of critical thinking. The Cambridge Online Dictionary (2023) defines critical thinking as “the process of thinking carefully about a subject or idea, without allowing feelings or opinions to affect you”. Paul Dummett and John Hughes (2019: 4) choose "a mindset that involves thinking reflectively, rationally, and reasonably" as their definition.

However, this choice involves a vague noun (which could refer to a fixed state of mind, a learned attitude, a disposition, or a mood) and three incredibly arbitrary adverbs. Dummett states that there are two reasons for promoting critical thinking in our English language classrooms: the desire to help students think for themselves and the other is “that we live in an age of misinformation in which only the critically minded can avoid manipulation or slavish conformity” (2019: 4). The point with these two reasons is the fact that they narrow the use of critical thinking only on texts and text analysis and evaluation of ideas on them. The authors continue the argument and consider critical thinking as a mindset or a global approach to learning rather than a box of tools to be used randomly. They affirm that it must affect every learner from beginner to advanced level and it must be used in every lesson (2019:5,6).

Critical thinking activities should call for questions on language and ideas in order to achieve a better understanding. For example, in grammar to ask how one structure differs from another, in vocabulary to ask about the restrictions of a certain word, in reading and listening to ask if the author used a neutral or emotional language, in writing or speaking to ask what the students already know on the topic provided (Dummett et al, 2019: 8).

Penny Ur boldly affirms that “the role of critical thinking in education has become more central in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, simply because there is far more information readily available to today’s students than there was in the previous centuries, and it is vital for them to be able to deal with such input wisely. They need to be able to distinguish between what is important and what is trivial, between truth and lies, between fact and opinion, between logical argument and specious propaganda; to look for evidence for theoretical claims, and to be able to evaluate the validity of such evidence when produced. Without such skills and awareness of the need to exercise them, they are liable to find themselves victims of commercial and political interests, their thinking manipulated by persuasion disguised as information.” (qtd in Mavridi, S & Xerri, D, 2020: 9)

In the same edited collection, Olja Milosevic (2020:18) echoes Ur’s argument: “Critical thinking becomes even more important as communication increasingly moves online. Students find an overwhelming amount of information and need to be taught how to evaluate its relevance, accuracy and quality. If teachers do not teach students how to go beyond surface meaning, students cannot be expected to practice it.”

The two authors above make reference to one particular kind of critical thinking: the ability to critically evaluate the dependability, accuracy, and other aspects of a text is widely regarded as part of what is commonly referred to as "media information literacy." According to the argument, in these days of fake news, it is critical for students to develop (with the help of their teachers) the necessary skills to identify fake news when they see it. The need for students to engage in discussions with their peers when questioning arguments or working on problem-solving tasks is a critical component of critical thinking activities. Students will enjoy working on a problem if they find it challenging enough, and they will produce a lot of language in the process. Although language production may be minimal in beginner classes, engaging students in critical thinking has numerous advantages (Ur, Milosevic, 2020).

English language teachers may find incorporating critical thinking skills in their lessons and activities difficult and presumably they have various reasons. First of all, language proficiency may be the first drawback, as it makes teachers question the possibility especially with less fluent students. Sometimes English teachers may focus more on “functional understanding of language in their classes” (Ur, 2020: 18). Teaching grammar and vocabulary could be considered more relevant for beginner students than teaching students to analyze or evaluate a text, finding arguments and debating on new ideas. Secondly, English language courses usually follow a syllabus or curriculum and

teachers are time constrained. Ur continues and argues that if they want to use critical thinking activities, they need to adjust the curriculum, design extra materials, and explain and allow students enough time to complete those tasks. The results cannot be seen immediately as students require extra time to learn how to deal with critical thinking skills. Also, if students do not feel confident to express themselves in English and may expect to do so in their mother tongue, the critical thinking activity may appear as a waste of time. Moreover, the assessment of the critical thinking skills is not an easy thing to do as the language of the assigned task might be acceptable but there is no evidence of critical thinking. English teachers might feel reluctant in including critical thinking skills tasks in their everyday teaching (Ur, 2020).

In the next lines, we will give some examples that might encourage students to use critical thinking skills. These activities can be used at any stage of the lesson and with students at different level proficiency. They could be used with students working in pairs or groups and have them take part in the decision-making process.

#### Activity 1 - Language exercises

Grammar exercises and vocabulary exercises are designed as sentence completion or matching tasks that follow to get the language right, so they rarely require students' critical thinking skills. Language exercises are generally closed-ended sentences: students get to have one answer which could be right or wrong.

E.g. Fill in the correct tense of the verb in brackets:

*He \_\_\_\_\_ the house. (arrive)*

In contrast, an open-ended item might look like the following example:

Fill in the correct tense of the verb in brackets and complete it to make a meaningful sentence.

*He \_\_\_\_\_ ... (arrive).*

Obviously, the open-ended sentence is not just more interesting for students, as they need to think about the form of the verb but also on the meaning of the sentence. If we make this sentence an oral exercise, students could suggest a great number of sentences to contextualize the form of the verb 'arrive'.

The same type of language exercise can be adapted for various levels and contexts of language learning. For a class of students studying English for Specific Purposes, for example, the task may be implemented as follows: students are given a partial description of a machine or technical system and asked to complete it by inferring possible functions, technical processes, or causes based on their background knowledge and contextual clues.

E.g. Complete the sentence using a suitable verb phrase:

*This system must be calibrated regularly to ensure that it \_\_\_\_\_.*

Students need to look for the right verb and additionally they must decide why the function of the verb phrase is necessary in the context of the system (e.g., safety, efficiency, precision).

#### Activity 2 - Making connections between independent items (based on Ur, 2020)

When we want to introduce a new topic or a new concept, this activity is very useful. Students need to connect a topic/theme to objects that do not have to do anything one with another; they are therefore encouraged to find a common line and the possible relationship between those objects.

Procedure:

1. Group students in three or four
2. Students have to define a concept or a topic and create a definition that everyone agrees upon.
3. After they have their definitions written, they have to search for a definition in the dictionary. Students check if their definition covers all aspects of the theme/concept they chose

4. Students have to compare their definition of the concept/theme with items that the teacher provides. For instance, one question the teacher could ask would be the following: *How is wealth related to gardening tools: lawn mower, rake, garden hose?* To complete the task, students need to find common things and extend the topic.
5. On a piece of cardboard, students need to pin the pictures and explain how the object and the concept are similar.
6. Display the cardboards around the class and allow students to walk around and discuss responses.

By allowing students to compare and discuss the items and the concept, they were encouraged to choose an aspect they wanted to underline. Their colleagues could ask for further explanations and develop the concept further on.

### Activity 3 - The Great Mini Debate (based on Benucci, 2017)

Level: Intermediate

Goals: - to present an oral argument using evidence

- to use language related to agreeing, disagreeing and showing contrast

Materials: whiteboard, markers, paper, pencils/pens, a timing device

Preparation:

- Choose a debate theme (e.g. digital communication and social media);
- Create a debate set related to the theme;
- Select topics that people will have strong opinions about;
- Activate background knowledge about debates (brainstorm for qualities of a great debater, write ideas on the board);
- Mention essential skills: agreeing, disagreeing, showing contrast.

Procedure:

- Tell students they are going to prepare for a debate;
- Put students into groups and select a group leader;
- Groups vote on a topic;
- Ask group members to line up according to their opinion - so we create Team 'FOR' and Team 'AGAINST';
- Allow students 20 minutes to prepare and take notes.
- Group leaders facilitate: - 10 minutes - brainstorm evidence and examples
- 5 minutes - discuss and identify strongest evidence;
- 5 minutes - discuss possible arguments from the other team and how to respond.
- Each member of the teams discusses for 1-2 minutes with a partner (for-against)
- Team 'For' members shift one place and then repeat the mini-debate
- At the end, bring the whole class back together and:
  - Evaluate strength of arguments and evidence;
  - Review any observed language issue;
  - Ask students if debates became easier or more difficult after each round and why.

These are briefly just a few activities that can be included in any English lesson and we can easily lead students into using their critical thinking skills. As English teachers we should keep in mind a few thoughts: when our students leave our English class, we want them to be able to think critically and creatively while performing either individually or in groups on a global scale. This means that we no longer teach only grammar and vocabulary but we are trying to provide the most interesting and engaging content and higher order thinking tasks.

We should consider making the experience personal because our learners are both our inspiration and our starting point. In other words, we should consider their likes or dislikes, what triggers their curiosity, which leads to another point: teachers should provide authentic content. Bringing something new, outside their textbooks, makes their curiosity sparkle and keeps them engaged in the topic. It is also fundamentally important to provide feedback, during and at the end of the activities: report back on what was great, what needs improvement, drill, expand on the topic. It is wonderful to feel useful and to know that you are doing your best to help your students grow.

## **Communication and Collaboration**

It has always been valued in the workplace and in public life to be able to express oneself clearly, articulate one's opinions clearly, communicate coherent instructions, and inspire others through one's speech. However, these abilities have changed and are now even more crucial in the twenty-first century. Collaboration is crucial in the classroom because it is part of how work is done in our civic and professional lives. Many tasks were completed by individual workers fifty years ago, but not anymore. Teams, oftentimes international teams, complete the majority of all significant work.

Teaching effective communication skills is increasingly crucial due to the influence of contemporary media and the pervasiveness of communication technologies in all spheres of life. Although clear speech, fluent reading, and concise writing have always been stressed in education, there is evidence that students are not becoming proficient in these fundamental abilities. Additionally, businesses now collaborate in "global teams." It takes successful teamwork to communicate effectively across cultural and linguistic barriers. Furthermore, it is crucial that the graduates of tomorrow are able to communicate effectively in a variety of languages as technology creates global work teams that cut across time zones, countries, and cultures.

Collaboration has generally been recognized as a skill that is necessary to produce meaningful and successful results. But because of globalization and the development of technology over the past ten years, it has become increasingly obvious that collaboration is not only important but also essential for both students and workers.

Roekel (2017: 19) argues that "... a large group of diverse individuals will come up with better and more robust forecasts and make more intelligent decisions than even the most skilled "decision maker." This underlines the significance of collaboration. Diverse individuals and cultural viewpoints contribute to the collaboration. Collaboration not only yields more comprehensive outcomes than individual endeavors, but it also increases the number of people with access to knowledge. Collaboration is a crucial component of student success in the modern global society because it allows the group of students to produce more knowledge (Roekel, 2017: 19-20).

Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (P21, 2019) accentuated what communication and collaboration competencies should bring together:

- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts;
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions;
- Use communication for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade);
- Utilize multiple media and technologies, and know how to judge their effectiveness a priority as well as assess their impact;
- Communicate effectively in diverse environments (including multi-lingual);

- Collaborate with others;
- Demonstrate ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams;
- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal;
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member.

Consequently, EFL teachers should encourage their students' skills in ICT-mediated communication in addition to helping them develop their conventional oral and written communication in English. To do this, ICT must be used as a learning tool.

In the process of teaching and learning, communication skills can be combined with integrated language skills by using a student-centered learning approach, particularly cooperative learning or project-based learning, in which groups of students collaborate to complete a task, solve a problem, or produce a product. Students have the chance to interact with peers through cooperative learning, where they can actively participate, present and defend ideas, swap differing viewpoints, and exchange ideas. Using either the CBI (Content Based Instruction), TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching), or a combination of both methods, cooperative learning can be implemented. (Pardede, 2020: 74)

According to Pardede, asking students to work in groups to finish a task, solve a problem, or work on a project is how collaboration is essentially implemented as a teaching and learning strategy. Through frequent learner-learner interaction, group projects give students the chance to benefit from one another's experiences. Thus, it is in line with the sociocultural approach, which sees learning as a social process that takes place through interaction among learners in situated contexts. However, despite the fact that students generally agreed that working in groups can be beneficial for enhancing ideas, achieving goals, improving accuracy, and increasing social interactions, various studies found that some students were reluctant to actively participate, while others tended to relax and keep quiet while the other members handled all the work. (Pardede, 2020: 75)

Here are some activities to enhance students' *communication skills* in an English class:

- 1) Give students different scenarios and let them role-play so they know what to say and how to behave in various situations *e.g. a job interview, meeting someone new at school, ordering food in a fancy restaurant*
- 2) Organize a public speaking contest. Students can present a speech about what they are passionate about or on a topic given. *E.g. the importance of technology in education, favorite places, sport or music*
- 3) Teach students how to write emails (formal or informal) and essays or articles - this activity can be done with previous explanations about the language and techniques that are appropriate for each piece of writing.

Working well with others opens up many doors in life and contributes to the development of strong relationships. Here are some activities to help students improve their *collaboration skills* in an English class:

- 1) Ask the students to plan an event, they can decide who is responsible for what and make a plan that everyone agrees with. *E.g. Inform your students that they are the organizing committee for a concert in their city. Everything from tickets to food to entertainment must be planned, and everyone must contribute.*
- 2) Bring pictures to the class, organize students in groups of 4-5 and ask them to create a story based on the pictures.

- 3) Present various scenarios to students and ask them what they would do in each one. Each student may present their ideas, but the class must ultimately reach an agreement. E.g. *What five items would you bring if you were stranded on a deserted island to help your team survive until help arrived?*

Some external factors, such as a lack of vocabulary knowledge, may impede students' development of communication skills in EFL classrooms. Students will struggle to express their ideas if they are unfamiliar with the discussed topics and concepts. Another issue is students' fear of making mistakes during communication. The proper method used by the teacher will help students reduce their fear and encourage them to express themselves, even if they use incorrect vocabulary. Additionally, appropriate activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and storytelling will allow students to speak freely and confidently.

Trilling and Fadel (2009) proposed that teachers use a variety of techniques and strategies to help students effectively build the communication skills required for the twenty-first century. To begin, teachers must teach students how to articulate their ideas in a variety of settings so that others can understand them and effective communication can occur. Allowing students to listen to native and non-native English speakers will allow them to focus not only on their language but also on the interlocutor's cultural background, values, and attitudes. Finally, because communication skills are used in conjunction with other skills, teachers must provide students with the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in communication (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

When it comes to the value of collaboration in the twenty-first century, it allows students to experience greater social and emotional challenges as they share and listen to each other's knowledge and ideas, leading to innovations. Collaboration is also thought to promote productivity and learning. Additionally, developing collaboration and communication skills enables students to interact professionally and respectfully with others, particularly across cultural boundaries, in a variety of global organizations and communities.

## **Creativity and Innovation**

Robinson (qtd. in Nunan, 2020:6) argues that creativity “is the single most important quality for education and the most important characteristic required for 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens.” However, Nunan affirms that there are two issues to discuss when it comes to creativity in education: the first one, it is extremely difficult to define it as people have an intuitive notion when it comes to creativity, the second problem is that it is rather impossible to teach. (Nunan, 2020: 6) Another great name related to creativity, besides Robinson, is Edward de Bono. His name was extremely popular in the 1970s and 1980s with schools around the world using his ‘thinking hats’, and teachers integrating his thinking tools into their curricula and lessons. “The technique underlying de Bono’s method for teaching creatively is lateral thinking. The essence of lateral thinking is to solve problems indirectly and creatively rather than following a traditional process of step-by-step logical reasoning. His technique involves bringing together two objects or concepts that would not normally be associated, but the procedure often results in solutions that are cute but often silly.” (Nunan, 2020: 6)

Many definitions of creativity have been proposed, but one has more support and it sustains that “creativity is a special ability to combine previously disconnected ideas or concepts, so as to produce novel output that is valuable within its context” (Farrugia, 2020: 35) Some authors support the idea that creativity is something that one can learn (Brinkman, de Bono, Robinson qtd. in Farrugia, 2020:35), consequently it is essential to organize training sessions.

The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (P21, 2019) introduced some key points when defining creativity and innovation:

❖ THINK CREATIVELY

- Use a wide range of idea-creation techniques (such as brainstorming);
- Create new and worthwhile ideas (both incremental and radical concepts);
- Elaborate, refine, analyze, and evaluate their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts.

❖ WORK CREATIVELY WITH OTHERS

- Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively;
- Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work;
- Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work and understand the real-world limits to adopting new ideas;
- View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.

❖ IMPLEMENT INNOVATIONS

- Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur.

The other skills that have been previously mentioned and creativity go hand in hand. These days, innovation has a social component and calls for flexibility, leadership, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. Today, being able to connect with others and having the means of communication and collaboration are becoming increasingly important for being innovative (Roekel, 2017: 25).

A random flash of inspiration that appears to have appeared out of nowhere is sometimes how creativity is portrayed. A more fruitful strategy, though, might be to deliberately exercise creativity. The first step is to lay out the creative task, which is the goal that calls for the use of our creative thinking ability. Ideas, problems-solving techniques, and novel interpersonal strategies can all be considered creative tasks. Usually, value is created or a problem is solved by new mental output. The creative process, which begins as soon as our brain is presented with a creative task, is greatly aided by having a clearly defined creative task. It includes every step we take to address the problem that has been presented to us.

Studying a foreign language fosters students' creativity, according to research on the relationship between learning that language and that skill. Creativity, on the other hand, encourages successful language acquisition. According to the same study, advanced EFL students outperform monolinguals in terms of creative thinking which may be related to the fact that learning a language involves learning about the culture, traditions, and beliefs of the target language's speakers, which elevates the student's sophistication. (Pardede, 2020: 77)

Some simple activities to promote *creativity* in the English class can be found below:

- 1) Train students' divergent thinking by having them participate in activities that require them to "think outside the box." e.g. come up with as many ideas possible to use an object - a stapler
- 2) Have students use 'the elevator pitch' to present a product or service, they could also try to sell it. E.g. Find out what issues students face on a daily basis and what new product could be created to help them solve those issues. Alternatively, instruct students to look around their rooms for a common item (like a pen) and then try to "sell" it to the class.

- 3) Have students explain a new concept in more simple terms 'explain like I am 5 years old'.  
E.g. Select a concept that a 5-year-old typically wouldn't understand, and have students come up with an inventive way to explain it in a way that a 5-year-old can understand.

Farrugia introduces an efficient tool for sparking creativity which is called "the Random Word", which stimulates the brain to find ideas and search for solutions when seeking connections with concepts that have no relation one to another. For instance, we ask our students to create messages that encourage people to recycle and we decide to use 'draught' as the random word. The brain will attempt to find associations by exploring the stimulus-word: why it happens, when it happens, what are the consequences, what is the relation to recycling, etc. This tool was first introduced by de Bono who "noticed that very often innovative ideas seemed to emerge spontaneously upon a chance encounter with a completely unrelated stimulus - such as a story told by a friend, a piece of news, an advert or an element of the environment" (Farrugia, 2020: 36). To put it another way, we can create new connections between topics of interest and ideas that were once unrelated by exposing ourselves to a random word.

There are two different uses for the Random Word tool as Farrugia explains it (2020: 26):

- When teachers need to come up with fresh lesson plans or concepts for new games, activities, or topics, they can use this internal tool to inspire creativity;
- As a lesson activity that fosters the creative potential of students.

When we incorporate creative thinking into English lessons, students develop relevant cognitive skills such as observing, questioning, comparing, contrasting, imagining, and hypothesizing, which they will need throughout the curriculum, as well as metacognitive skills such as the ability to evaluate and reflect critically on their own performance and learning outcomes.

Our activities to foster creativity can range from variation to original creation depending on the students' skill levels. Activities like brainstorming, group projects, rewriting, writing an essay or poem, ending a movie or story in a different way, attempting to draw after listening by using imagery, using web 2.0 tools for creating new brands, and game-like exercises can be suggested and enhanced to promote creativity skills. This is because language learning tasks should inspire a creative desire and the need to say something new is as essential as the need to communicate knowledge.

Creativity is a highly desired skill, yet many students and teachers experience anxiety when faced with a creative task. Although lacking confidence is difficult to overcome, false beliefs are gradually disproved with practice and successful outcomes.

### **Information, Media, and Technology in the EFL Classroom**

Modern technology and a media-focused environment define the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because of the internet's accessibility, usability, and convenience, our lives are now more global and digital, especially in the last ten years. Online tools are also much more widely used. Even though accessibility is appealing at this point, the fact that anyone can produce content online as a result of this feature results in information pollution in the mass media. Media can also be used to sway public opinion in the direction that is desired by higher authorities.

The use of digital information tools is expanding quickly as technology continues to advance. Information literacy, media literacy, and ICT (information, communications, and technology) literacy are skills that 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens must be proficient in. These literacy skills require media analysis to understand how messages are created and how people interpret them, as well as "using digital technologies as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information" (P21,

2019b). The 21<sup>st</sup> century skills movement places emphasis on the notion that educational systems must foster students' diverse literacies due to urgent economic and technological considerations.

Information literacy is the ability to accurately recall, interpret, represent, and evaluate accurate information among a variety of resources (Dent et al., 2021). Information literacy may be the most subtly successful educational process, according to Cowan (Cowan & Eva, 2016; Hammons, 2020). Since any type of data set can be broadcast online by any individual worldwide, mastering information literacy skills is of utmost importance. Online resources' and the internet's accessibility has many benefits, but it has also made it more difficult to review the content. Therefore, in order to distinguish between reliable information and false information, 21<sup>st</sup> century digital citizens are expected to possess information literacy skills.

According to P21 the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, information literacy underlines two aspects:

- ❖ The ability to access and evaluate information:
  - Access information efficiently (time) and effectively (sources);
  - Evaluate information critically and competently;
- ❖ The use and the ability to manage information:
  - Use information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand;
  - Manage the flow of information from a wide variety of sources;
  - Apply a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information. (P21, 2019)

"The ability to effectively produce, disseminate, and curate a wide variety of content that can be enabled by technology, including photographs and videos," is how media literacy is defined (Dent et al., 2021, p.123). Media literacy research in educational settings primarily focuses on people's media use and practices as well as on the teaching strategies and pedagogy of media literacy that are targeted at people. Because the majority of authentic materials are now accessible online in the context of modern education, media literacy is crucial for foreign language learning and teaching classrooms. The exposure to the target language outside of the classroom is encouraged in modern teaching environments, mostly through media tools like TV shows, online video content, journals, forums, blogs, etc. Language learners must receive media literacy training in order to interact with the unrestrained digital world. This makes the value of media literacy for foreign language teachers in the twenty-first century so clear.

The subject of media literacy will be further developed in the next subchapter as well as some specific ways to introduce it in the English class activities.

Technology integration in EFL classrooms is a key component of teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. While others refuse to acknowledge the fundamental changes that ICT innovations for ELT bring about, some teachers have happily accepted their new roles, highlighting the successes of today's online learning opportunities for English language learners while promoting great possibilities for the future. According to Wong (2013:249–250), the main challenges teachers face, are philosophical and pedagogical in nature. She also acknowledges that the use of ICT necessitates a change in both teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning as well as their view of their own roles. Teachers' perspectives on the capabilities of technology for a successful integration in the classroom must be in harmony with their beliefs about language learning and teaching in order for sustainable change to occur (Wong 2013:249).

Active measures must be taken to assist teachers in transitioning to the new mode of teaching and approach to pedagogy because they play a crucial role in the implementation of innovation, such as when they choose to use technology in their language classrooms (Wong 2013:250). Teachers

require assistance to better comprehend their circumstances, the effects of technological advancement and curricular change, and to use their knowledge and abilities to effectively plan novel classroom activities (cf. Wong 2013:250). The integration of innovative concepts requires significant processes of professional and personal change, especially for experienced, long-tenured teachers (cf. Wong 2013:258). Several strategies, such as situated learning opportunities or the assistance of a mentor with IT/ICT experience, can be used to support, for instance, a profound conceptual change in teachers' perspectives (cf. Wong 2013:250).

Furthermore, Wong's (2013:259) case study demonstrated that the alignment of individual and conceptualized pedagogical beliefs, as well as the perceived ability of ICT-related methods to support these beliefs, is a critical element in the success of conceptual change. While a dedication to student-centered learning, for instance, appeared to have a positive effect, a teacher-centered orientation appeared to have the opposite effect. The integration of innovations like ICT will prove to be a more difficult process if the pedagogical beliefs do not align with the expectations and perspectives on the innovative concepts (cf. Wong 2013:260).

In the EFL sector, training in the use of digital technologies is frequently left to chance. Teachers may choose to enroll in workshops, conferences, online webinars, and courses in order to receive training, but this approach can be hit or miss from a management standpoint. Only a few teachers from a given school might initially be interested in technology, while others may be reluctant until school policy forces them to use it. In addition, a lot of teachers who might be eager to participate in training simply lack the time due to other obligations. (Borg, 2020: 65)

After the technology training, many teachers acknowledge that they do not feel the same enthusiasm when implementing what they learned due to lack of technical support at school. So, how can we keep on being excited for technology in the classroom? Who is responsible for teacher training in technology eventually? Who builds and brings resources for the digital infrastructure in schools? How can teachers be aided with their technology needs on a regular basis? These are just a few questions that we might ask ourselves and hopefully we will get the answers and help we all need.

Pamela Borg (2020: 66-68) proposes some ways to create a digital toolbox of resources for teaching and learning English which has become a real expectation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher. We expect that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in modern schools some form of technology is used on a daily basis, like an IWB, digital coursebooks, educational platforms, Google Workspace, PowerPoint, or other online resources. With the ascension of the World Wide Web, there has been an explosion of online resources and tools which can be used for the teaching and learning of English both in the classroom and outside of it. Borg (2020: 66-68) has six suggestions which teachers might find as a useful addition to their own digital toolbox:

❖ Proof-reading tool

Grammarly is one of the best proof-reading tools available. This is a tool recommended for business students or students with dyslexia who need help with grammar, spelling and punctuation errors in writing.

❖ QR codes for easy access to URLs

Teachers could ask their students to quickly access a web address with a QR code generator. QR.io or any other pages produce a simple image file that can be scanned by a QR code reader; then this can be accessed and downloaded on mobile devices or any other devices available for students.

❖ Quizzing tools for fun

There are so many quizzing tools available online that it is best for teachers to choose one or two and stick to those. Teachers could use Kahoot or Quizizz because they can cover the need for assessment,

concept checking and quizzing. These are game-based learning platforms that make it fun to learn English. Teachers can create Kahoot or Quizizz (Wayground now) in a few minutes by designing the questions like multiple choice, jumble, true or false, etc. The students or the players answer the questions on their own devices, while the game is displayed on a shared screen and the teacher can use this to give feedback to each student or the whole class in error correction.

❖ Self-correcting writing tool

Write and Improve is a tool created by the University of Cambridge which helps every student to improve their English writing. Students can choose from hundreds of tasks at all levels and start writing. After they submit their writing, they get a result linked to the international standard CEFR and also instant feedback with the changes they need to make in order to improve. Teachers can create their own writing tasks or use some of the suggested tasks available and there is also an IELTS section with membership.

❖ Collaborative virtual display board

Padlet is a tool that is user-friendly and intuitive to create and collaborate on the net. It works like a 'wall' where collaborators can add images, text, videos, documents, from any device. It can be used for teaching, brainstorming, note-taking, website publishing, bookmarking, blogging, making it a great resource for teaching and learning.

❖ Online video discussion platforms

Flipgrid is a great platform which promotes speaking and listening activities and can be used in the classroom and outside of it. Teachers can use Flipgrid, a fantastic video discussion platform, to give students a voice and encourage their creative thinking. Flipgrid operates in a straightforward manner: teachers create Groups for their classes (a Group is a shared virtual space), after which they invite students to join. Teachers add Topics to Groups, which are questions for discussion that students respond to with brief videos captured by the Flipgrid camera. Flipgrid makes it enjoyable and engaging to make videos. In addition to recording videos, students also use a variety of editing tools, effects, and annotations to give their videos a much stronger sense of expression. Students may include text, drawings, photos, sticky notes, animated GIFs, emojis, and more in their recorded videos. This gives a voice even to the shyest student and the results are rewarding.

In conclusion, technology is just part of good teaching, but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom it is without doubt part of an integrated combination of content, pedagogy and technology that make for innovative English language teaching and learning. When we prepare for the classroom, we might consider a few aspects: choose the best technology for the task, make it meaningful and manageable, make the learning outcome worth the time and effort. With these ideas in mind, we can move forward with innovative technologies because we want our learners to feel engaged and motivated, as well as enhance teaching and learning in the 21st century EFL classroom.

## **Creative ways to integrate media literacy in the EFL classroom**

The ability to analyze, assess, and create messages in a wide range of media modes, genres, and formats is known as media literacy (P21, 2019). Youth and adults who are media literate are better able to comprehend the complex messages we receive from television, radio, the Internet, newspapers, magazines, books, billboards, video games, music, and all other forms of media. According to the most popular P21 framework (P21, 2019), media literacy is understood from three different perspectives which are elaborated below.

A key component of media literacy is the ability to **analyze media** effectively. This involves understanding not only how media messages are constructed but also why they are created and for what specific purposes. It requires a critical awareness of how individuals interpret messages differently, depending on their background, experiences, and cultural contexts. Learners must also examine how values and perspectives are either included or excluded in media texts, and how such choices can shape beliefs and influence behavior. In addition, a solid grasp of the ethical and legal considerations related to media access and usage is essential for responsible engagement with media content.

Equally important is the ability to **create media products**. This entails selecting and using the most appropriate tools, formats, and conventions for different media contexts. It also involves understanding how to express ideas clearly and appropriately in diverse, multicultural environments, adapting both content and style to suit the intended audience. Media creation today is inseparable from ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) literacy, which underpins the ability to navigate and employ digital platforms and tools effectively.

Finally, students must develop the ability to **apply technology effectively** across various academic, professional, and social contexts. This includes using digital tools to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information efficiently. Technologies such as computers, mobile devices, GPS, and social networks must be used not just competently, but also critically—recognizing their potential and their limits. Competence in this area also implies a fundamental understanding of the ethical and legal responsibilities that come with accessing and using information technologies in an increasingly interconnected knowledge economy.

One of the broadened categories of literacy is media literacy, which according to NAMLE is described as the capacity to "access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication" as well as "encode and decode the symbols transmitted via media and synthesize, analyze, and produce mediated messages" (National Association for Media Literacy Education, n.d., p. 1). Another definition of media literacy is offered by CML (Center for Media Literacy) that goes beyond the definition that is most cited: "Media Literacy is a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy" (Center for Media Literacy, n.d.).

The information and entertainment technologies of today use a potent combination of words, images, and sounds to communicate with us. As a result, we must cultivate a wider range of literacy abilities that will enable us to both understand the messages we receive and use these tools to effectively create and distribute our own messages. As we read on NAMLE website, literacy in the media age necessitates critical thinking skills that empower us as we make decisions in the classroom, living room, workplace, boardroom, or voting booth. Finally, media literacy is not an anti-media movement, despite the fact that it does raise important issues regarding the effects of technology and media. Instead, it stands for a coalition of concerned people and groups, including academics, religious organizations, healthcare professionals, and citizen and consumer groups, who seek a more enlightened understanding of our media environment. (NAMLE, n.d.)

The original core principles of media literacy education and key questions were originally developed in 2005 and 2007 by CML respectively Namle/AMLA board members (CML, 2005) and they included the following:

Five Core Concepts:

1. All media messages are ‘constructed.’
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Five Key Questions of Media Literacy:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

In 2023, NAMLE revised the core principles and drew from the work of organizations affiliated with the National Media Literacy Alliance, including the Center for Media Literacy, MediaSmarts, Media Education Lab, Project Look Sharp, Learning for Justice, The John Lewis Institute for Social Justice, and The Stanford History Education Group; they all articulate NAMLE’s position on media literacy education and draw attention to the intricate relationships that exist between people, the media, and the structures and systems that make up our world (NAMLE, n.d.). The figure below is an educational tool developed to support media literacy learning. It is inspired by principles common in the field of media literacy education, including those promoted by NAMLE. This is not an official NAMLE diagram.

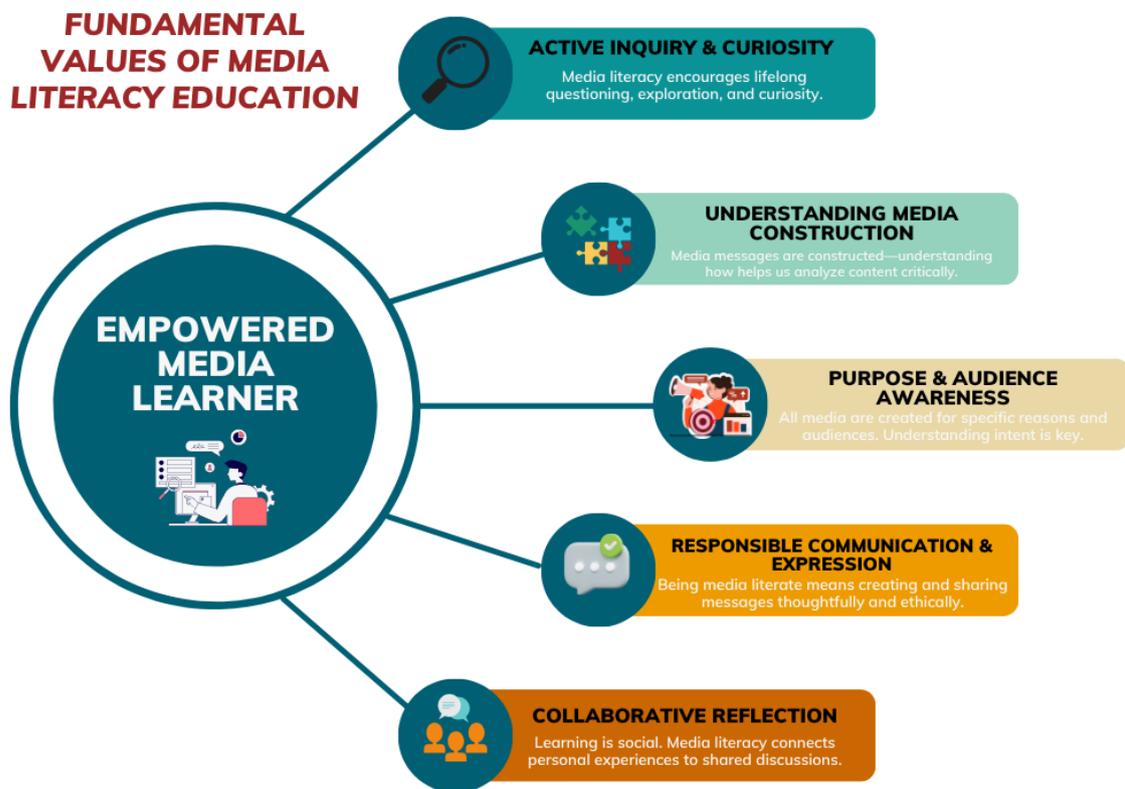


Figure 4. Fundamental Values of Media Literacy Education

Each fundamental value comes with implications for practice which act as a set of benchmarks for media literacy educators, emphasizing the attitudes, values, instructional strategies, and methodologies that underpin each core principle.

We must actively consider every media experience we have, from scrolling through social media to watching the news while waiting for the bus. The phrase "media experiences" encompasses both the media text (what many refer to as "the message") and the physical and technological context in which we actually meet the text. The key questions in the graphic below can assist us in critically analyzing the messages we encounter, the platforms and technologies that influence those messages, as well as the unique personal contexts that we bring to every media experience. You might ask other questions in addition to these because not all of them will apply to every media experience. There will be multiple possible answers to some questions, but we must always make sure to look for supporting evidence and ask ourselves, "How do I know that?", "Why do I say that?" (NAMLE, n.d.). This graphic presents five essential questions to guide media analysis, helping learners think critically about media messages. These questions are paraphrased and reimagined for this book, inspired by common practices in media literacy education.

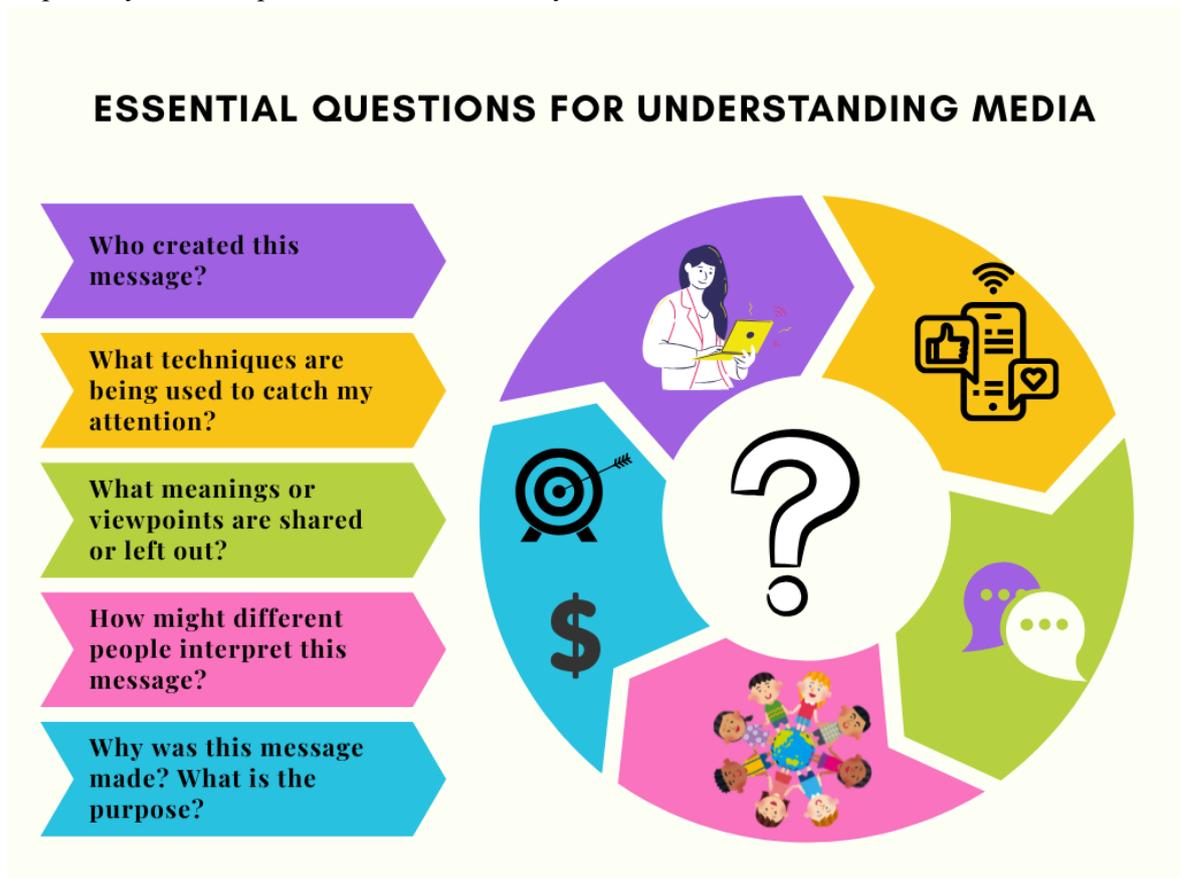


Figure 5. Essential Questions for Understanding Media

Now that we learnt what media literacy is, maybe we should consider what media literacy is not as teachers might get the wrong idea when teaching it in the classroom. Teachers may want to consider a few points:

- Media 'bashing' is not media literacy, although media literacy sometimes involves criticizing the media
- Merely producing media is not media literacy, although media literacy should include media production

- Teaching using videos, audio CDs or other mediated content is not media literacy, one must also teach about media
- Simply looking for political agendas, stereotypes or misrepresentations, is not media literacy, there should also be an exploration of the systems making those representations appear normal. Media is just a means to convey those messages.
- Looking at media messages or a mediated experience from just one perspective is not media literacy because media should be examined from multiple perspectives
- Media literacy does not mean ‘don’t watch’, it means watch carefully, think critically, because we still need to be informed and entertained.

Although media literacy is not taught in schools as a part of the National Curriculum but only as reference points to be considered with the other 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, we can still make it a meaningful and integrated part of our classroom practice. Here are some creative ways that I considered we could integrate media literacy in our teaching.

### 1. Perspective

The first lesson on media literacy that I introduced to my students was about perspective, as media literacy can be seen as a set of perspectives that we use when we expose ourselves to media and when we try to understand and interpret the messages that we encounter. The exercise can be done online or in the classroom and it starts like this:

*“I am going to describe an image which you won’t see on the screen, but you’re going to take out a sheet of paper and a pencil and you’re going to attempt to draw the image with complete accuracy. So, try to keep up...let’s start.*

*I see on my screen a large square. Actually, the square is a bit more rectangular, a bit longer than it is tall, a bit wider than it is tall. It’s a rectangle. On top of the rectangle, there is a triangle connected to the top edge of the original rectangle. This triangle is quite flat and it isn’t very high. Inside the rectangle there are four smaller rectangles. I’m going to start in the top left corner: there’s one small rectangle; it is not touching any of the edges of the original rectangle; the next rectangle is in the top right corner of the original rectangle and it is not touching any of the edges of the original rectangle. Below this rectangle we have another vertically elongated rectangle and it is touching the bottom edge of the original rectangle, but the other three sides of the rectangle are not touching any of the original rectangle. If we move to the left, we have another rectangle and this one is also not touching any of the edges of the original rectangle. This is it!*

*So...what have we got? Can anyone share/show their drawing?”*

Students show their drawings and the teacher shows the drawing which was described above. Most of the time the students get it right, but sometimes they get entangled in details and they miss the point. This guided drawing activity is the first one to introduce when talking about media literacy because the first rule of media is that media is a representation, an interpretation of the world based on someone else’s perspective (Five Principles of Media Literacy, 1989). We take that information, that description of the world and see it filtered through their lens.

You could do this guided drawing exercise with your students in pairs and ask them to describe the picture one to another, try to explain the differences and understand why they exist. It is a great way to introduce media literacy.

### 2. Media Bias

You can start by showing a picture to your students and ask some questions like: “What do you see in this picture?”, “What do you see that makes you say that?”, “What more can you find?”. After you start that conversation, explain to the students that media products are created by individuals who make conscious and unconscious choices about what to include, what to leave out

and how to present what is included. These decisions are based on the creators' own point of view, which will have been shaped by their opinions, assumptions and biases – as well as media they have been exposed to. As a result of this, media products are never entirely accurate reflections of the real world – even the most objective documentary filmmaker has to decide what footage to use and what to cut, as well as where to put the camera – but we instinctively view many media products as direct representations of what is real.

Let's take a specific example: you can show your students an image of a poor lady begging in the streets. Then ask the following questions: "What images come to mind when we think of poverty?", "How are images composed to tell different stories?", "What information one might learn about the communities in which these people live, just by analyzing the picture?", "In what way do you think the media shows bias?". The next step would be to introduce your students to the definition of bias and contrast it with that of prejudice. Your background, culture, and personal experiences, among other things, can have an impact on which way you lean. Explicit bias refers to bias that you are aware of; implicit bias, on the other hand, refers to bias that you are unaware of having. Media bias refers to actual or perceived bias among news organizations and journalists in the mass media. Instead of bias in the viewpoint of one journalist or article, it typically implies a pervasive bias that affects the standard of journalism. The events and stories that are published, the viewpoints from which they are written, and the language used to tell them can all be impacted by media bias.

Prejudice and bias - Prejudice may result in bias, but it is also possible for someone to develop bias after being exposed to biased information. Even individual words, such as "egotistical," "proud," and "confident," can have bias. Most nations believe that media bias favors liberal or conservative politics, depending on whether it is to the left or the right of the center. In some nations, media bias can be so extreme as to entirely mirror the goals of the governing body (for example, in North Korea). Such situations effectively transform media bias into propaganda. (Media Literacy: Identifying Bias, n.d.)

### 3. Have students create media - advertisements

A great way to make even your less enthusiastic students create media. You can use different tools or platforms for this like Biteable, Canva, Screencastify, etc.

In terms of the structure of the ad, a great way to begin is to use Monroe's Motivated Sequence (Goodby et.al, 2022) - it is essentially a five-step process that is used by a lot of advertising companies. So, in a very systematic way, they are trying to convince you to buy a product. How? They will start by getting your attention, then establishing the need, satisfying the need with their product or service, helping you visualize the perfect future in which you have that need satisfied, and then driving you to action!

This structure can be used in order to have students use their creativity and determination and also their communication skills to create something great in a short period of time.

In conclusion, for many reasons listed above, media literacy is important. It teaches children to evaluate the media they consume, first and foremost. The purpose of a particular media's creation, the inclusion of particular elements, or the exclusion of specific details are all topics that students learn to question. Additionally, students are taught that not all media is factual and that it's crucial to research sources' reliability. Credibility assessment is a crucial ability to possess.

Another factor supporting the importance of media literacy is understanding points of view. Each content producer has a viewpoint and bases their work on their own ideas, presumptions, or beliefs. Students can better evaluate media to determine its potential influence by understanding the author's point of view and where they are coming from. Simple questions like "Who created this?" "Why did they create this?" "Who was intended for this?" "What details may have been omitted?"

and "How does this make you feel?" are all effective ways to get kids to consider the media they are accessing.

Media literacy is a necessary skill in the twenty-first century. As technology continues to shape how students live and participate in the world as they enter the workforce, it is critical that they understand how media influences and shapes perceptions. We should start teaching media literacy in our classrooms with the activities listed above and many more to be added. Students will benefit from examining and reflecting on the purpose of the media they use.

## Chapter 4 – 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS IN ACTION

The practical part of the book aims to provide evidence regarding the effectiveness of including media literacy notions in the language class. One section of the practical part is related to the teachers' practices that support students learning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and the second one that is meant to see students' progress in their integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills with special reference to 4C, media literacy and technology in English class.

This chapter describes the hypotheses and the objectives of the study, the research strategy, methods, and procedures. It describes the participants and the methodological approach before concluding with a discussion of some research issues and limitations.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Over the past two decades, the idea of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills became an essential part of educational repertoire and has led to a number of educational reforms at all levels of education in many countries. There is, however, a significant knowledge gap regarding how 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are incorporated into the core curriculum and how to effectively teach or develop these skills in the EFL class. The development of a sustainable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning implementation is directly impacted, according to prior research, by the discrepancy between teacher beliefs and practice regarding the teaching of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Voogt & Roblin, 2012).

Many studies have been conducted on the importance of integrating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in EFL classes, as well as students' perceptions of whether 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity are addressed in their classrooms (Voogt & Roblin, 2010, 2012). The findings assisted the authors in determining whether the content of English classes met the demands and challenges of the twenty-first century. Furthermore, student perceptions of the relevance of current classroom teaching and learning patterns are critical in determining what is relevant for meeting the requirements of a global economy and a twenty-first-century world. The research, however, has not addressed the question of how and to what extent the 4C skills and media literacy skills are implemented in EFL classes in our country, Romania.

English has gained significantly in popularity over the past few decades across the globe, especially in areas like international forums, global media, scientific and ICT advancements, business, politics, finance, diplomacy, sports, and entertainment (Pardede, 2020). Its widespread application in numerous fields has changed the purpose of use as well. In a world that is becoming more globalized, English non-native speakers must use the language for more intricate purposes. The speakers of this language must employ 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to address these sophisticated purposes. Language teachers' responsibilities have shifted in accordance with the new requirements, as they are now expected to address 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

As there is always a significant gap between language policies and teaching practices, it is necessary to investigate teachers' practices. Given that it is critical to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills from an early age, the quantitative component of this study seeks to determine the extent to which English language teachers working in various schools employ 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and whether their demographic characteristics influence their practices.

The second purpose of the present study is to measure the reactions and the attitudes of the students before and after the activities and lessons which were meant to integrate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills

in the English classroom in order to support their future success and equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for long-term success in society.

The teaching and learning process was designed and revised from lesson to lesson to provide students with opportunities to practice and improve their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skill practices were observed and assessed in order to determine students' improvement of 21<sup>st</sup> century skill practices through activities that implied 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, particularly communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, media literacy, and technology integration. The purpose of this study was to look at the outcomes of students' practices and improvement of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills during activities in English class.

## **Research Objectives**

After collecting current research not only on the topic of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills but also on the responsibility of the EFL classroom in this context, the first part of this study focuses primarily on teachers' perspectives on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the EFL classroom, with 'perspective' being defined as the teachers' opinions and attitudes as well as reports of their own teaching practice. As a result, a positive perspective refers to attitudes and opinions that support the implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the EFL classroom, as well as teaching practices that aim to convey these skills. Since they significantly influence the teachers' teaching methodology and teaching practice, the attitudes, opinions, and views of teachers play a crucial role in the implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the classroom.

The survey conducted in the context of this research paper aims to offer an insight on the perspectives of EFL teachers in Targu Mures, on the changing society, the impact the change has on the EFL classroom and the integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the EFL class. The main focus of the survey is on the 4C skills: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity and using technology as a means of learning, ICT literacy and the local and global connections. Therefore, some of the research questions guiding this study are the following:

- What are the perspectives of Romanian EFL teachers on the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and particularly on the promotion of communicative, collaborative, critical thinking, creative and ICT related skills in the EFL classroom?
- How do EFL teachers' perspectives on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills relate to their self-reported teaching practice?
- To what extent do Romanian EFL teachers promote 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in their classrooms?

Another objective of this research and the most important one is to test the hypotheses which have been formulated in accordance with findings in current literature and which are interconnected with the topics of the research questions below. They aim to serve the overall goal of providing insight into the changes of perspective and students' attitude in the English class as the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills were implemented on a daily basis teaching.

- How does the implementation of 4C skills influence students' attitudes towards their learning language experience?
- How effectively do English language learners respond and/ or interact with the use of modern technology?
- Has the student's English level improved after the use of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English class?

Surveys have been chosen as the method for data collection which will be described further in the chapter.

## **Hypotheses**

The present study follows several hypotheses which aim to establish a frame for the analysis of the research questions formulated above in the activities in the classroom and the surveys that were shared for the study. The hypotheses are aimed for the students participants in the study group and they are the following:

1. The more positive the students' attitude and opinions in the English class when they are exposed to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the higher is the chance for the teacher to integrate these skills in everyday practice
2. The more students are exposed to learning through a new technology in the English class, the more they will show interest for new activities that include 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
3. There more students are involved in working with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English class, the higher the assimilation of English language skills and a better language proficiency

## **Methodological Approach**

This study attempts to answer the research questions that are mainly centered on exploring the incorporation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English classroom, viewed from the teachers' perspective and the students' perspective, and to test the hypotheses formulated above. The nature of this investigation entails integrating different tools to collect the data related to this study. Therefore, the study is qualitative but it also has some quantitative data collected from teachers' questionnaires. The following subsections provide a detailed description of the research context, research design, questionnaire study and instruments, delimitation and ethical considerations.

## **Research Context**

The context of the research in this section provides background information that is relevant for the study. The current research was conducted at Omega Secondary School in Targu Mures and the participants were 18 students from 7th grade who were studying English as a Foreign Language intensive program. The students at Omega Secondary School have had this intensive English study program since kindergarten and it continued all the way to the 8th grade. The research was conducted for two consecutive school years: 2021-2022, 2022-2023 with the specific purpose to integrate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English lessons.

For the present study, the researcher and the teacher are one and the same person. The study began with classroom observations during the 2021-2022 school year, classroom activities from September 2022 until February 2023, the pre-study survey, then the research study itself which started in March 2023 and ended June 2023 with the project "News Wise", and finally the post-study survey for the final conclusions.

The survey conducted on English teachers was sent to multiple groups: English teachers in secondary school and high-school in Targu Mures and three Facebook groups ("Profesori de engleza", "Clubul profesorilor de limba engleza din România", "Soluții și Materiale de pregătire

pentru profesorii de limba engleza”). The reason why these groups were chosen was to collect feedback from a large group of teachers across Romania on their current teaching in connection to incorporation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English class. The results were significantly relevant for my survey and appropriate conclusions were drawn.

## **Research Design**

A research design illustrates a specific path of procedure or strategy that guides the research inquiry. In this study I adopted a mixed method research design which is a method in which the design aims to collect, analyze, and mix or integrate both qualitative data and quantitative data at some point of the time within a single study. Mixed method methodology refers to the integration of philosophical assumptions from positivism and constructivism, data collection, and analysis (Creswell, 2018). Using mixed methods research designs ultimately aims to increase knowledge and validity from both quantitative results and qualitative results.

To ensure the study's validity and reliability, data triangulation was used to collect information on the same question from various angles. Triangulation in exploratory research refers to using more than one data collection method, such as interviews after observations, focus groups after surveys, or comparisons between various data types (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2019).

The teachers research part was meant to check teachers' attitudes and beliefs and also their perspective on teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in their English class, therefore they received a survey to complete and the analysis will be presented in the next chapter.

The students' research part included observations in the classroom, pre-survey before implementing the media literacy project and post-survey to check their attitude after the project was finished. All these findings will be presented in the next chapter.

## **Questionnaire Study, Instruments and Methods**

The study conducted in the context of this research is a mixed method study using a questionnaire for data collection. The aim was to gather information about the perspectives of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills from a wide range of EFL teachers in Romania and the students' attitudes in relation to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills learning, to answer the research questions, and to test the hypotheses.

In order to find out English language teachers' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills practices, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching and Learning scale developed by Hixson et.al (2012) was conducted. Special permission was asked from the authors in order to freely use the survey. The scale includes eight categories and 48 items measuring teachers' 21<sup>st</sup> century practices. Each category includes two parts: the first part presents the definition of the related 21<sup>st</sup> century skill, in the second part there are 5-point Likert scale items scored from 'almost never' to 'almost daily'. The survey was created online using Google Forms in order to make the distribution to the teachers easier and more efficient. After the scale was conducted with the participants, the analysis was made, and the findings will be presented in the next chapter.

The pre-study and post-study surveys were implemented among the selected students in the EFL classroom to answer the research questions stated above. The goal of the pre-survey was to find out to what extent the students are using 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in their lessons, with a special focus on the 4Cs, media literacy and technology, while the post-survey aimed at discovering the students' understanding and their attitudes after these skills were implemented in their EFL classroom. Both

surveys include questions meant to check students' understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, with open-ended and closed-ended questions to be answered. They also included a 5-point Likert scale to examine the questions from a quantitative perspective. The surveys were also conducted on Google Forms on the 7th grade WhatsApp group.

The primary benefit of using questionnaires as a data collection method is that they are simple to create, incredibly adaptable, and uniquely capable of gathering a significant amount of data quickly in a form that is easily processed. Furthermore, closed-ended questionnaire items, which limit respondents to selecting from a set of predetermined responses, promote objectivity and make it easier to analyze the findings. There is no room for rater subjectivity in the coding and tabulation of open-ended items because they can be coded numerically.

The use of questionnaires is not without drawbacks, and it is frequently asserted that this method of data collection yields inaccurate and invalid results. The superficiality and shallowness of the data obtained, as well as the inability to correct errors or clear up misunderstandings, are some additional areas of criticism. The following steps were taken in order to lessen the impact of the majority of these problem sources: first, in order to prevent unreliable and unmotivated responses, the questionnaire was kept brief and limited to the most important aspects of the research interest. In order to avoid misunderstandings or misinterpretations, the questionnaire's items were also written as simply and plainly as possible.

Obviously, there is no guarantee that the potential problem sources are entirely removed, and it is still possible that unreliable responses or social desirability will reduce the reliability and validity of the results. However, even after accounting for these situations, the questionnaire's results can still be useful and instructive.

Another way to collect qualitative data was through lesson observations, where I observed two classes, the 8th grade and the 7th grade in the pre-survey period. The purpose of the observations was to check how much the students actually know about 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and how they react to activities that implied the use of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The research in observations was done deductively, as a checklist with specific criteria driven by the principles of 4Cs was elaborated before starting the observations (**see Appendix A**). The checklist contained 12 indicators related to the 4C skills. There was a rubric for the detailed notes that were taken to be considered during the data analysis.

All observations were analyzed using a deductive approach, which assumes that specific criteria or rubrics are developed in the literature review prior to beginning the observations. The researcher then searches the observations for instances that meet those criteria. In addition, the data obtained from the observation checklist was triangulated using the researcher's journal.

A researcher's journal or diary is a self-reflective tool for reflecting on the researcher's practices, thoughts, and feelings throughout the research process. Mind Maps, drawings, sketches, and various notes can be included. This tool is used to record the researchers' observations in order to collect more accurate data. The researcher wrote a summary of the lesson process after each intervention class. It covered the students' successful and unsuccessful activities, tasks, or issues.

For the current research study, the main method was the experiment. Being a natural experiment integrated in the educational process, it was gradually transformed into an activity that had the attributes of naturalness and habit. Taking place in a natural environment of life and activity, the results obtained could not be affected by what is attributed to the factors "novelty" and "enthusiasm". Viewed diachronically or in its development, experimentally pedagogical, as a research method. It goes through three phases: the phase before the intervention of the experimental

factor, the phase of applying the experimental factor and the phase of recording the results after the intervention of the experimental factor.

The pedagogical experiment involves the creation of a new situation for introducing changes in the development of educational action, so that, based on the results recorded, the validity of the interventions applied can be assessed. The changes introduced in the educational phenomenon under investigation are independent variables, while the changes that occurred as a result of the interventions introduced are dependent variables, which are to be measured and explained. The essence of the experiment is to highlight causal, functional or causal relationships between independent and dependent variables in order to improve the educational process. Such a method, designed to raise the educational process to higher levels, is the expression of an idea or hypothesis, and the experiment itself is designed to prove or test that hypothesis.

The experiment was conducted with 7th grade students who are at intermediate English language proficiency, and apart from all the activities that were carried out in the classroom using the 4Cs skills, media literacy, and technology, the project “News Wise” was the main project that had as its final outcome the creation and the implementation of this project in school: the school newspaper “Omega News”. The project was presented in Google Classroom because the students required a space to have all lessons and information in one location, to be easily accessible, and to be able to evaluate their understanding at the conclusion of each lesson. The *News Wise* project took place at Omega Secondary School and it started in March 2023 and ended in June 2023. A number of fifteen lessons was designed (**see Appendix B**) based on the project developed by the Guardian Foundation, National Literacy Trust and PSHE Association in the UK (NewsWise, 2018). The project generated curiosity and critical engagement with news, equipping students with skills and knowledge to make sense of the world.

*News Wise* was split into three themes:

1. Understanding the News which includes four lessons: a) How is News Produced?, b) Identifying Newsworthy Stories, c) Managing Feelings about the News, d) Holding Power to Account - the Windrush Scandal
2. Navigating the News which included five lessons: a) Spotting Fake News, b) Understanding that News is Targeted, c) Identifying the Difference between Fact and Opinion, d) Producing Balanced News Report, e) Analyzing Bias in the News
3. Reporting the News which included six lessons: a) Reporting Real News Stories, b) Structuring News Report, c) Recognizing News Report Language, d) Writing News Reports, e) Subediting News Reports, f) Producing a Finished News Report.

From the beginning the students were grouped in teams of two or three and they worked together on the assignments; for the final project, the newspaper, they were assigned roles in order to carry out the final product: desk editor, picture editor, subeditor, reporter. The researcher/ the teacher was assigned as chief editor. The project included the use of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, especially the 4Cs, media literacy, news literacy, technology which helped students' involvement in the EFL class from a different perspective.

The method above is called project-based learning (PBL) which is considered one avenue for differentiated instruction that is greatly recommended for 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms. (Bender, 2012:2) Baird defines PBL as a ‘student-driven, teacher-facilitated approach to learning’, and states that the main components of a PBL include “an authentic problem, a driving question, inquiry, collaboration, a public product and reflective practices” (Baird, 2019). The success of the project relies on students effectively drawing on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. She underlines the importance of including PBL in the curriculum, as compared to the actual curriculum the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are not

concrete and it is a great tool for educators to build new skills in their students. PBL allows students to actually develop new skills like the 4Cs, use of technology and complex problem solving, and it helps students develop content mastery through an authentic experience. The positive impact of PBL is that it develops collaboration, creativity and innovation, effective communication, valuable critical thinking skills, it is supported through the use of technology like Google Workspace, Padlet, Quizizz, Kahoot, Socrative, YouTube and many more.

PBL implies students spending sustained periods of study time exploring real-life problems and trying to reach a valuable solution to the problem. Project-based learning does not imply just doing a project with students in the classroom, it requires some key elements that are essential to the development of the project. According to Nik Peachey (2019) these include:

- a) A challenging problem or question - project goals should be set and real-life problems to be addressed;
- b) Public product - something like digital products, newspapers, videos, etc.;
- c) Key knowledge and skills - 4Cs, self-direction, self-management, use of technology;
- d) Sustained inquiry - a set number of lessons that constantly engage students in the problem and has tasks/ assignments that lead to the final product;
- e) Authenticity - real world outcomes and that are relevant to the students;
- f) Student voice - choice of subjects and real input in the final project;
- g) Reflection - students reflect on their work and the problems they encounter and the solutions they found;
- h) Critique and revision - feedback should be encouraged both from peer students and the teacher.

Another method used in the research was the Socratic method or the Socratic seminar. The Socratic method's primary distinguishing feature is that it does not constitute "teaching" in the traditional sense. A teacher is a guide, an observer, and an assistant; they do not impart knowledge. Instead of lecturing on "undeniable" facts and truths and forcing students to memorize them, or, in other words, "guiding the students," shared dialogues between students and teachers are preferred (Delic et.al, 2016). In these dialogues, both parties are in charge of advancing the conversation by asking questions. There are five stages to the Socratic method according to Delic et.al:

1. Inquire (asking questions such as, "What is courage?" "What is virtue?");
2. Hypothesis (a response to the question, one expresses his or her opinion or claim about the question, which becomes a dialogue hypothesis);
3. Elenchus, refutation, and cross-examination (the essence of Socratic practice; the hypothesis is challenged and a counterexample is provided to prove or disprove the hypothesis);
4. Hypothesis acceptance or rejection (participants accept or reject the counterexample);
5. Action (acting on the findings of the inquiry) (Delic et al, 2016).

Socratic seminars, also referred to as Socratic Circles, are a form of evaluation. In a sense, this is a conversation or discussion among the students about the subject at hand. This can be done with two groups of students, depending on the size of the class. Using two groups, a smaller circle of students would cluster inside a larger circle of students, which would represent the second group. Each circle of students would have a discussion about the initial topic and questions that the teacher had posed. Students concentrate on their own ideas as each group has a turn to speak, then they respond to the talking points of the opposing group.

It is crucial that students understand the material being covered in the Socratic Circles. The first question is then addressed by the teacher. Students in the smaller group debate the questions and come up with new ones. The larger group then debates the topic and questions raised by the smaller

group, and develops their own questions for the smaller group to answer. This process is repeated several times, resulting in a dialogue between the two groups. Following the presentation of the opening question, the teacher acts as the seminar's facilitator.

This method was used during the observation period with the 8th grade group in order to discuss “Biometrics - applications and implications” (see **Appendix C**). The same method was used at the end of the project with the 7th grade students to discuss the importance of media literacy in their daily lives and the impact it had on them during the English classes. This method is used mainly to encourage their critical thinking skills and the other 21<sup>st</sup> century skills so necessary for them in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

The data collection process started with classroom observation, the use of the researcher's journal and the pre-study survey applied to two groups of students in order to identify their knowledge and understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the EFL classroom. The whole process was recorded with the consent of the parents and the students. The principles of confidentiality and privacy were applied during the process.

The classroom observations and the activities which integrated 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English class took place twice a week in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade as they were considered the control group, but after the pre-study survey the researcher and the teacher worked only with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, they became the target group.

The target group was later exposed to working with specific 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in their News Wise project, the final product, the *Omega News newspaper*, proving to be a real success. At the end of the project, the eighteen 7<sup>th</sup> grade students were asked to answer the post-study survey on Google Forms which was sent on their WhatsApp group.

The data analysis was done using mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data obtained from the teachers' survey was analyzed using Excel, while qualitative data from students' observations, lessons activities and surveys were analyzed descriptively. The data provided by the surveys were analyzed with the percentages received after the data collection, the aim being to see the differences and the changes within the same group of students.

## **Delimitations**

There are several delimitations that shape the directions of this study. Given that one of the scopes of this study was to focus on English language teachers, teachers of other subjects in school were not included in this study. Even though the other subjects taught in school are meant to implement 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, the focus of our study was only on EFL teachers in Romania. As such, this research was delimited to offer an explicit understanding of the current practices in the English language teaching in EFL setting.

Additionally, the data from the classroom observations were not used to assess the degree to which beliefs and practices were demonstrated or practiced in the classroom. Instead, this information served as a triangulation strategy to examine the pedagogical justifications offered in project-based learning and other activities and to supplement the survey results. The potential vulnerability of the data could be taken into account and reduced through classroom observations when the qualitative data that investigated in-depth understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices

did not reflect the actual teaching behavior. However, additional research that thoroughly analyzes data from classroom observation is encouraged.

The results of a questionnaire can frequently be superficial and lacking in depth, which is a drawback that has already been mentioned. Clarification in this study could have improved the validity of the findings and the holistic nature of the study through follow-up inquiries or additional qualitative research. As a suggestion for additional research, a qualitative approach might explore the factors that contributed to the teachers' perspectives, attitudes, and opinions in more detail. Due to the study's participants' anonymity, this, however, has not been possible.

Another limitation of this study is the fact that only a few students benefited from the project and the activities that implemented 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Even though activities that include the 4Cs and other 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English class were performed with other classes, only 18 students had the opportunity to grasp the new knowledge and apply it effectively in their English class and in their daily lives.

### **Ethical considerations**

Throughout this study, special consideration was given to ethical issues that must be considered in the context of data collection. The primary ethical principle governing data collection is that participants not be harmed, which can be ensured by applying a number of subordinate principles.

This indicates that the privacy of the participants in this study is respected as their responses were provided voluntarily and anonymously. In order to inform the respondents about the general terms of the study, it had also been stated in the introductory words that participation is completely anonymous. The participants were informed that their responses would be kept private and that the information would be used in a specific way. Last but not least, the researcher upholds the level of confidentiality that the respondents have been guaranteed, as is their moral and ethical duty.

## Chapter 5 – EVIDENCE-BASED INSIGHTS

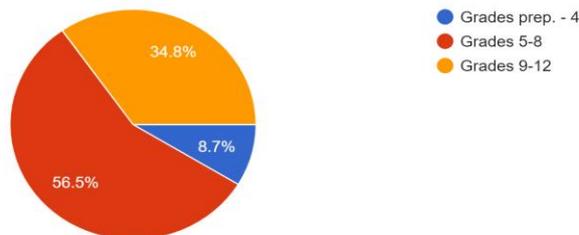
### 5.1 EFL Teachers' 21st-Century Skills Teaching Practices

The study was conducted in Targu Mures, but the survey was sent online to different groups as stated above in the previous chapter via email or as a post on Facebook. The graphics below will show the number of participants, the school grades they are teaching and their teaching experience. Although we expected a greater number of responses, only 23 teachers responded to the survey. The conclusions will be later developed in the chapter.

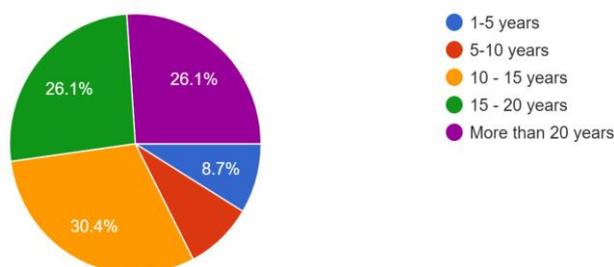
From the 23 teacher participants in the study, two of them (8.7%) work with primary students, 13 of the teachers (56.5%) work with secondary school students and 8 teachers (34.8%) work with high-school students.

Figure 6. Schools and teaching experience

Currently teaching:  
23 responses



Teaching experience:  
23 responses



To address the research questions raised in the preceding chapter, teachers' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills teaching practices are examined across eight domains: critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity and innovation, self-direction, global connections, local connections, and using technology as a tool for learning. The tables in the following sections present an analysis of teachers' practices within each skill, as well as the percentages.

### 5.1.1 Critical thinking skills

There are six items measuring teachers' critical thinking skills teaching practices. As it is presented in Table 1, the most frequently used practice is 'summarize or create their own interpretation of what they have read or been taught' on a daily basis (39.1%). A percentage of 26.1% of the teachers use this practice 1-3 times/ week, while 21.7% use it 1-3 times/month. 13% of the teachers used it just a few times.

The lowest score has the practice of 'try to solve complex problems or answer questions that have no single correct solution or answer' where only 4.3% of the teachers use it on a daily basis, 39.1% have used a few times, 26.1% have used it 1-3 times/month and the same average score used it 1-3 times per week, leaving 4.3% to teachers that never used it.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Critical Thinking Skills Teaching Practices

How often have you asked students to do the following	Almost Never (%)	A few times (%)	1-3 times a month (%)	1-3 times per week (%)	Almost daily (%)
Compare information from different sources before completing a task or assignment	0	39.1	34.8	17.4	8.7
Draw their own conclusions based on analysis of numbers, facts, or relevant information	0	17.4	21.7	26.1	34.8
Summarize or create their own interpretation of what they have read or been taught	0	13	21.7	26.1	39.1
Analyze competing arguments, perspectives or solutions to a problem	0	17.4	39.1	26.1	17.4
Develop a persuasive argument based on supporting evidence or reasoning	4.3	17.4	30.4	26.1	21.7
Try to solve complex problems or answer questions that have no single correct solution or answer	4.3	39.1	26.1	26.1	4.3
<b>Overall participants number</b>	<b>23</b>				

### 5.1.2 Collaboration skills

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of the teachers' collaboration skills teaching practices. According to the results, working in pairs or in small groups to complete a task together is widely addressed by the teachers. Most of the teachers (47.8%) use this practice on a daily basis, 43.5% use it 1-3 times per week and 8.7% use it 1-3 times per month. The lowest score has the practice of creating joint products using contributions from each student: 8.7% use this method on a daily basis, 21.7% use it a few times, 39.1% use it 1-3 times/month, 26.1% use it 1-3 times/week and 4.3% have never used it.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Collaboration Skills Teaching Practices

How often have you asked students to do the following	Almost Never (%)	A few times (%)	1-3 times a month (%)	1-3 times per week (%)	Almost daily (%)
Work in pairs or small groups to complete a task together	0	0	8.7	43.5	47.8
Work with other students to set goals and create a plan for their team	4.3	8.7	39.1	30.4	17.4
Create joint products using contributions from each student	4.3	21.7	39.1	26.1	8.7
Present their group work to the class, teacher or others	0	21.7	30.4	30.4	17.4
Work as a team to incorporate feedback on group tasks or products	0	34.8	30.4	26.1	8.7
Give feedback to peers or assess other students' work	4.3	26.1	34.8	21.7	13
<b>Overall participants number</b>	<b>23</b>				

### 5.1.3 Communication skills

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Communication Skills Teaching Practices

How often have you asked students to do the following	Almost Never (%)	A few times (%)	1-3 times a month (%)	1-3 times per week (%)	Almost daily (%)
Structure data for use in written products or oral presentations (e.g., creating charts, tables or graphs)	8.7	30.4	30.4	26.1	4.3
Convey their ideas using media other than a written paper (e.g., posters, video, blogs, etc.)	0	21.7	43.5	30.4	4.3
Prepare and deliver an oral presentation to the teacher or others	0	17.4	52.2	13	17.4
Answer questions in front of an audience	0	27.3	22.7	22.7	27.3
Decide how they will present their work or demonstrate their learning	8.7	21.7	34.8	26.1	8.7
<b>Overall participants number</b>	<b>23</b>				

In the table above, we can observe that the most common practice is that 'students answer questions in front of an audience': 27.3% on a daily basis, 27.3% a few times, 22.7% 1-3 times a

month, 22.7% 1-3 times per week. The least conducted communication skill is ‘structure data for use in written products or oral presentations’: 8.7% of the teachers never used it. The overall result is that more than half of the teachers employ these practices in their English class from a few times to almost daily.

### 5.1.4 Creativity and Innovation Skills

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics that regard teachers’ creativity and innovation teaching practices. The research showed that the most common practice is ‘use idea creation techniques such as brainstorming and concept mapping’ which is used almost daily by 26.1%, same percentage 1-3 times per week, 21.7% of the teachers use it 1-3 times per month or just a few times, while 4.3% never used it. Teachers’ weakly used practice is creating an original product or performance (13%).

Findings show that less than 15% of the teachers almost never integrate these skills, whereas most of the teachers conduct the skills presented below from a few times to almost daily.

*Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Creativity and Innovation Skills Teaching Practices*

<b>How often have you asked students to do the following</b>	<b>Almost Never (%)</b>	<b>A few times (%)</b>	<b>1-3 times a month (%)</b>	<b>1-3 times per week (%)</b>	<b>Almost daily (%)</b>
Use idea creation techniques such as brainstorming or concept mapping	4.3	21.7	21.7	26.1	26.1
Generate their own ideas about how to confront a problem or question	4.3	21.7	13	39.1	21.7
Test out different ideas and work to improve them	8.7	26.1	34.8	26.1	4.3
Invent a solution to a complex, open-ended question or problem	13	26.1	17.4	39.1	4.3
Create an original product or performance to express their ideas	13	26.1	39.1	17.4	4.3
<b>Overall participants number</b>	<b>23</b>				

### 5.1.5 Self-Direction Skills

There are seven items measuring teachers' instructional practices within the context of self-direction skills. The difference between the most and least used skills is relatively small, as shown in Table 5. The most frequent practice is ‘use specific criteria to assess the quality of their work’, which is done daily by 17.4% of the teachers, a small portion never use the skills, and some of them use it a few times or 1-3 times per month. What is more, the least used skill is to select their own subject of learning. Less than 10% of teachers, according to overall data, never include the skills listed in Table 5, while 64% of teachers use the skills once or twice a month, once or twice ever. However, about 24% of educators use these techniques once, twice, or even almost daily.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Self-direction Skills Teaching Practices

How often have you asked students to do the following	Almost Never (%)	A few times (%)	1-3 times a month (%)	1-3 times per week (%)	Almost daily (%)
Take initiative when confronted with a difficult problem or question	0	43.5	26.1	17.4	13
Choose their own topics of learning or questions to pursue	8.7	39.1	30.4	17.4	4.3
Plan the steps they will take to accomplish a complex task	0	26.1	47.8	17.4	8.7
Choose for themselves what examples to study or resources to use	0	39.1	39.1	8.7	13
Monitor their own progress towards completion of a complex task and modify their work accordingly	4.3	47.8	21.7	13	13
Use specific criteria to assess the quality of their work before it is completed	8.7	30.4	30.4	13	17.4
Use peer, teacher or expert feedback to revise their work	4.3	30.4	30.4	21.7	13
<b>Overall participants number</b>	<b>23</b>				

### 5.1.6 Global Connections

There are six items in the Global Connections section and their percentages can be seen in Table 6 below. The most common practices are studying information about other people and cultures, using the information that comes from people in other countries and understanding the life experiences of people in other cultures. Only less than 10% of the teachers never practice this skill, but almost 15% use it daily.

The general results of the global connections skill indicate that almost 13% never offer time for global connections, while almost 50% of the teachers responded that it a few times or 1-3 times per month.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Global Connections Skills Teaching Practices

How often have you asked students to do the following	Almost Never (%)	A few times (%)	1-3 times a month (%)	1-3 times per week (%)	Almost daily (%)
Study information about other countries or cultures	0	17.4	39.1	21.7	21.7
Use information or ideas that come from people in other countries or cultures	0	21.7	34.8	26.1	17.4
Discuss issues related to global interdependence	0	17.4	56.5	17.4	8.7

<b>How often have you asked students to do the following</b>	<b>Almost Never (%)</b>	<b>A few times (%)</b>	<b>1-3 times a month (%)</b>	<b>1-3 times per week (%)</b>	<b>Almost daily (%)</b>
(for example, global environment trends, global market economy)					
Understand the life experiences of people in cultures besides their own	0	13	52.2	17.4	17.4
Study the geography of distant countries	13	56.5	17.4	8.7	4.3
Reflect on how their own experiences and local issues are connected to global issues	4.3	47.8	26.1	17.4	4.3
<b>Overall participants number</b>	<b>23</b>				

### 5.1.7 Local Connections

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics items of local connection practices among the teachers who participated in the survey. As the table clearly indicates, the most often used items are ‘investigate topics or issues that are relevant for the family and community’ and apply what students learn to the local community. The other three sub-skills have a percentage of almost 30% among teachers that never use them, most teachers using them a few times, and 1-3 times per month. Less than 15% use the skills on a daily basis.

The statistic indicates that unfortunately teachers do not actually use local connections in their teaching practice and when they do it is only for a few times or once every few months.

*Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Local Connections Skills Teaching Practices*

<b>How often have you asked students to do the following</b>	<b>Almost Never (%)</b>	<b>A few times (%)</b>	<b>1-3 times a month (%)</b>	<b>1-3 times per week (%)</b>	<b>Almost daily (%)</b>
Investigate topics or issues that are relevant to their family or community	0	21.7	30.4	30.4	17.4
Apply what they are learning to local situations, issues or problems	0	26.1	39.1	21.7	13
Talk to one or more members of the community about a class project or activity	8.7	56.5	30.4	4.3	0
Analyze how different stakeholder groups or community members view an issue	26.1	52.2	21.7	0	0
Respond to a question or task in a way that weighs the concerns of different community members or groups	17.4	56.5	21.7	4.3	0
<b>Overall participants number</b>	<b>23</b>				

### 5.1.8 Using Technology as a Tool for Learning

Using technology as a tool for learning contains eight items and descriptive statistics of these items are presented in Table 8. The results show that the most commonly used item is selecting appropriate technology or resources for completing a task - 52.2% daily. On the other hand, the percentage of people "using technology for self-instruction and to help them share information" is very close to the first most frequently used skill- 39.1% daily. The sub-skill that is the least used is to use technology to interact with experts or members of the local/global community - 39.1% of the teacher participants in the survey.

The overall findings reveal that less than 25% of teachers seldom employ the techniques listed in Table 8. On the other hand, about 35% of the participants use the skills occasionally, once or twice per month, and about 40% incorporate the practices into classes once, twice, or almost daily.

*Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Using Technology as a Tool for Learning*

<b>How often have you asked students to do the following</b>	<b>Almost Never (%)</b>	<b>A few times (%)</b>	<b>1-3 times a month (%)</b>	<b>1-3 times per week (%)</b>	<b>Almost daily (%)</b>
Use technology or the Internet for self-instruction (e.g., Kahn Academy or other videos, tutorials, self-instructional websites, etc.)	0	4.3	34.8	21.7	39.1
Select appropriate technology tools or resources for completing a task	0	0	30.4	17.4	52.2
Evaluate the credibility and relevance of online resources	4.3	17.4	26.1	21.7	30.4
Use technology to analyze information (e.g., databases, spreadsheets, graphic programs, etc.)	8.7	30.4	13%	17.4	30.4
Use technology to help them share information (e.g., multimedia presentations using sound or video, presentation software, blogs, podcasts, etc.)	4.3	8.7	30.4	21.7	34.8
Use technology to support teamwork or collaboration (e.g., shared work spaces, email exchanges, giving and receiving feedback, etc.)	8.7	21.7	21.7	21.7	26.1
Use technology to interact directly with experts or members of local/global communities	39.1	17.4	26.1	8.7	8.7
Use technology to keep track of their work on extended tasks or assignments	8.7	17.4	21.7	39.1	13
<b>Overall participants number</b>	<b>23</b>				

### 5.1.9 Final Ranking of 21st Century Skills Teaching Practices

The results of the survey presented in the tables above indicate that teachers use 21<sup>st</sup> century skills approximately once to three times per month. The skill that is mostly used is using technology

in the classroom as a tool for learning; in contrast, the least employed skills are local and global connections.

The final ranking of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills based on the results of the survey is the following:

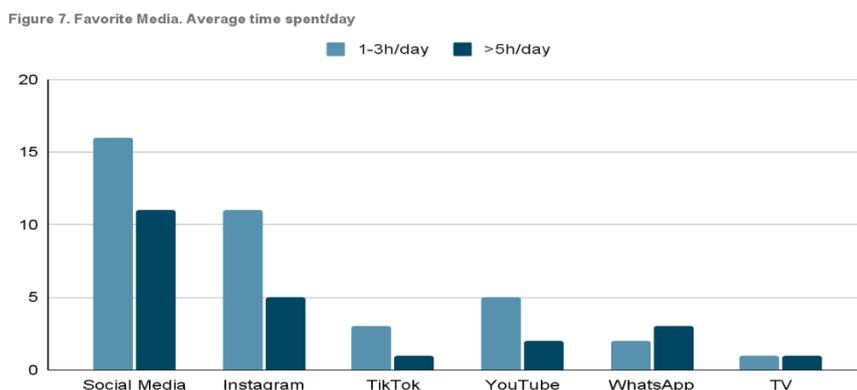
1. Using technology as a tool for learning;
2. Collaboration;
3. Creativity and Innovation;
4. Critical Thinking;
5. Self-direction;
6. Global connections;
7. Local connections.

## 5.2 Pre-Study Survey Results

The pre-study survey has 20 questions and its main goal was to check students' knowledge on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and their habits in relation to media, technology and the impact of media in their school lives and daily lives. The target group was the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but the survey was sent to a larger control group which included both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. At this stage, both groups of students' answers were considered valid and relevant at this stage of the research. The questions of the pre-study survey follow to answer the research's questions and to prepare the students for the next stage of the experiment.

The first question meant to inquire the students about their favorite type of media and the average time spent daily using it. The total number of respondents is 29 and the survey was sent on the students' WhatsApp groups using Google Forms. The responses varied but the largest percentage 40% belong to the students that use social media on a daily basis, followed by those who use Instagram 28.6%, YouTube and TikTok with the same percentage 11.4%, WhatsApp 5.7% (although most of them use it on a daily basis), and only one student mentioned the TV - 2.9%.

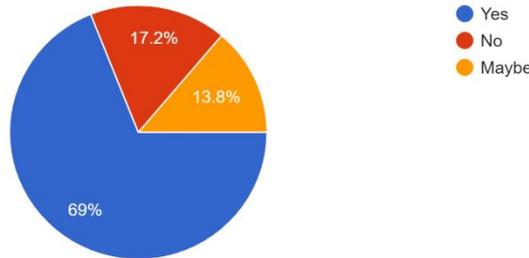
Figure 7. Favourite Media. Average time spent/day



The second question was meant to verify if the students keep track of time of their current use of media. Most students answered that they do - 69%, but the rest 17.2% answered they did not and 13.8% answered that maybe they did.

Figure 8. Media Use

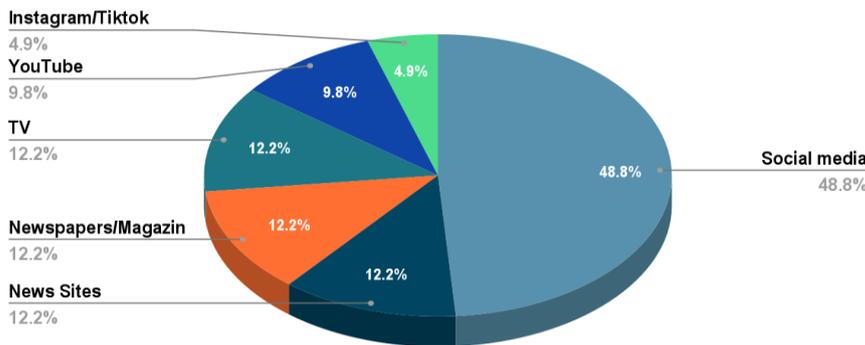
2. Have you ever kept track of your media use?  
29 responses



The third question was an open-ended question and students wrote about the different kinds of media they know and their opinion on the most powerful one. Most students chose social media as the most powerful media source of information, followed by news sites (CNN, BBC, New York Times, etc.), newspapers and magazines, TV, YouTube, Instagram, and Tiktok being in last place in the students' answers.

Figure 9. Most powerful media

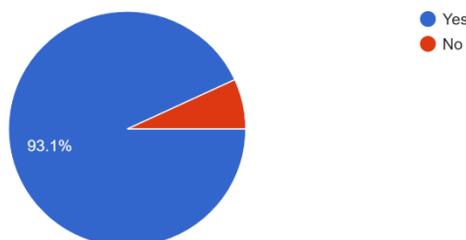
Figure 9. Most powerful media



Question number 4 measured the nominal data and it wanted to know if students made a comparison between different types of media, for instance to compare the content on the internet to that of a book or film. 93.1% of the students answered 'yes' and they stated that they did that not only in the English class but with other school subjects as well.

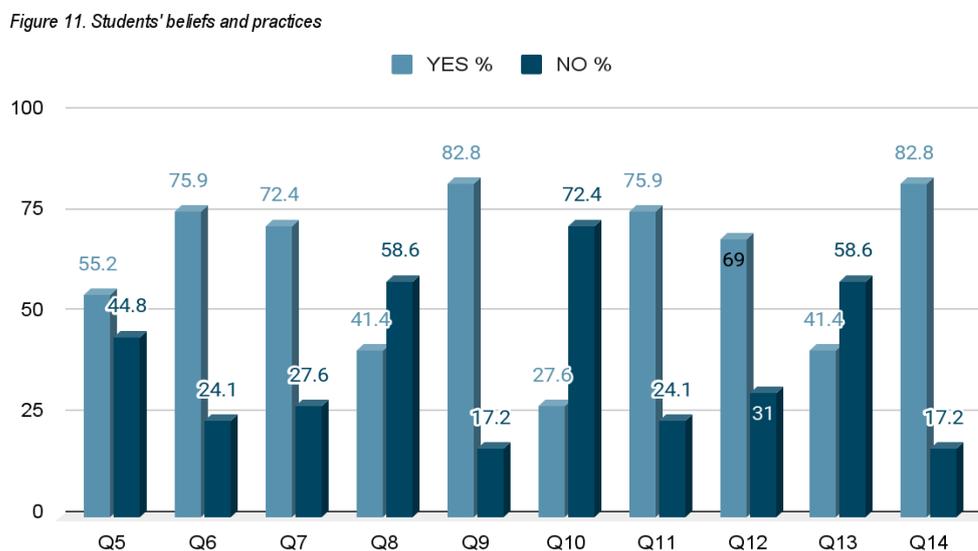
Figure 10. Media comparison

4. Have you ever looked at similarities and differences between different types of media? (For example, comparing the content on the internet with film, television or books)  
29 responses



Questions from 5 to 14 also check students' knowledge and their practices on media and their beliefs and opinions on the subject and they are yes/no questions, therefore they measure the nominal data. The answers will be presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Students' beliefs and practices



Question 5: Have you ever analyzed an advertisement? S.A: 55.2% yes, 44.8% no.

Question 6: Have you ever learned about how advertisements are targeted to make them more effective? S.A: 75.9% yes, 24.1% no.

Question 7: Have you ever discussed at school how the choices made by people who create media influence people's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs? S.A: 72.4% yes, 27.6% no.

Question 8: Have you ever made a video, script, or storyboard in school showing the plot of a book? S.A: 41.4% yes, 58.6% no.

Question 9: Have you discussed at school how media can be beneficial or harmful to your health, identity, or relationships? S.A.: 82.8% yes, 17.2% no.

Question 10: Have you worked with other students to make a video that was shown to other students, parents, or community members? S.A: 27.6% yes, 72.4% no.

Question 11: Have you done a research project where you had to think of questions, gather information from multiple sources, and then summarize what you learned in a paper, video, presentation, etc.? S.A: 75.9% yes, 24.1% no.

Question 12: Have you ever written an article or made a presentation that advocated either for or against something using evidence and reasoning? S.A: 69% yes, 31% no.

Question 13: Have you ever chosen a topic and worked with others to create a campaign to raise awareness, promote an event, or motivate people to take action? S.A: 41.4% yes, 58.6% no.

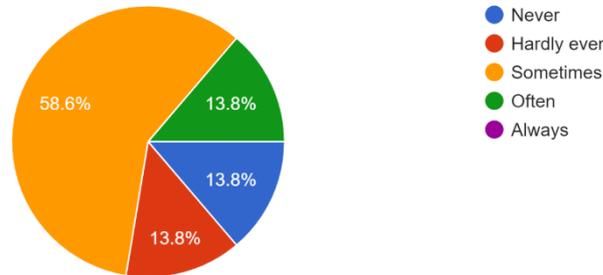
Question 14: Have you looked at information and thought about how your opinions and beliefs influence what you think it means? S.A: 82.8%, 17.2% no.

Questions 15 to 17 are questions that want to measure the students' behavior in relation to media sources, sharing online, risks of false information. Figures 12 to 14 will present the responses below.

Figure 12. Trust in media sources

15. How often do you discuss what makes media sources more trustworthy with your parents or teachers?

29 responses



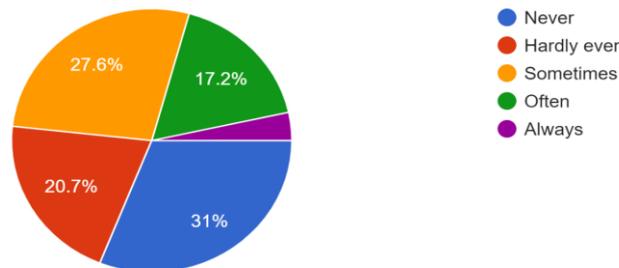
58.6% of the students stated that they sometimes discuss the topic of trust in media with their parents/teachers, while 13.8% responded that they often or hardly ever discuss it with elders, and 13.8% answered that they never discuss media sources with adults.

Question 16 wanted to know students' reaction when they share something online and if they ask for permission or they ask adults around about this decision. Their results are as follows: 31% never ask for permission, 20.7% ever do so, 27.6% sometimes ask for permission, and 17.2% often ask for permission from a parent or teacher.

Figure 13. Sharing Online

16. How often do you discuss decisions about what to share online with your parents or teachers?

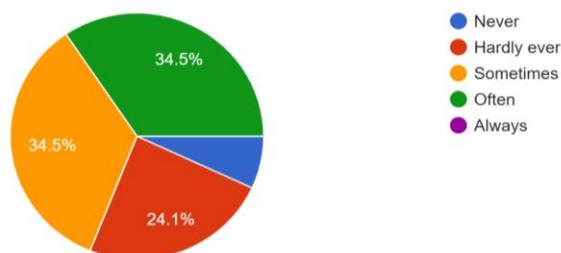
29 responses



Question 17 asks the students if they discuss the risks of the false information that is found online and if they realize they themselves expose sometimes to clickbaits and information that cannot be trusted. The results are presented in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Risks of false information online

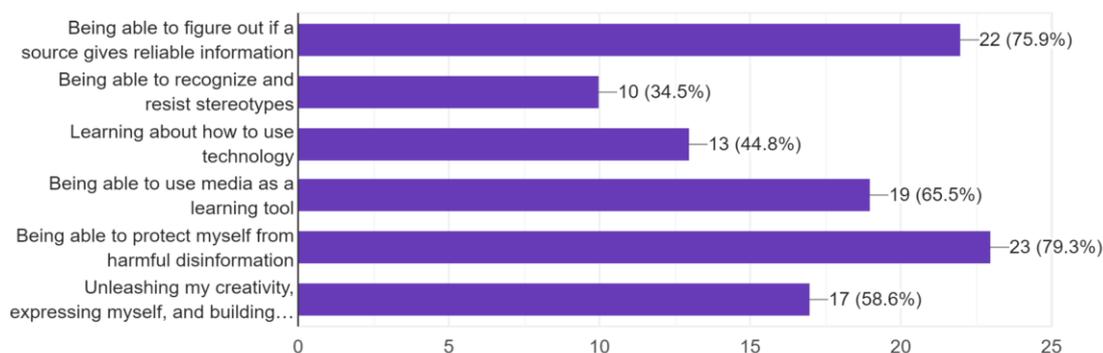
17. How often do you discuss the potential risks and harms of false information online with your parents or teachers?  
29 responses



Question 18 discusses the many skills which can be improved through the use of Media Literacy Education. The students are asked to choose four of the ones presented in the survey: checking the source credibility, recognize and resist stereotypes, how to use technology, use media as a learning tool, protect from harmful information, use creativity and build confidence. The highest percentage 79.3% refers to being able to protect from harmful information, followed by checking the source credibility with 75.9%, and 65.5% being able to use media as a learning tool. The least important skill is the one that teaches the students to recognize and resist stereotypes - 34.5%.

Figure 15. Media Literacy Education skills

18. Media Literacy Education may improve many important skills. Which of the skills below are most important to you? (Choose four)  
29 responses

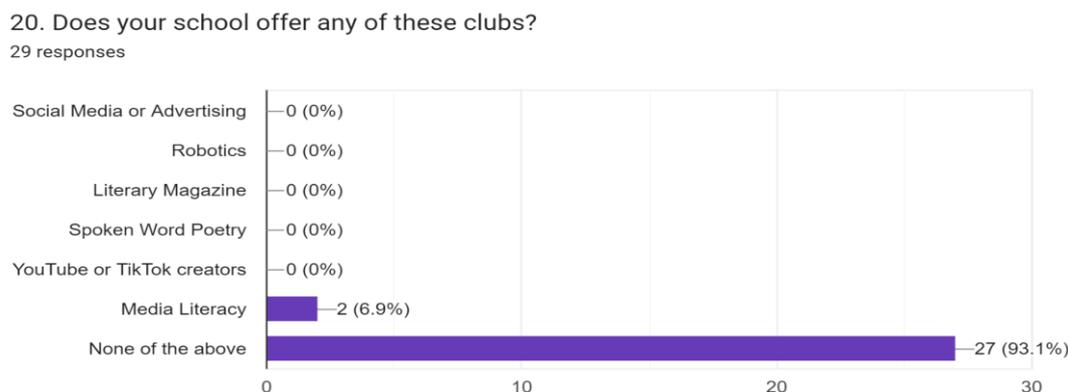


Question 19 asks students about possible optional courses that have been offered in school so far. The choices are:

- Video or media production where students answered that they haven't - 0%
- Journalism or school newspaper - 0%
- Media Literacy - 10.3%
- Cyber security - 0%
- Photography - 3.4%
- Graphic Arts and Design - 0%
- None of the above - where most students answered - 84.5%

The last question, question 20, inquires about the present school year offer and the answers are as follows in Figure 16:

Figure 16. School Club Offer



The pre-study survey helped in choosing the target group that was later involved in the project *NEWS WISE*. The project was targeting the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students to use 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in their English class and to focus on the research questions and to test the hypotheses of the study.

### 5.3 *NEWS WISE* Results

The experiment or the project “NewsWise” was constructed with the idea of involving students into learning more about media literacy, developing their critical thinking, communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation skills, and using technology as a means of learning in the English class. The prior activities and the lessons observations were beneficial for the researcher to prepare the project that has an actual topic and to involve students in real world situations that require their critical thinking skills and communication and collaboration, as a means to solve real world problems.

The Guardian Foundation offers these projects to any schools that apply for the project or to teachers that already know what media literacy education means for 21<sup>st</sup> century education.

The students were permanently assessed during the months when they studied and worked on the final product: the school newspaper “Omega News”. The NewsWise project provided effective support for the students’ news literacy. The students had greater critical engagement with the news, improved confidence and skills like communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, media literacy, use of technology when navigating the news, and I believe it supported the students’ wellbeing. The EFL classroom was seen in a different color and students’ attitude changed during the project to a more mature and open to new when studying English language.

The final discussion that the teacher/researcher had in the classroom at the end of the project with the students pointed out some key elements:

- Students shared that they have increased interest and a more active engagement with the news (some of them shared that they read now almost daily news on social media channels)
- Students related that are more aware of the elements of trustworthy news (they are able now to critically assess news)
- Students developed news literacy behavior (they learnt to check the sources of news and to check news reliability)

- Students are more confident when they navigate news (they feel they know the pillars on which the information is grounded)
- Students have increased news literacy skills (they stated that they are able to differentiate real news from fake news, they are aware of the potential dangers of reading everything in the social media in good faith, they learnt to process the information objectively).

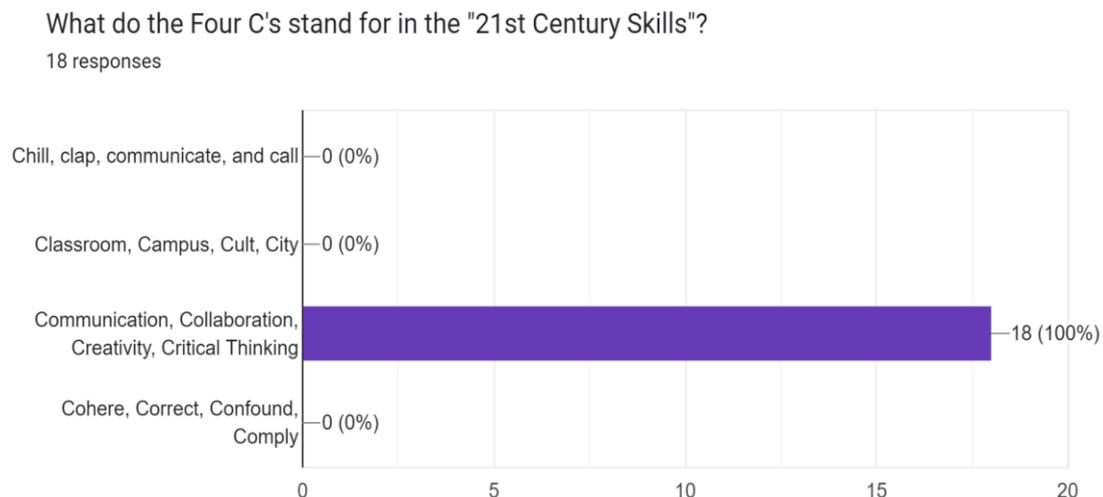
The final product, the Omega News newspaper, was designed to share to the public the students' efforts in learning about new skills and engaging in real-world problems. They decided to work in each department according to their own skills, the research and the teams were formed according to students' own preferences. The brilliant work they did showed specifically that it is possible to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English classroom and this had a great impact on their personal lives. The newspaper can be seen in **Appendix D**.

### 5.4 Post-Study Survey Results

The post-study survey has 12 questions and they followed the students' understanding of concepts and definitions as well as their opinion and attitude at the end of the *NewsWise* project. The answers were anonymous and confidential and the survey was sent on the WhatsApp group of the 7th grade, using Google Forms.

The first question meant to check students' understanding of the 4Cs and students' answers showed their understanding unanimously as we can see in the figure below.

Figure 17. The 4 Cs

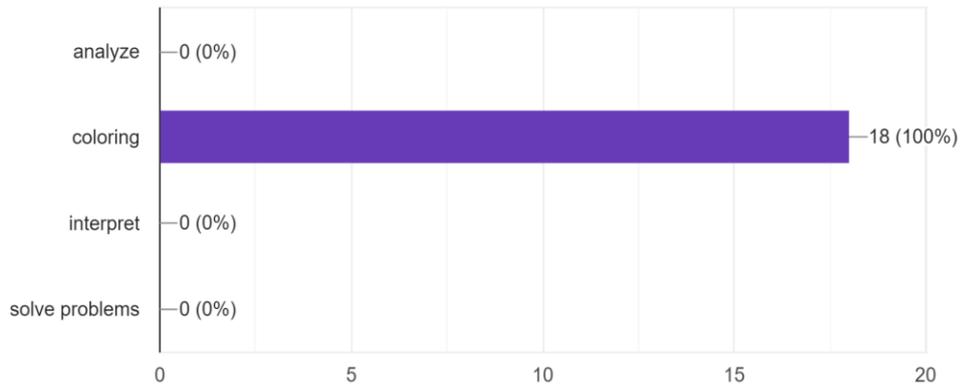


The second question checked students' knowledge on critical thinking skills. Their answers are in Figure 18.

Figure 18. Critical Thinking Skills

Which one of these is NOT a critical thinking skill?

18 responses



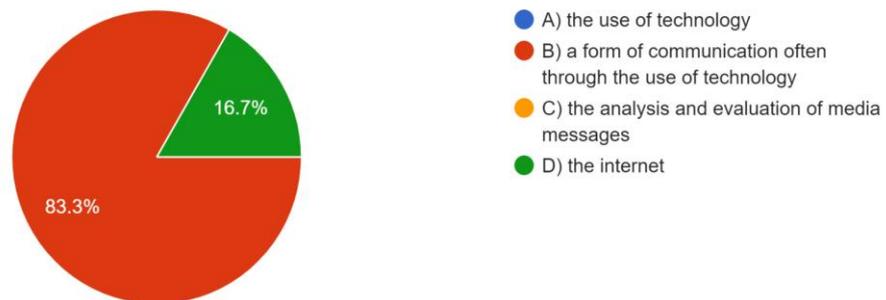
Questions 3, 4 and 5 checked students' understanding of communication, collaboration and creativity and their answers were 100% correct. They understood that communication means expressing opinions, requires strong listening skills and speaking clearly one's mind; collaboration is working with others, being flexible and sharing responsibilities; creativity is being responsive to ideas from others, brainstorming and refining ideas.

The question that required a correct definition of media received 83.3% correct answers and 16.7% answers stating a different concept. The situation is presented in Figure 19.

Figure 19. A definition of media

The definition of media is:

18 responses

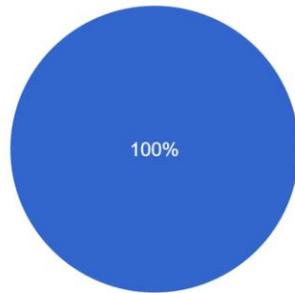


Question 7 that checked students' definition of the purpose of media received 100% answers.

Figure 20. The purpose of media

What is the main purpose of the media?

18 responses



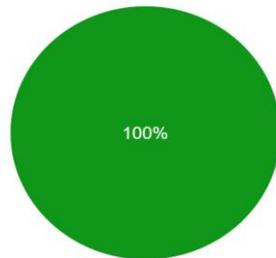
- A) To convey information
- B) To post on social media
- C) To design advertisements
- D) To make people angry

Question 8 received 100% correct answers to the inquiry about being a media literate.

Figure 21. Media literate

If you are "media literate", you can

18 responses



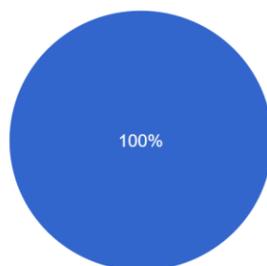
- A) create a post on Facebook
- B) get a large amount of likes on Instagram
- C) communicate with your friends
- D) analyze and evaluate the media messages you receive

Question 9 was a true/false question and it meant to see students' attitude towards fake news. Their answers were again 100% right.

Figure 22. Fake news

It is always a good idea to research other credible resources if you suspect something is fake news.

18 responses



- True
- False

Question 10 asked the students to rank the following statements in the order of their importance from a 5-step scale varying from ‘very important’ to ‘not important’. The statements are the following:

1. People are passive when they don’t notice biases and points of view that are embedded in media messages.
2. You can be misled by the media when you don’t know where the information comes from.
3. Too often, the media distracts students from the information and ideas that are really important.
4. Students who aren't active online are isolated from the rest of the world.
5. The most competitive schools of the future will invest in the right technology tools and help students learn to use them well.
6. If my school doesn’t keep up with technology trends, we will fall behind.
7. It is essential for young people to use digital media in the classroom to advocate for social change.
8. The best thing about the Internet is the access to rich content, ideas and information that I can use in the classroom.
9. When students learn to master a new technology tool, they gain special knowledge and status.
10. Good educational technologies help teachers teach better.

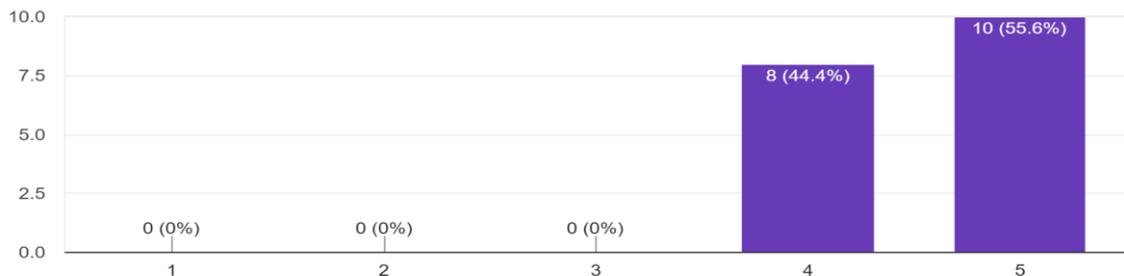
Most students 66.7% of the students answered ‘important’ to all the affirmations above, 9.8% answered with ‘very important’, and 23.5% answered ‘moderately important’ to these statements.

Question 11 is a question that makes reference to students’ confidence when reading the news and checking social media posts on a daily basis. On a scale from 1-5, 55.6% answered 5 ‘extremely confident’, and 44.4% answered ‘confident’.

*Figure 23. Confidence level when reading media*

After completing the course "News Wise" in your English class, how confident do you feel now when reading something in the media?

18 responses

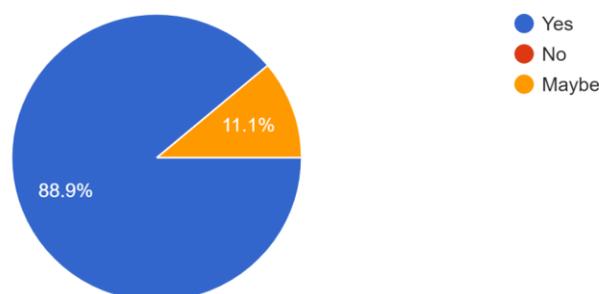


The last question wanted to check students' level of confidence and their attitude in the English classroom at the end of the project. 88.9% answered that they felt more confident in their skills and their English level proficiency has increased in the past school year.

Figure 24. Students' English language level

Do you feel that your English level has improved during the last school year due to different activities that involve learning about advertisement...dia, the use of technology and 21st century skills?

18 responses



The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices in developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills among students from various educational backgrounds, as well as to test the hypotheses regarding students' attitudes toward the application of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the EFL classroom.

For the first part of the research, the study aimed to investigate to what extent the English language teachers in Targu Mures and across Romania apply 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in their lessons. The first observation to be made is related to the poor number of teachers that answered the survey, only 23. The number actually shows that either teachers do not use 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the English classroom, or they are not interested in changing the daily routine. A larger sample size would be required for more generalizable results on teachers' perspectives and current teaching practices. The implementation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills requires change, training, time management, maybe lesson planning becomes more difficult. Teachers may also argue that students' low motivation leads to a poor integration of the skills, as some students do not feel attracted or confident in participating in the activities proposed by the teacher. Teachers may also argue that it is difficult in integrating some skills, such as the 4Cs or media literacy without prior study or training. Other challenges teachers may face would be stimulating students' creativity skills when solving problems or students' barriers when studying new material. The most plausible argument at this moment would be that teachers lack tools and materials, like devices or appropriate technology, to help and encourage students to get involved in a project. These are just assumptions made based on the small number of teachers that participated in the survey.

According to the survey's findings, teachers incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into their lesson plans about once or three times per month, with some skills being covered more frequently than others. The most common 21<sup>st</sup> century skill used by teachers is the use of technology as a tool for learning, and this finding is consistent with the results of the interviews. However, teachers tend to give the least attention to local connections skills. This conclusion that teachers did not mention local connections when asked which 21<sup>st</sup> century skills they use in their classes was supported by qualitative data findings.

The answer to the research questions stated in the previous chapter is that unfortunately in Targu Mureş and Romania, very few teachers include 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in their lessons. They use technology as a tool for teaching and learning, but they only use some skills like the 4Cs occasionally and probably without prior training and preparation. At this point, one answer would be that the

teachers that were involved in professional development training apply these skills more often as compared to those who do not.

Another drawback of the teachers' survey is that since the results were obtained from Google forms there was no chance to interact with the participants face-to-face to answer their potential questions. Furthermore, this study is restricted to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching and Learning scale (Hixson et al., 2012) and the researchers' interview questions. Different measuring tools can yield different results.

The students' surveys and lessons observations, together with the researcher's journal are important tools in drawing a final conclusion. The research questions of the study found an answer in students' answers and in their attitude in the English class. The first research question which sought to find if the implementation of the 4C skills drives students to a better language learning experience, gained results from lessons observations and students' implication in the NewWise project and it revealed that they not only know about these skills but they also use them on a daily basis in their class. In response to the second question, the results indicated positive changes in the classroom as students were eager to work on their devices and to use technology as a change in their English class format. They stated that their classes became more interesting and interactive, and more open to new ideas. The results of the survey and the project stated clearly that students' English level has improved and they felt more connected to the real world. They were able to share ideas, talk about their interests, use their creativity, show interest in knowing more about media and the way it is constructed, they read more and listened more in English about real current world problems.

The qualitative study results demonstrated that the students valued more the significance of 4Cs and media literacy skills and also the use of technology as an attribute to linking their learning to real life problems. The implication of national and international news, the raised awareness on the environmental issues, their collaboration and a better communication in new and attractive activities throughout the study, led to a better understanding of the necessity of working with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

The use of Google Classroom and other technologies throughout the study helped students to be more productive, allowed them to access materials conveniently and submit assignments quickly and enabled them to interact with each other and the teacher. The students considered Google Classroom useful, easy to use and worthwhile. What is more, students' exposure to technology both at home and at school had a positive impact in developing their ICT skills and also their language skills. They believe that it makes the learning more fun, interactive and enjoyable. Utilizing technology in the classroom has the potential to improve student engagement, learning, and motivation. It can also increase social interactions and produce positive outcomes.

As students were required to read, access and analyze information online from different sources, they used their English language skills but also their critical thinking skills, their information and literacy skills and they were able to adapt to situations in order to complete a task. Students enjoyed having a different environment in their classroom and they were able to adapt to a different type of learning. Using 21<sup>st</sup> century skills led the students to improve their language skills and feel more confident in presentations, having a wider view of the real world and being able to have a reaction and a solution to a situation they encounter. They learned that media is not simply journalism, it is life, objectivity, discovery and implication.

In conclusion, students must be able to think critically, solve problems creatively, work in teams, communicate clearly across multiple media, understand rapidly evolving technologies, and deal with an abundance of information in order to hold jobs in the information age. Students must be adaptable, take the initiative and the lead when necessary, and create something new and useful because of the rapid changes in our world.

## Chapter 6 – LOOKING AHEAD

Education reforms for the twenty-first century aim to change people's lives, especially in terms of assisting future generations in surviving in a society that is increasingly interconnected and digital. The question of how these ambitious 21<sup>st</sup> century reforms can be effectively taught or developed in the curriculum is one of the most topical issues for educators and policy makers, triggered by the growing need to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in today's education. In this context, integrating 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into language education, is a necessity for cultivating engaged, confident, and competent learners in a world that is rapidly changing.

We live in complex, interconnected, linguistically and culturally diverse societies that allow us to work across countries and cultures. For students to be proficient actors in this context, they require not only linguistic competence, but also transversal values, attitudes, and skills. These transversal competences include values of diversity, human rights, equality, attitudes of respect, tolerance, civic-mindedness, autonomous learning, critical thinking, cooperation and problem-solving skills.

That is the reason why today's classrooms need to place a greater emphasis on teamwork and communication skills than on content knowledge alone. In this context, students are encouraged to come up with original solutions and analyze complex problems critically. By doing this, teachers can make sure that every one of our students has the tools they need to succeed in the modern world.

The present book suggests that integrating key 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into language education—particularly those related to technology, communication, and collaboration—can have a positive impact on both teaching practices and student engagement. Based on the results of the applied survey, teachers appear receptive to these competencies and recognize their relevance in modern classrooms. The rationale and motivation of the present book was to reinforce the value of aligning language instruction with contemporary skill sets, highlighting the potential for increased learner motivation, confidence, and active participation. The main beneficiaries of such approaches are students, indicating that innovative and skill-oriented teaching formats may be both effective and well-tolerated in diverse educational contexts.

The results of the present book – both as a conceptual framework for digital literacy in a language-learning context and as practical experience – suggest a need to reconsider language education. It must be reimagined through a future-oriented lens, prioritizing skills alongside linguistic versatility.

There may be a series of obstacles in implementing such methodological changes into the language class, some triggered by institutional requirements and limitations and others by personal reluctance on the part of the teachers. However, the positive feedback from the students should provide the impetus for the shift towards such experiential endeavors in the practice of language acquisition.

The study of language discourse will inevitably have to adapt when faced with contemporary challenges. As digital communication reshapes how meaning is constructed and shared, discourse analysis must account for multimodal texts, algorithm-driven interactions, and the blending of personal and public voices. Media literacy becomes essential—not only as a tool for understanding evolving textual forms but also as a critical competence for analyzing power, perspective, and credibility in mediated discourse. Future-oriented discourse studies must therefore integrate media literacy to equip learners and researchers with the analytical tools needed to function in complex, fast-changing communicative environments.

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## Appendix A.

### Checklist For Lessons Observations

DATE _____		CLASS _____		<b>Observations and notes</b>
No.	Indicators	Lesson _____		
Use the symbols to check the indicators used during the lesson.		√	X	
1.	Incorporates activities in which students work collaboratively.			
2.	Students know how to work in a team to achieve one common goal.			
3.	Incorporates group activities where students are assigned into specific functional roles.			
4.	Incorporates peer feedback in the teaching and/or assessment of speaking, reading, and/or writing.			
5.	Incorporates activities which require students to speak and write in pairs or groups.			
6.	Incorporates group discussions and debates.			
7.	Includes activities which require students to find a solution to a given situation.			
8.	Implements Q&A tasks which develop students' critical thinking skills to answer the questions.			
9.	Incorporates art and craft activities requiring students to make something new.			
10.	Incorporates activities, which require students to use their ICT skills.			
11.	Incorporates role-play or improvisation tasks.			
12.	Topics are relevant to our reality and open-ended.			

## Appendix B.

### Lesson Plan *News Wise Project*

**Name:** Elvira Kiss

**School:** Scoala Gimnaziala Omega, Targu Mures

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**Class:** 7th grade

**Number of students:** 19

**Time:** 50 min.

**Google Classroom:** NewsWise

**Level:** B1

**Lesson:** *News Unit. Holding power to account*

**Language Skills:** reading, listening, speaking and writing

**Type of lesson:** Media Literacy. Google Classroom – NewsWise

**Lesson aims:**

- to revise the main ideas in the previous lessons on news
- to practice grammar in editing news
- to understand how news can challenge power
- to understand discrimination and how to challenge it

**Specific competences:** By the end of the class Ss will be able:

- to define what power means how journalism can hold power to account
- to explain why it is sometimes important to challenge power
- to identify how the Windrush news reporting changed how people in power acted
- to describe the different effects the Windrush news reporting had on the people involved

**Anticipated problems:** Ss may have trouble with understanding different concepts and using the terms in a correct manner

**Organization:** individual work, pair work, group work, whole class

**Teaching techniques:** video presentation, dialogue, explanation, game, exercises

**Materials:** Board, markers, video projector, laptop, worksheets, educational platforms

**Bibliography:**

Jenny Dooley, *New Enterprise B1* (teacher's book, Student's book, workbook), Ed. Express Publishing

Wiggins, Grant, McTighe, Jay (2015), *Understanding by design* (expanded 2nd edition), ASCD, Alexandria, VA

### **Activity 1: Warmer**

**Aim:** to accommodate Ss in the English class and introduce the topic of the lesson

**Procedure:**

- T greets the Ss, asks for absentees and how they feel today
- T asks Ss to read their homework and peer-correct the mistakes if any
- T informs the Ss about the aim of the lesson

**Interaction:** T-Ss; Ss-T

**Organization:** whole class

**Timing:** 3'

### **Activity 2: Lead in: *Powerful people role-play***

**Aim:**

- to practice the news related vocabulary that Ss already learnt
- to develop fluency, to encourage Ss to be creative with their answers
- to introduce the concept of power

**Procedure:**

- In pairs, pupils role-play a given scenario in which one person has more power
- T invites pupils to share roleplays with the class and consider: *Who has more power and why? Who was affected by their actions? Is the person in power acting fairly? Why/why not? Could they be challenged and, if so, how?*
- T and Ss create a class definition of power and discuss: *Who has power? Can 'powerful' people be anyone and anywhere? Is it good to be powerful? When is it important to challenge power?*

**Interaction:** T-Ss, Ss-T, Ss-Ss

**Organization:** whole class, pair work

**Timing:** 7'

### **Activity 3: *Windrush Explainer***

**Aim:** to develop listening skills and to be able to understand historical events and news related events

**Procedure:**

- T tells the Ss to watch the Albert Thompson or Paulette Wilson video and consider: *How did the video make you feel? Did the situation seem fair? Why/why not? Why do you think The Guardian made this video?*
- T refers back to the starter discussion on power; in this situation, *who has power and who doesn't have power? What needs to change?*

**Interaction:** T-Ss; Ss-T**Organization:** whole class, individual work**Timing:** 15'**Activity 4: Windrush headlines and summaries****Aim:** to use the news without prejudice and to understand better the concept of power**Procedure:**

- T asks the Ss to read the four Windrush headlines and summaries of Guardian news reports.
- Ss are asked to arrange the reports into chronological order to see how the reporting affected what happened next. At each stage of reporting, Ss answer: *Who has the most and least power and why (ie the Windrush citizens, the government, journalists)?*
- T asks the Ss as a class to discuss the way power changes throughout the reporting. *Who began with power and who ends with power? Why did this happen? How did the news reports help to bring about change for the Windrush citizens? How was power challenged?*

**Interaction:** T-Ss, Ss-T, S-S**Organization:** whole class, pair work**Timing:** 12'**Activity 5: Plenary****Aim:** to give further practice to the activities in the beginning of the lesson**Procedure:**

- T asks the Ss to revisit role-play scenarios from the starter activity. *Can you identify whether the people in power should be challenged? If so, how and why? Pupils could change their role-plays to demonstrate this. Are there examples where power is being exercised positively? What might happen if these scenarios were reported in the news?*

**Interaction:** T-Ss, S-S**Organization:** individual work, pair work**Timing:** 10'

### Activity 6: Homework

**Aim:** to practice news writing from the perspectives of power

**Procedure:**

- T asks the Ss to choose from the two options:
  - A. Ss write, record or film their own explainers about the Windrush scandal.
  - B. Ss write from the perspective of one of the Windrush citizens, both before the news reporting began and at the end of the reporting. T encourages Ss to explore the citizens' thoughts and feelings at both stages and consider how their lives changed over this period. This could be run as a drama activity: a press conference with pupils hot-seating in role as Windrush citizens.

**Interaction:** T-Ss

**Organization:** whole class

**Timing:** 3'

## Powerful people roleplay

Who has the power? How do the other people in the scenario feel? Who is affected by the decisions made by the person in power?

1. People:
  - The Prime Minister
  - The MP in charge of education

The prime minister does not like sport so has decided there will be no more PE in schools.



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2. People:
  - The rich owner of a big company
  - School headteachers

The owner of the company has decided to use some of their money to send free books to local schools.



3. People:
  - The owner of a big supermarket
  - Supermarket customers

The owner of the supermarket wants to stop fruit getting bruised by using lots of plastic packaging to protect it.



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## WINDRUSH HEADLINES AND SUMMARIES



Jack Taylor/Getty Images

**30 Apr 2018**

### Amber Rudd quits

Amber Rudd, the British home secretary, has resigned. After Paulette Wilson, more Windrush citizens told journalists about how Amber Rudd and her department had treated them. Amber Rudd apologised for the “appalling” actions of her department.



Sarah Lee/The Guardian

**28 Nov 2017**

### 'I can't eat or sleep': the woman threatened with deportation after 50 years in Britain

Paulette Wilson received a letter from the government saying she was an illegal immigrant and that she would be sent back to Jamaica. However, she has lived in the UK for 50 years. She left Jamaica when she was 10 years old and has never visited since. She has no family in Jamaica.



Alicia Canter/The Guardian

**5 May 2018**

### 'I'm glad we spoke out': Windrush victim who shone a light on the scandal

Paulette Wilson's daughter said: “I'm so glad we spoke out and I'm so glad it meant so many other people came forward with their stories and that now they are all being recognised as British citizens - which is what they are. This has changed my mum: it has brought her confidence back. She can't stop smiling.”



Sarah Lee/The Guardian

**11 Jan 2018**

### Woman nearly deported after 50 years in UK wins right to remain

Paulette Wilson and other Windrush victims have been given the official right to stay in the UK after news reports about their situations were published. Readers of the reports were very angry about what had happened. Wilson, 61, said: ‘it would be nice to get an apology’.

## APPENDIX C.

### Lesson Plan Socratic Seminar

**Name:** Elvira Kiss

**School:** Școala Gimnazială Omega, Targu Mureș

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**Class:** 8th grade

**Number of students:** 17

**Time:** 50 min.

**Textbook:** New Enterprise B1+, Ed. Express Publishing

**Level:** B1+

**Unit:** 7 – *High Tech*

**Lesson:** *Biometrics – applications and implications*

**Language Skills:** listening, speaking, writing

**Type of lesson:** debate - Socratic seminar

**Lesson aims:**

- to present vocabulary related to technology and biometrics
- to review vocabulary related to technology
- to read and listen for key information
- to talk/ debate on biometrics – applications and implications

**Specific competences:** By the end of the class Ss will be able:

- to use specific vocabulary related to technology
- to reinforce knowledge about types of technology
- to practice vocabulary in exercises, debates, games

**Anticipated problems:** Ss may have trouble with some technology words and their meaning and may require further explanations

**Organization:** individual work, pair work, group work, whole class

**Teaching techniques:** dialogue, explanation, exercises, Socratic Seminar debate

**Materials:** textbook, workbook, board, markers, video projector, laptop, worksheets, educational platforms

**Bibliography:**

Jenny Dooley, New Enterprise B1+ (teacher's book, student's book), Ed. Express Publishing  
Wiggins, Grant, McTighe, Jay (2015), *Understanding by design* (expanded 2nd edition), ASCD, Alexandria, VA

Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, Ed. Pearson-Longman, 2007

**Activity 1: Warmer**

**Aim:** to accommodate Ss in the English class and introduce the topic of the lesson

**Procedure:**

- T greets the Ss, asks for absentees and how they feel today
- T asks Ss to read their homework and peer-correct the mistakes if any
- T informs the Ss about the aim of the lesson

**Interaction:** T-Ss; Ss-T

**Organization:** whole class

**Timing:** 2’

**Activity 2: Lead in:** *“I have very real concerns about the civil liberties implications of ultimately requiring every resident to submit themselves for compulsory fingerprinting or some other biometric test.” Patricia Hewitt*

**Aim:**

- to practice the technology related vocabulary that Ss already learnt
- to develop fluency, to encourage Ss to be creative with their answers

**Procedure:**

- T asks the Ss to explain the meaning of the quote they see and to give their opinion. They answer a couple of other questions based on the article they had to read at home and Ss answer on mentimeter.com
- T sets the roles for the Socratic seminar, assigns questions and prepares the Ss for the debate

**Interaction:** T-Ss, Ss-T, Ss-Ss

**Organization:** whole class, individual work, pair work

**Timing:** 9’

**Activity 3: Biometrics**

**Aim:** to develop speaking skills and to consolidate the knowledge about technology

**Procedure:**

- T introduces the technology - biometrics vocabulary in the second section of the lesson
- Ss work the exercises related to the vocabulary presented and work in pairs on the comprehension questions in the same section

**Interaction:** T-Ss; Ss-T, S-S

**Organization:** whole class, individual work, pair work

**Timing:** 10’

**Activity 4: Video watching – Metaverse**

**Aim:**

- to practice the listening and speaking skills
- to listen for key information

**Procedure:**

- T asks the Ss to watch the video *“What is Metaverse and why are billions of dollars being spent on it?”* The metaverse refers to a hypothetical virtual world where users can work, trade or socialize. The term has attracted lots of buzz in Silicon Valley thanks to Facebook’s rebrand to **Meta** last year.
- Ss are asked to answer the questions that follow in the Ss’ handout based on the video they watched and the article they read at home
- T organizes the Ss in the “inner circle” and “outer circle” for the Socratic Seminar and allows the Ss enough time to debate and come to a conclusion related to Metaverse and biometrics

**Interaction:** T-Ss, Ss-T, S-S

**Organization:** whole class, pair work, group work

**Timing:** 20'

**Activity 5:** *Biometric technology applications*

**Aim:** to give further practice in debating on technology and applications

**Procedure:**

- T asks the Ss to continue their debate and talk about the apps they find intrusive
- Ss swap roles in the inner and outer circle and bring arguments for their opinion.

They come to a conclusion

**Interaction:** T-Ss, Ss

**Organization:** group work

**Timing:** 7'

**Activity 6:** *Homework*

**Aim:** to practise writing skills

**Procedure:** T asks the Ss to write an opinion essay on the development of new technologies and applications and whether they think this is a real part of the future, including the future of education. The writing activity is designed to allow students to practice and improve their grammar with the feedback from their teacher.

**Interaction:** T-Ss

**Organization:** whole class

**Timing:** 2'

## Biometrics – applications and implications

1. Look at the two parts of the term below and say what they might refer to.

**BIOMETRICS**

2. Read the definition of *biometrics* and complete the gaps with the correct forms of the words in brackets. Then, look at the icons and complete the examples of biometric identifiers in the final sentence.

Biometrics refers to the measurement and analysis of human  
 ..... (DISTINCTION) characteristics. It can be used for  
 ..... (RECOGNIZE) of individuals. With .....  
 (ADVANCE) in computer vision and AI, biometric technology  
 can be applied to ..... (AUTHENTIC) people based on  
 their unique biometric identifiers. These include, e.g.  
 ....., ....., ....., .....



3. Discuss the questions.

- What kind of technology is the article about and what does it allow Mastercard users to do?
- Mastercard says you can pay “with a smile or a wave”. Would you like to be able to authenticate your payments this way?
- What identity, privacy and security concerns with regard to using biometric technology might there be?
- Do you think it’s inevitable that biometric technology will become as ubiquitous as cameras in smartphones?
- In what other areas of life might this technology be used?

4. Look at the list of biometric technology applications and say which of them (if any) you find intrusive and why.

- Taking payments for school lunches by scanning the faces of pupils.
- Using facial recognition in public places for police surveillance.
- Voice recognition for banking, e.g. to check account balances or make payments.
- Continual remote monitoring of patient’s biometrics by healthcare professionals.

## APPENDIX D.

### Omega News School Newspaper

ISSUE No. 1 | June 2023

OMEGA SECONDARY SCHOOL

# OMEGA NEWS

News • International • Science • Environment • Sports • Entertainment • Rethinking Reform in Education

## ROMANIAN EDUCATION UNION ANNOUNCE GENERAL STRIKE STARTING MAY THE 22ND

*ROMANIAN TEACHERS GO ON A GENERAL STRIKE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 18 YEARS*

The Federation of education unions for Romanian schools (FSLI) asks for major raises, so that a beginner teacher has a net salary of €800 and €1400 at the end of their career. After multiple failed negotiation attempts with the government, a general strike was declared to start on the 22nd of May. At the moment, teachers are paid around €500 per month and between €480-€550 at private schools.

President Klaus Iohannis, a former professor, supports the teachers saying "Teachers' demands for salary increases are justified, if we want a competitive system, we have to pay teachers well".

At first, pupils in the 6th grade were supposed to take national evaluations on the 24th and 25th of May, but because of the ongoing walkout they got postponed for the 30th and 31st of May. Later on, the evaluations got postponed for a second time, the new dates being the 12th and 13th of June.

We decided to ask some students to share their opinions on the current situation. A 7th grade student from a school in Targu-Mures said: "The strike is a valuable opportunity for the teachers to manifest their rights and improve the education system for our benefit".

The strike has a significant impact on students in the 8th and 12th grade, who are taking highschool and college entry exams. Here is the opinion of an 8th grader: "In my opinion, the strike is beneficial because it offers us more time to study. However, it has a great negative effect, as it can alter the dates of the upcoming exams. I have also noticed that many teachers have changed their behaviour towards students since the beginning of the strike due to the unfair treatment and payment."

As of today, the 7th of June, the strike is still ongoing in its third week. There seems to be no resolution to the teachers' request. There is a lot of confusion and worrying coming from students and parents surrounding exam dates. We are waiting for updates on the situation.

**Kriszta Zöld**



*Teachers march in Bucharest*

## ROMANIA HAS THE 2ND CHEAPEST GAS AND 3RD CHEAPEST DIESEL IN THE EU

Among all the EU countries, Romania has one of the lowest prices for diesel and gas in the EU; the markdowns are being noticed in the statistics where Romania has now the 2nd most affordable price for gas and 3rd most economical price for diesel.

Looking at the European Commission data, recorded in the Weekly Oil Bulletin, on May 8th Romania had an average price of gasoline of 6,43 lei per liter (1,30 euros) and an average price of diesel of 6,46 lei per liter (1,31 euros).

Fuel prices in our country are surpassed only by those in Bulgaria (1,29 euros) in the case of gasoline, and by Malta (1,21 euros) and Bulgaria (1,27 euros) when it comes to diesel. On the other hand, Finland has the most expensive petrol in the EU, at 1,94 euros per liter, and Sweden has the most expensive diesel - 1,86 euros per liter.



Country	Gasoline price (EUR/liter)	Diesel price (EUR/liter)
Hungary	1.34	1.42
Ireland	1.39	1.40
Slovakia	1.36	1.46
Czechia	1.37	1.47
Bulgaria	1.14	1.24
UK	1.50	1.66
Italy	1.52	1.52
Germany	1.54	1.50
France	1.49	1.43
<b>Romania</b>	<b>1.30</b>	<b>1.31</b>

The Average price for gas in EU countries is 1.70 euros per liter, and 1.54 euros for diesel per liter.

Oil prices decreased by about 2% in volatile trade on Wednesday, after three days of increases as U.S. economic data suggested the Federal Reserve may raise interest rates further in its bid to fight inflation.

Brent oil was down \$1.48, or 1.9%, at \$75.96 a barrel, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) oil was down \$1.63, or 2.2%, at 72.08 dollars per barrel.

Although people think that petrol and diesel are cheaper in Romania because of the low annual wages compared to other countries, in fact petrol and diesel are much more expensive in Romania. For example, in Germany in 2021 the gross salary was 4,100 euro (20,310 lei) and in Romania it was 6,489 lei (1,370 euro).

One salary in Germany will buy you 2291 liters of petrol and 2599 liters of diesel, while a salary in Romania can buy only 1053 liters of petrol and 1053 liters of diesel.

**Eliza Moldovan**

## **iPhone 15 to be released in the fall of this year and to come with major changes**

iPhone 15 is in the full development process of Apple. The engineers are now focusing on this new model that is to be launched in the fall of this year.

According to new information, it is going to come up with a series of extremely interesting news for Apple and iPhone fans.

Although the company keeps the long-awaited appearance secret, some sources claim that the iPhone 15 would include cameras that have sensors of the last generation image that makes it clear that Apple's plans are to offer the best image sensors in their phones to the entire smartphone market, at least theoretically.

Apple makes this decision more to comply with EU laws, but it seems that it is also preparing other surprises, including the design side.

After three years of flat design, the company is considering re-introducing curved lines on the iPhone, but the new models will still resemble the ones before.



### **The unluckiest thieves**

The thieves that stole 1,000 boxes of Nike Sports shoes ended up with a surprise.

Two thieves from Germany broke into a shoe store in the city of Berlin, with the aim of stealing several boxes of Nike sports shoes, but the discovery they made after the robbery left them speechless.

Thieves entered the city centre store and made off with more than 1,000 boxes of sports shoes, but all the shoes stolen were for the right foot.

The store owner estimates the damage at over 20,000 euros, but it will not be easy for the thieves to get rid of the stolen goods, considering that the shoes are for the same foot.

The robbery was captured by the store's surveillance cameras. Footage shows the thieves forcing the store's lock at night, then loading boxes of Nike trainers onto a tricycle.

According to Berlin media, the local police chief said: "We have collected evidence from the scene of the robbery. The unusual part about this robbery is that only shoes for the right foot were stolen. With the help of footage and fingerprints, we will be able to identify the perpetrators."

*Sara Florea , Lucia Opreș & Ianis Ganea*

## Ricciardo confirms that he is going to drive in the new RB 19

The Australian driver has announced that he will get a taste of the new RB19 just after The British Grand Prix. "I've been in the simulator, but I will drive the RB19 in July after the Silverstone race – I'm getting a Pirelli test," Ricciardo confirmed in an interview with ESPN this week.

And there's a chance of him getting in the car again after Monza. "Then maybe I'll get another one after Monza as well in September. A couple of months away and I'll get to feel what it's like."

Daniel Ricciardo has shown that he is happy to drive a fast car and one that is familiar and fit to his style of driving. He said that he is excited to drive once again with the team that raised him and he can still do a fast lap.

And continued with "I'm definitely still in a really good place – I'm very happy with this," he said of his reserve duties. "Does it mean that I'm happy doing this for the next two or three years? Probably not. But I think for this year it's certainly a good thing for me."

Sometimes taking a break from something can help you even more as it was shown with Fernando Alonso. Every Red Bull fan wants and expects that Daniel will get a chance to drive this year with a hope that he will get his 9th Grand Prix victory.



## Manchester City 4-0 Real Madrid

Wednesday night on the 17th of May the Citizens humiliated Real Madrid 4-0 in the semi-finals of the UCL. City dominated Real with a 60% possession, 16 shots, 8 of those being on target and 7 corners, compared to Real's 7 shots, of which 3 on target and 3 corners.

This delivered Manchester City to the finals of the UCL against Inter Milan.

Even though Man City lost the 2 previous Semi-finals they showed that they are learning from mistakes and showed everyone who they really are.

The Real Madrid goalkeeper performed excellently with saving 2 shots from Haaland but he stood no match to Bernardo Silva's close-range shot that opened the score, then he scored the second goal.

Even though Real had occasions of scoring with Karim Benzema and David Alba, Ederson has shown his skills once again.

Do you think the match stopped here? No, Manchester City scored once again.

Manuel Akanji's header deflected off Eder Militao and made 3-0 for Manchester. But this didn't make Julian Alvarez feel sorry even though he joined in the last minutes, he made the 4-0 for Manchester.

Now Manchester City's last match is against Inter Milan to finally win their first Champions League in Istanbul or it could be redemption for Inter Milan.

*Rareş Florea & Sergiu Borz*

## Roglic wins Giro after an amazing comeback

Roglic needed a 30 second advantage over Thomas to get the general lead and win 2023 Giro, but he finished the time trial stage with 40 seconds faster than the previous pink jersey.

Despite having a mechanical issue, he fixed it quickly and kept going.

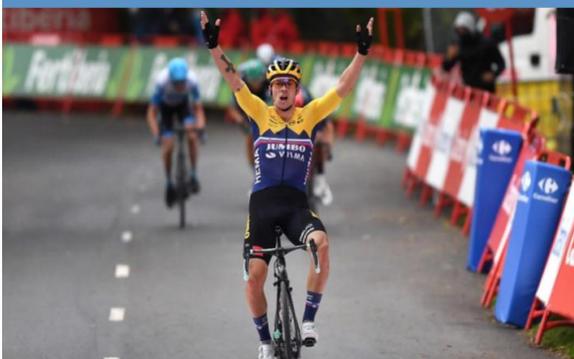
"It's just something amazing," said the 33-year-old. "I dropped the chain. It's part of it. You don't want these things to happen but I put the chain back on and restarted."

Thomas said: "To be honest, Primoz deserves that. He had a mechanical as well. If you would have told me this back in February or March, I would've bitten your hand off but now I'm devastated. With the season I've had up until now, I can be proud of that. I'm just gutted for the boys as well as they worked so hard."

Roglic was defeated in a similar way in the 20th stage of the 2020 Tour de France by Pogacar. Primoz Roglic had a 57 second advantage over the younger Slovenian, only for Pogacar to win in the time trial, and the Grand Tour.

Giro ended on Sunday with a 135 km stage around Rome, during which Roglic was not challenged for the lead.

Primoz now has four Grand Tour victories. He won Vuelta a España three times and now Giro.



## Denver Nuggets advance to the western Conference finals

The Nuggets win the series 6-4, beating the Phoenix Suns 125-100 in their latest game.

Nikola Jokic scored 32 points, had 12 assists and 10 rebounds in another triple-double. Jamal Murray added another 26 to get the Nuggets to the conference finals for the first time since 2020.

At the start of the second half, The Nuggets were leading by 30 points, 81-51. This is their largest halftime lead in the franchise's history.

"I could tell that our guys were really locked in. We had a really good win in Game 5, but there was no celebrating. We understood that we had work to do here in Phoenix," said Michael Malone after the victory. "And I told them before the game, don't give into a human element of, 'Well, we have Game 7 at home in my pocket... We don't have Game 7 at home. Game 7's right now.'"

Fans started to wonder if the Durant trade was a mistake. Many think that trading for Kevin Durant was a waste of money, and should not have been done. The truth is that it was not a mistake. Teaming up Durant with Devin Booker, Paul and Ayton set The Suns up for a championship win and the risk was worth taking.

Denver will play either the Los Angeles Lakers or the Golden State Warriors, depending on which one wins the series. The Lakers currently have a 3-2 lead in the series and can close things out Friday evening but a Golden State win would mean a Game 7 Sunday.

**Rareș Florea & Sergiu Borz**

## RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS ON HOLD DUE TO LONG QUEUES



In January, February and March of this year, a third of the UK's energy came from wind turbines. Saturday, 13 May, statistics have shown that, for the first time in the UK, wind has produced more electricity than gas, even though there are projects worth 200 billion pounds stuck on hold, the UK aims for net zero gas emissions by 2035.

In the first 3 months of 2023, 42% of the UK's energy came from renewable energy. Most of the UK's wind power came from offshore wind farms, because building onshore wind farms has been banned since 2015, unless it is built in a specific area, on a specific land.

A lack of capacity in the "grid" is causing some new solar and wind facilities to wait up to 10 to 15 years to be connected. Renewable energy firms are concerned that it would endanger UK climate ambitions. The system's manager, National Grid, recognises the issue but asserts that substantial overhaul is required.

Nearly 50% of the nation's electricity consumption in 2017 was net-zero. In 2022, wind energy produced a record quantity of electricity, but a significant increase in the number of renewable projects around the nation will be necessary to fulfill this aim. There may be a demand for up to five times more solar energy and four times more wind energy.

Since 2010, 198 billion pounds has been invested in renewable energy infrastructure by the government and private investors. The ability of energy providers to bring additional green power online, however, is now in jeopardy due to severe delays in connecting their green energy projects to the system.

Once it has been connected to the grid, a new wind farm or solar installation can begin producing energy for people's homes.

Energy firms like Octopus Energy, one of the biggest investors in renewable energy in Europe, claim that National Grid has informed them that they will need to wait up to 15 years for some connections, which is significantly longer than the government's target of 2035.

It is estimated that there are currently connections waiting for developments worth more than £200 billion. Approximately 40% of them will have to wait at least a year for a connection, according to data provided by National Grid. That amounts to tens of billions of pounds in delayed investments.

Currently, according to Zoisa North-Bond, CEO of Octopus Energy Generation, "We have one of the longest grid queues in Europe."



**Yanis Jourd'heuil, Rareş Macarie, David Vancea**

## A.I. GENERATED ART: A TOOL AND A THREAT

A.I. generated art starts to significantly influence the art community.

Art created by artificial intelligence peaked last year, via social media, when people found A.I. art generators, such as MidJourney and Deep Dream Generator, that could turn a couple of words into a work of art.

A.I. generators use different algorithms to create images based on the words typed in. This would mean that it learns from pre-existing works of art, copies their style and sometimes even the actual work to create something new.

As it gained popularity, the new format of art raised panic in the art world. Artists fear that they will lose their jobs because, eventually, artificial intelligence will completely replace them. After all, why would you spend money on a composition when you can design something similar, for free, in a couple of minutes?

One issue artists have with A.I. is that when it uses images to learn and create, the creator behind the artwork is not given credit or even informed of how their work is being used. Some argued that it is a higher form of plagiarism.



Photo Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-65562658>



Another aspect that has made creatives view generated art so negatively is the fact that it does not provide any of the creative processes that lead to the final product. Therefore, most artists have come to the conclusion that it is the 'opposite of art'.

On the other hand, for someone who is not affected by this issue, seeing what a program is able to create can be quite entertaining.

With all the negative backlash artificial intelligence is receiving, artists can learn to use A.I. not as a competitor but as a tool. It is much faster and can mimic any art style the artist wishes to use.

Or if they want to experiment with something new or need help in getting their creative process started.

For graphic designers, illustrators and so on, with the help of A.I. they can find means to express their ideas in ways artificial intelligence can't.

Not to mention that with A.I. you can easily enhance artworks if you are looking for a way to realistically create landscapes or a 3D model of a building.

Artificial intelligence is not something to be feared, it is always learning and it can pose a significant threat for artists or any job for that matter, but if used correctly it can be to our advantage.

**Iris Nicoară**

## Why media literacy is more important than ever

The capacity to critically evaluate what you are hearing, reading, and seeing is known as media literacy. It aids in the multiple-perspective analysis of data. With so many sources of information available today, critical thinking abilities can aid in sifting through the noise to find the truth and identifying trustworthy sources.

For instance, we might be better at spotting fake news or comprehending why some products receive more social media marketing attention than others, such as on Facebook or Instagram.

We might also observe that content shared on those platforms frequently has a purpose, such as advancing the political viewpoint of an organization or persuading a user to make an unnecessary purchase.

### *IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY*

Media literacy is important because it makes it possible for people to understand the messages being communicated to them. Media literacy can help in sifting through the noise to find the truth and identifying reliable sources, given the abundance of information sources available today.

### *INHERENT BIAS IN THE MEDIA*

Media literate individuals can identify media biases and how they may influence how they view a situation or issue. To spread fear among the public, a conservative news outlet might, for example, only cover terrorist attacks. The same media outlet may use emotive language to stir readers' hostility toward immigrants entering their country, including refugees.

For example, a liberal news outlet might promote gender parity or call attention to the detrimental effects of poverty on minority communities. Depending on how conscious we are of these biases, we can decide how to respond to these occasionally sensitive topics.

### *MEDIA LITERACY AS A TEACHING TOOL*

Learning new concepts, cultures, and viewpoints that may not have been previously considered can also be done through media literacy.

Understanding media could improve your performance at work or school (e.g., writing a persuasive essay). In order to fill in any knowledge gaps that the traditional media may have missed,

media literacy can also assist people in making decisions about what they want to learn more about.

### *TAKING CHARGE*

We will be more aware of what is going on in our communities, schools, and workplaces if we are better prepared to make changes. For example, we can use the media we consume to learn more about what is happening in our nation and the rest of the world.

The more aware we are of how certain groups are underrepresented or misrepresented in the media, the more driven these groups are to take control of their representation through blogs and social media platforms.

### *CRITICAL THINKING*

The ability to analyze media critically equips students with the knowledge and abilities they'll need when they enroll in college or launch their careers. A student who has mastered media literacy techniques can comprehend news articles and recognize how the reporter is framing them, analyze social media posts for bias or ulterior motives, and recognize an advertisement on TV from a distance.

Although media literacy is not currently taught in Romanian schools and it is not a part of the National Curriculum, its significance has increased significantly in the wake of the development of deep fakes and AI-generated content. It not only enables students to critically analyze the media present in their daily lives and communities, but it also gets them ready for college or careers.

**teacher Elvira Kiss**



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Scan Me!

## APPENDIX E.

### A Survey For Measuring 21st Century Teaching And Learning

**Instructions**

The rest of this survey asks about your teaching practices that might support students' learning of the following 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

Critical Thinking  
 Collaboration  
 Communication  
 Creativity & Innovation  
 Self-Direction  
 Making Global Connections  
 Making Local Connections  
 Using Technology as a Tool for Learning

For each of the above you will be asked about your general teaching of these skills, and about a few specific practices you may have used.

There are no correct or incorrect answers and all responses will be kept confidential.

**CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS** refer to students being able to analyze complex problems, investigate questions for which there are no clear-cut answers, evaluate different points of view or sources of information, and draw appropriate conclusions based on evidence and reasoning

1. Here are some examples of practices that may help students learn CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS.

In your teaching of your TARGET CLASS, how often have you asked students to do the following	Almost never	A few times a semester	1-3 times per month	1-3 times per week	Almost daily
a. Compare information from different sources before completing a task or assignment?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Draw their own conclusions based on analysis of numbers, facts, or relevant information?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Summarize or create their own interpretation of what they have read or been taught?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Analyze competing arguments, perspectives or solutions to a problem?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Develop a persuasive argument based on supporting evidence or reasoning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Try to solve complex problems or answer questions that have no single correct solution or answer?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. To what extent do you agree with these statements about your TARGET CLASS?

	Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
a. I have tried to develop students' critical thinking skills	<input type="radio"/>				
b. Most students have learned critical thinking skills while in my class	<input type="radio"/>				
c. I have been able to effectively assess students' critical thinking skills	<input type="radio"/>				

**COLLABORATION SKILLS** refer to students being able to work together to solve problems or answer questions, to work effectively and respectfully in teams to accomplish a common goal and to assume shared responsibility for completing a task.

1. Here are some examples of practices that may help students learn COLLABORATION SKILLS.

In your teaching of your TARGET CLASS, how often have you asked students to do the following	Almost never	A few times a semester	1-3 times per month	1-3 times per week	Almost daily
a. Work in pairs or small groups to complete a task together?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Work with other students to set goals and create a plan for their team?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Create joint products using contributions from each student?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Present their group work to the class, teacher or others?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Work as a team to incorporate feedback on group tasks or products?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Give feedback to peers or assess other students' work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. To what extent do you agree with these statements about your TARGET CLASS?

	Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
a. I have tried to develop students' collaboration skills	<input type="radio"/>				
b. Most students have learned collaboration skills while in my class	<input type="radio"/>				
c. I have been able to effectively assess students' collaboration skills	<input type="radio"/>				

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS** refer to students being able to organize their thoughts, data and findings and share these effectively through a variety of media, as well as orally and in writing.

1. Here are some examples of practices that may help students learn COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

In your TARGET CLASS, how often have you asked students to do the following	Almost never	A few times a semester	1-3 times per month	1-3 times per week	Almost daily
a. Structure data for use in written products or oral presentations (e.g., creating charts, tables or graphs)?	0	0	0	0	0
b. Convey their ideas using media other than a written paper (e.g., posters, video, blogs, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0
c. Prepare and deliver an oral presentation to the teacher or others?	0	0	0	0	0
d. Answer questions in front of an audience?	0	0	0	0	0
e. Decide how they will present their work or demonstrate their learning?	0	0	0	0	0

2. To what extent do you agree with these statements about your TARGET CLASS?	Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
a. I have tried to develop students' communication skills	0	0	0	0	0
b. Most students have learned communication skills while in my class	0	0	0	0	0
c. I have been able to effectively assess students' communication skills	0	0	0	0	0

**CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION SKILLS** refer to students being able to generate and refine solutions to complex problems or tasks based on synthesis, analysis and then combining or presenting what they have learned in new and original ways.

1. Here are some examples of practices that may help students learn CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION SKILLS.

In your teaching of your TARGET CLASS, how often have you asked students to do the following	Almost never	A few times a semester	1-3 times per month	1-3 times per week	Almost daily
a. Use idea creation techniques such as brainstorming or concept mapping?	0	0	0	0	0
b. Generate their own ideas about how to confront a problem or question?	0	0	0	0	0
c. Test out different ideas and work to improve them?	0	0	0	0	0
d. Invent a solution to a complex, open-ended question or problem?	0	0	0	0	0
e. Create an original product or performance to express their ideas?	0	0	0	0	0

2. To what extent do you agree with these statements about your TARGET CLASS?	Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
a. I have tried to develop students' creativity and innovation skills	0	0	0	0	0
b. Most students have learned creativity and innovation skills while in my class	0	0	0	0	0
c. I have been able to effectively assess students' creativity and innovation skills	0	0	0	0	0

**SELF-DIRECTION SKILLS** refer to students being able to take responsibility for their learning by identifying topics to pursue and processes for their own learning, and being able to review their own work and respond to feedback.

1. Here are some examples of practices that may help students learn SELF-DIRECTION SKILLS.

In your teaching of your TARGET CLASS, how often have you asked students to do the following	Almost never	A few times a semester	1-3 times per month	1-3 times per week	Almost daily
a. Take initiative when confronted with a difficult problem or question?	0	0	0	0	0
b. Choose their own topics of learning or questions to pursue?	0	0	0	0	0
c. Plan the steps they will take to accomplish a complex task?	0	0	0	0	0
d. Choose for themselves what examples to study or resources to use?	0	0	0	0	0
e. Monitor their own progress towards completion of a complex task and modify their work accordingly?	0	0	0	0	0
f. Use specific criteria to assess the quality of their work before it is completed?	0	0	0	0	0
g. Use peer, teacher or expert feedback to revise their work?	0	0	0	0	0

2. To what extent do you agree with these statements about your TARGET CLASS?	Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
a. I have tried to develop students' self-direction skills	0	0	0	0	0
b. Most students have learned self-direction skills while in my class	0	0	0	0	0
c. I have been able to effectively assess students' self-direction skills	0	0	0	0	0

**GLOBAL CONNECTIONS** refers to students being able to understand global, geo-political issues including awareness of geography, culture, language, history, and literature from other countries.

1. Here are some examples of practices that may help students learn to make GLOBAL CONNECTIONS.

In your teaching of your TARGET CLASS, how often have you asked students to do the following	Almost never	A few times a semester	1-3 times per month	1-3 times per week	Almost daily
a. Study information about other countries or cultures?	0	0	0	0	0
b. Use information or Ideas that come from people in other countries or cultures?	0	0	0	0	0
c. Discuss issues related to global interdependency (for example, global environment trends, global market economy)?	0	0	0	0	0
d. Understand the life experiences of people in cultures besides their own?	0	0	0	0	0
e. Study the geography of distant countries?	0	0	0	0	0
f. Reflect on how their own experiences and local issues are connected to global issues?	0	0	0	0	0

2. To what extent do you agree with these statements about your TARGET CLASS?	Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
a. I have tried to develop students' skills in making global connections	0	0	0	0	0
b. Most students have learned to make global connections while in my class	0	0	0	0	0
c. I have been able to effectively assess students' skills in making global connections	0	0	0	0	0

**LOCAL CONNECTIONS** refers to students being able to apply what they have learned to local contexts and community issues.

1. Here are some examples of practices that may help students learn to make LOCAL CONNECTIONS.

In your teaching of your TARGET CLASS, how often have you asked students to do the following	Almost never	A few times a semester	1-3 times per month	1-3 times per week	Almost daily
a. Investigate topics or issues that are relevant to their family or community?	0	0	0	0	0
b. Apply what they are learning to local situations, issues or problems?	0	0	0	0	0
c. Talk to one or more members of the community about a class project or activity?	0	0	0	0	0
d. Analyze how different stakeholder groups or community members view an issue?	0	0	0	0	0
e. Respond to a question or task in a way that weighs the concerns of different community members or groups?	0	0	0	0	0

2. To what extent do you agree with these statements about your TARGET CLASS?	Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
a. I have tried to develop students' skills in making local connections	0	0	0	0	0
b. Most students have learned to make local connections while in my class	0	0	0	0	0
c. I have been able to effectively assess students' skills in making local connections	0	0	0	0	0

**USING TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL FOR LEARNING** refers to students being able to manage their learning and produce products using appropriate information and communication technologies

1. Here are some examples of practices that may help students learn to USE TECHNOLOGY as a TOOL FOR LEARNING.

In your teaching of your TARGET CLASS, how often have you asked students to do the following	Almost never	A few times a semester	1-3 times per month	1-3 times per week	Almost daily
a. Use technology or the Internet for self-instruction (e.g., Kahn Academy or other videos, tutorials, self-instructional websites, etc.)?	0	0	0	0	0
b. Select appropriate technology tools or resources for completing a task?	0	0	0	0	0
c. Evaluate the credibility and relevance of online resources?	0	0	0	0	0
d. Use technology to analyze information (e.g., databases, spreadsheets, graphic programs, etc.)?	0	0	0	0	0
e. Use technology to help them share information (e.g., multi-media presentations using sound or video, presentation software, blogs, podcasts, etc.)?	0	0	0	0	0
f. Use technology to support team work or collaboration (e.g., shared work spaces, email exchanges, giving and receiving feedback, etc.)?	0	0	0	0	0
g. Use technology to interact directly with experts or members of local/global communities?	0	0	0	0	0
h. Use technology to keep track of their work on extended tasks or assignments?	0	0	0	0	0

2. To what extent do you agree with these statements about your TARGET CLASS?	Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
a. I have tried to develop students' skills in using technology as a tool for learning	0	0	0	0	0
b. Most students have learned to use technology as a tool for learning while in my class	0	0	0	0	0
c. I have been able to effectively assess students' skills in using technology for learning	0	0	0	0	0

## APPENDIX F.

### Pre-Study Students Survey

*This survey is meant to check your knowledge about media literacy and about your daily and school practices. There is no right or wrong answer and all your answers are confidential.*

1. What is your favorite media? How much time do you spend with it every day? every week?
2. Have you ever kept track of your media use?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Maybe
3. Please describe the different kinds of media that you know about. Which one do you think is the most powerful? Why?
4. Have you ever looked at similarities and differences between different types of media? (For example, comparing the content on the internet with film, television or books)
  - Yes
  - No
5. Have you ever analyzed an advertisement?
  - Yes
  - No
6. Have you ever learned about how advertisements are targeted to make them more effective?
  - Yes
  - No
7. Have you ever discussed at school how the choices made by people who create media influence people's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs?
  - Yes
  - No
8. Have you ever made a video, script, or storyboard in school showing the plot of a book?
  - Yes
  - No
9. Have you discussed at school how media can be beneficial or harmful to your health, identity, or relationships?
  - Yes
  - No
10. Have you worked with other students to make a video that was shown to other students, parents, or community members?
  - Yes
  - No
11. Have you done a research project where you had to think of questions, gather information from multiple sources, and then summarize what you learned in a paper, video, presentation, etc.?
  - Yes
  - No
12. Have you ever written an article or made a presentation that advocated either for or against something using evidence and reasoning?
  - Yes
  - No

13. Have you ever chosen a topic and worked with others to create a campaign to raise awareness, promote an event, or motivate people to take action?

- Yes
- No

14. Have you looked at information and thought about how your opinions and beliefs influence what you think it means?

- Yes
- No

15. How often do you discuss what makes media sources more trustworthy with your parents or teachers?

- Never
- Hardly ever
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

16. How often do you discuss decisions about what to share online with your parents or teachers?

- Never
- Hardly ever
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

17. How often do you discuss the potential risks and harms of false information online with your parents or teachers?

- Never
- Hardly ever
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

18. Media Literacy Education may improve many important skills. Which of the skills below are most important to you? (Choose four)

- Being able to figure out if a source gives reliable information
- Being able to recognize and resist stereotypes
- Learning about how to use technology
- Being able to use media as a learning tool
- Being able to protect myself from harmful disinformation
- Unleashing my creativity, expressing myself, and building confidence

19. Have you ever been offered these electives in school?

- Video or Media production
- Journalism or School Newspaper
- Media Literacy
- Cyber Security
- Photography
- Graphic Arts and Design
- None of the above

20. Does your school offer any of these clubs?

- Social Media or Advertising
- Robotics
- Literary Magazine
- Spoken Word Poetry
- YouTube or TikTok creators
- Media Literacy
- None of the above

## APPENDIX G.

### Post-Study Students Survey

*This survey is meant to check your knowledge and understanding of media literacy and 21st century skills after participating in the English classes in the past school year.*

1. What do the Four C's stand for in the "21st Century Skills"?
  - Chill, clap, communicate, and call
  - Classroom, Campus, Cult, City
  - Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, Critical Thinking
  - Cohere, Correct, Confound, Comply
2. Which one of these is NOT a critical thinking skill?
  - analyze
  - coloring
  - interpret
  - solve problems
3. Which one of these is NOT communication?
  - expressing opinions
  - requires strong listening skills
  - speaking clearly
  - watching TV
4. Which one of these is NOT collaboration?
  - working with others
  - being flexible
  - independent practice
  - sharing responsibilities
5. Which one of these is NOT creativity?
  - brainstorming
  - refining ideas
  - being close-minded
  - being responsive to ideas from others
6. The definition of *media* is:
  - A) the use of technology
  - B) a form of communication often through the use of technology
  - C) the analysis and evaluation of media messages
  - D) the internet
7. What is the main purpose of the media?
  - A) To convey information
  - B) To post on social media
  - C) To design advertisements
  - D) To make people angry
8. If you are "media literate", you can
  - A) create a post on Facebook
  - B) get a large amount of likes on Instagram
  - C) communicate with your friends
  - D) analyze and evaluate the media messages you receive
9. It is always a good idea to research other credible resources if you suspect something is fake news.
  - True
  - False

10. Respond to these statements according to how important they are to you.

1. Not important
  2. Slightly important
  3. Moderately important
  4. Important
  5. Very important
- People are passive when they don't notice biases and points of view that are embedded in media messages.
  - You can be misled by media when you don't know where the information comes from
  - Too often, the media distracts students from the information and ideas that are really important.
  - Students who aren't active online are isolated from the rest of the world.
  - The most competitive schools of the future will invest in the right technology tools and help students learn to use them well.
  - If my school doesn't keep up with technology trends, we will fall behind.
  - It is essential for young people to use digital media in the classroom to advocate for social change.
  - The best thing about the Internet is the access to rich content, ideas and information that I can use in the classroom.
  - When students learn to master a new technology tool, they gain special knowledge and status.
  - Good educational technologies help teachers teach better.

11. After completing the course "News Wise" in your English class, how confident do you feel now when reading something in the media?

- Not confident
- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
- Extremely confident

12. Do you feel that your English level has improved during the last school year due to different activities that involve learning about advertisements, media, the use of technology and 21st century skills?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



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