

THE USE OF POP CULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF A TESOL CLASSROOM

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By

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The Use of Pop Culture: A Case Study of a TESOL Classroom

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ABSTRACT
THE USE OF POP CULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF A TESOL CLASSROOM

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Joseph Carroll

This qualitative research focuses on the use of pop culture in a ninth grade TESOL classroom. To understand pop culture as a system of symbols, this research framed the use of Vygotsky's (1978) view on speech and how pop culture can become a symbol system for individuals. In an effort to understand how English teachers are using pop culture to motivate and create safe spaces to students, the researcher decided to investigate this classroom through a case study design. This research collected data through a teacher interview (**TI**), focus group (**FG**), documentation (**D**), and field notes (**FN**). Taking into consideration that the process of data analysis incorporates storage, segmentation, coding, developing categories, and identifying relationships between said categories, I segmented each category on the research questions themselves to lead the analysis in a straight line without deviating from the goal. This research revealed that the teacher used diverse spheres of pop culture to motivate and create safe spaces for students. Nevertheless, the investigation also revealed that using pop culture in a classroom is an arduous task and must be researched prior to its incorporation. One of the numerous conclusions reached by the researched focused on how pop culture is advantageous to students when the pop culture being used is relevant to the students in the classroom.

ABSTRACTO
EL USO DE LA CULTURA POPULAR: UN ESTUDIO DE CASOS DE SALON DE
TESOL

Director de disertación: Dr. Joseph Carroll

Esta investigación cualitativa se enfoca en el uso de la cultura pop en un salón de clases de TESOL de noveno grado. Esta investigación enmarcó el uso de la visión de Vygotsky (1978) sobre el lenguaje y cómo la cultura pop puede convertirse en un sistema de símbolos para los individuos. En un esfuerzo por entender cómo los maestros de inglés utilizan la cultura popular para motivar y crear espacios seguros para los estudiantes, el investigador decidió investigar este salón de clases a través de un diseño de estudio de caso. Esta investigación recopiló datos a través de una entrevista con el maestro (TI), grupo focal (FG), documentación (D) y notas de campo (FN). Teniendo en cuenta que el proceso de análisis de datos incorpora el almacenamiento, la segmentación, la codificación, el desarrollo de categorías y la identificación de relaciones entre dichas categorías, segmenté cada categoría en las preguntas de investigación mismas para llevar el análisis en línea recta sin desviarme del objetivo. Esta investigación reveló que el docente utilizó diversas esferas de la cultura pop para motivar y crear espacios seguros para los estudiantes. Sin embargo, la investigación también reveló que utilizar la cultura popular en un salón de clases es una tarea ardua y debe investigarse antes de su incorporación. Una de las numerosas conclusiones a las que llegó el investigador se centró en cómo la cultura popular es ventajosa para los estudiantes cuando es relevante para los estudiantes en el aula.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Problem

Motivation and interest are crucial factors when creating a safe space for students in the English classroom. Students who do not feel safe, invested, or reflected in the discussion will lose interest. According to Johnson and Chang (2012), “[w]ith the range of cultures found in most ESL classrooms, educators must take into consideration all the features that encompass diversity” in a classroom (p. 19). Creating a safe space for students can be done through the cultures they bring into the classroom from the outside: their prior knowledge. The melting pot of diverse cultures, backgrounds, interests, and motivators creates a space where the educator can meet the student and try to understand their perspective; hence, creating a safe space in the process.

Literature is but one of the many factors that students shudder at when mentioned, yet it is crucial to critical thinking skills. “Working with literary texts in the English classroom can make a considerable contribution not only to learning a foreign language but also to inspiring critical thinking, which is inherent to a critical reading of a fictional work” (Bobkina and Stefanova, 2016, p. 680). Critical thinking fosters problem-solving skills, making informed decisions, finding meaning in literary works, analyzing and weighing the evidence in a logical manner, and drawing well-reasoned conclusions from the material. This is exemplified in approaches like the critical literacy approach that focuses on enabling “...students to interpret different types of texts using critical lens[es]” (Bobkina and Stefanova, 2016, p. 683). Furthermore, Bobkina and Stefanova focus on how critical thinking and literature meld together to create critical literacy taking from fields such as philosophy to feminism (Bobkina and Stefanova, 2016). For

some students, critical thinking is a difficult task that sometimes disengages students. Therefore, the problem of this study was in how students were motivated by their educators to approach literature and all it entails.

In some cases, there is a lack of interest in students when literary themes emerge due to the fact that it is unengaging. Collins (2012) states “[t]he use of pop culture...helps educators engage students. Using pop culture can allow students to be more connected to the subject matter” (p. 31). These discussions about literary themes tend to be uninteresting and unrelatable for some of the students. Among the gamut of perspectives from teachers toward pop culture, literature seems to be the main strategy to introduce themes when they are also present in other mediums. Thanks to the proliferation of purely academic material, some students tend to view pop culture as devoid of literary elements due to the dominance of classical literature. But contrary to this belief, literary elements are present in several mediums (television, music, movies, video games, songs), all of which students are exposed to and sometimes even obsess over. “Findings from the [Commonsense] Census showed that teens spend an average of nine hours per day consuming some form of digital media...” (Bruno, 2018, p. 46). One must consider that pop culture is a reflection of the world around us, hence the elements that surround the students might have the same themes that teachers are hoping to teach through classic literature. “Imagine the literary experience in which students could engage if they were asked to examine the story origins of their favorite video games or movies, or if they were asked to rewrite a classic from a different cultural perspective” (Page, 2012, p. 131). Literary elements are embedded in pop culture and themes associated with courage,

morality, and ethics may be present in comic books like *Batman*, TV series like *Black Mirror*, or even video games such as *Orwell*.

Thus, the use of pop culture is a possibility through which teachers might awaken and enhance students' interest in literary themes. However, it was my interest to find out if teachers were using these mediums as teaching tools, how they were using them, and which were they using. I postulated that students would be more immersed in the mention of relevant pop culture and when the moment to recall themes and connect them with literature appeared, the students would be more inclined to remember these elements. By using pop culture relevant to the students' life, the teacher helped them find themes interesting and understand the relevance of these. However, one must take the reality of the context into account. Students learn in different manners and the introduction of pop culture into the English curriculum might be an adequate tool for teaching literature. Hence, pop culture becomes a medium, a bridge, a tool to help the educator bridge the material with the students' reality. Nevertheless, this investigation sought to see if a teacher was using pop culture as a motivator for students toward literary themes. Pop culture might be able to increase interest toward literary classics.

Student motivation and interest have always been crucial factors when considering the topics being discussed in class. Some students might not feel driven or enthralled by the classroom discussion, losing interest in the topics being covered in the curriculum. The problem lay in how students are motivated to approach these themes. By using pop culture, the students might find themes interesting and understand the relevance of these. One must take students' reality into account. This investigation sought

to understand how pop culture was used in a TESOL classroom to benefit and motivate students.

Research Purpose and Aim

The aim of this study was to shed light into the teachers' use of pop culture in a single TESOL classroom. I sought to see how an English teacher perceived the incorporation of pop culture into the English curriculum. Seeing as the English classroom is mainly about the language being taught, this provided the teacher with enough leeway to use pop culture. In addition, I sought to draw attention to the way teachers teach literature. According to Page (2012) "...I also had to fight the movie versions and the seemingly endless supply of summaries and "study" guides that students often chose over reading the assigned text. Still I rejoiced, often by myself, in those classics" (p. 129). This quote highlights the need to incorporate pop culture into the classroom for two reasons: there's a plethora of mediums, summaries, and complementary literature that delves into the same topics evident in the literary classics; and these classics are often mostly enjoyed by the teacher rather than focusing on the students' enjoyment. However, I was not proposing an English classroom free of any classics, but one where the classics and pop culture could complement each other harmoniously.

On the long run, the purpose of this study was to understand the need to incorporate pop culture into students' academic lives. The students' context was crucial to facilitating the learning process. Teachers must understand students, and the use of pop culture in the classroom is one of the many ways in which teachers can connect with the students' inside and outside of their classrooms. By doing so, teachers validate the pop culture that students are exposed to whether in English, Spanish, or in both languages. In this sense, this study sought to redirect the participating classroom toward pop culture

which helped students connect the topics being discussed in class with the topics that they have decided to bring from outside the classroom.

Research Questions

In this Case Study, the use of pop culture in a single TESOL classroom, sought to answer six research questions. These questions were based on the way educators use pop culture and their perception of said use daily:

1. How does the TESOL teacher's incorporation of pop culture create safe spaces for students?
2. How does the teacher use pop culture in the classroom?
3. Which mediums of pop culture are being used in the classroom?
4. What are the advantages of the use of pop culture in the classroom?
5. What are the challenges of the use of pop culture in the classroom?
6. What are the most salient uses of pop culture in the classroom?

Justification

This investigation was aimed at the use of pop culture in the classroom due to the impact it had in TESOL classes. For this purpose, the focus was on the teacher. The teacher was the ones in direct contact with the student population, and it was crucial for them to understand their pupils' current world—the current pop culture. In this sense, this investigation was justified for it sought to understand the way each educator uses pop culture and what challenges might emerge through the process. Be it positively or negatively, it directed the classroom down a specific path. It was my aim to document and understand the elements that make some Puerto Rican classrooms unique with the use pop culture.

Glossary

1. Americanization Process: The US's attempt to Americanize Puerto Ricans.
2. Aventura: Musical group
3. Black Mirror: TV show
4. Bad Bunny: Puerto Rican artist
5. Memefying: The process in which an individual transforms an event, idea, or concept into a meme.
6. Memeable: A high possibility that an event, idea, or concept can be turned into a meme.
7. Meme: A funny image that is usually propagated in social media and the internet.
8. Residente: Puerto Rican Artist
9. Trap: A subgenre of urban hip hop music.
10. Sonnetizing: The process of turning an item into a sonnet.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Safe Spaces in Education

The way students react to the material discussed in class will be reflected in the way the classroom space is portrayed. This is exemplified in how teachers decide to appeal to the students around them and the world that they bring into the classroom from the outside. According to Holley and Steiner (2005), “[t]he metaphor of the classroom as a “safe space” has emerged as a description of a classroom climate that allows students to feel secure enough to take risks, honestly express their views, and share and explore their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors” (p. 50). The use of pop culture and motivation are factors that are embedded in the concept of a safe space. For instance, students might feel more accepting of the educator and the classroom material if they feel that their opinion, whether it be based on a movie, comic, or TV show, is validated in the classroom discussion. The previous definition encompasses a number of elements that make up a safe space: risk-taking, honesty, and sharing. Each of these is crucial to understanding how a TESOL classroom can work and how a teacher can create bonds with their students. However, some of these, such as risk-taking, seems paradoxical, but it truly isn’t. The more comfortable the student is with the material being discussed, and the educator for that matter, the easier it will be for them to try new approaches to the material and express themselves. This space “[encourages] students to speak honestly about their biases and unpopular views is a particular challenge in social work classrooms” (Holley and Steiner, 2005, p. 51).

In this literature review, I aim to discuss the implications and effects motivation can have on students’ language skills, in this case skills will refer to the four language

arts (reading, writing, speaking and listening), when pop culture is used to further create a safe space for TESOL students.

“Motivation is widely known, among both teachers and researchers, as one of the key issues in language education” (Lamb, 2016, p. 324). Motivating students in this standardized world, where in some cases the students’ needs and types of intelligences are not considered, is much harder than one would think. “The dominant forms of education actively stifle the conditions that are essential to creative development” (Robinson, 2001, p. 49). The use of pop culture in the classroom can be used to reignite creativity and motivate our students in this corporatized and standardized world.

In recent years, pop culture has peaked many researchers’ interests. The creation of classes aimed at the discussion of pop culture phenomenon has created an environment for these sorts of topics. However, it has been my experience that there are still some teachers who avoid its use in the classroom. Nevertheless, the bond between children, teenagers, and adults and their favorite TV shows, movies, video games, among others might prove useful in the teaching of another language. By using something familiar, teachers can hope to maintain the students’ attention and motivation to make connections between reading and writing, critical-thinking skills, and the importance of these in the academic world.

Students who are not motivated will possibly be less interested in the discussion and they will lose concentration. Therefore, the problem lies in how teachers motivate students to approach these themes and topics. It is crucial to judge the same themes present in movies, TV shows, and video games like one does in diverse types of literature. “Providing popular culture texts in the classroom allows students the

opportunity to analyze rhetorical strategies, make thematic connections, examine allusions, develop background knowledge, and question race, class, and gender issues” (Page, 2012, p. 130). Topics like love, identity, war, racism, discrimination, among others, are as relevant in any book as they are in pop culture. One must also consider the variety of students when one speaks about motivation. According to McIntyre et al (2001), “[m]otivation represents one of the most appealing, yet complex variables used to explain individual differences in language learning” (as cited in Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013, p. 123). Each student is different, and as educators, we must consider this when trying to motivate them.

Furthermore, Vedenpää and Lonka (2014) go on to relate both learning and creativity. Creativity, according to the study, is related “to the sociocultural approach of learning” (p. 1,824). There is an intrinsic and extrinsic connection between the culture and the individual. The individual’s culture influences the way they see the world. In essence, this boils down to Vygotsky’s view of education. As cited in Vedenpää and Lonka (2014), “Moran (2010) states, ‘Vygotsky saw educational development [in] two way[s]: the individual also produces and reproduces culture’” (p. 1,824). Pop culture is part of the culture being mentioned in the previous quote and should essentially be considered in the development of the student. Students are exposed to music, TV shows, video games, and movies on a daily basis, and they tend to reproduce what sticks with them after the enjoyment of any of the previously mentioned media has passed.

Thus, the use of pop culture is a possibility through which teachers might awaken and enhance students’ interest. I postulate that students will be immersed in the alternative and when the moment to recall literary themes and expand their literacy

emerges, the students will be more inclined to do so. By using pop culture, the students might find the English class interesting and understand the relevance of learning an additional language.

Defining Motivational Pop Culture

According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), motivation “...derives from the Latin word “movere” meaning “to move”; what moves a person to make certain choices...” (p. 86). Etymologically, one can derive from “to move” that motivation is a process of being in motion rather than being static. In this sense, motivation draws on change, on becoming different, on deciding to take a step in a “right” direction. This means that to motivate is to guide toward a certain direction.

In addition, pop culture is defined as ““cultural activities or commercial products reflecting, suited to, or aimed at the tastes of general masses of people”” (Collins, 2012, p. 20). This umbrella definition permits us to address several mediums (series, movies, comics, games, music, among others) under one notion. However, pop culture also encompasses a set of practices, beliefs, and rituals that stretch throughout a specific social and cultural lens (Kidd, 2014). These practices and rituals will be diverse in each setting and environment which means that pop culture is never the same for all the students involved. One must consider the students’ current background and socioeconomic reality before delving into their preferred pop culture experience.

However, seeing that English is a language, therefore a medium, the use of pop culture can be applied to the TESOL classroom with miniscule modifications. Using concepts and elements students are already familiar with, the educator can bridge a gap between the world outside the classroom and the world inside the classroom. These two worlds are often in competition, yet they are both crucial to a student’s life. Pop culture has the potential to enliven the curriculum.

Zone of Proximal Development

“Learning and development are interrelated from the child's very first day of life” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 77). These two elements are intrinsically tied together. They cannot be divided or separated due to the way a child's development is intrinsically tied to the learning process. However, this learning process is not formal as it would be in the context of the educational system. The moment the child is born he/she is receiving impulses from all around him/her. The world becomes an influencer on the child's life. Every sound, experience, and feeling are tied to a learning process.

Vygotsky (1978) believed “[t]hat children's learning begins long before they attend school is the starting point of this discussion. Any learning a child encounters in school always has a previous history” (p. 76). Said previous history becomes the knowledge they have set up from a previous state—from the home, their peers, and anyone the child encounters before starting formal education. Formal education in this context would be schooling. The child already comes with preconceived notions and formulated information. The informal education they receive at home is still a form of education which prepares them for the social interactions that they will be exposed to in the educational scenario. Formal education is then “...concerned with the assimilation of the fundamentals of scientific knowledge” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 77). The child has already had exposure to certain topics in the filial scenario; when a child comes to school, they are not a tabula rasa or a blank slate. The educator cannot expect to disregard what the child has learned outside of formal education. Hence, the child has been educated informally on everything from math, names, and the perception of their surroundings. Education is then a process of assimilation. Whether the child is learning how to acquire

language or learning how to walk, the child is going through a process of assimilation and education.

According to Vygotsky, there are various levels of development. “The first level can be called the actual developmental level, that is, the level of development of a child's mental functions that has been established as a result of certain already completed developmental cycles” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 78). The actual development of a child must have happened for the child to be able to go through the process of the first actual developmental level. Based on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), this is where the child is at the moment without any proper help to learn any further. The child knows the material to this point, but everything beyond this point becomes harder for the child to assimilate. Children have two stages of development according to the ZPD. The first stage has to do with what the child has already learned and internalized. There is no additional help needed for the child to solve the problems given. For example, if the child is given a test on a mathematic problem and he/she passes said test, it is understood that the child has already internalized the topic that was discussed. This means that the children can “independently deal with tasks up to the degree of difficulty that has been standardized for...” their current age level (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 78). It is crucial to understand that standardization plays a vital role in this context because the student is being exposed to the material that they are supposed to have developed and learned at a given age level. If the student cannot perform in this standardized test specialized to the student's age, then the student has not gone through the developmental process acquired to be at said level.

On the other hand, Vygotsky (1978) defines the Zone of Proximal Development as "...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 79). In short, ZPD is the second stage in which the distance between the actual development and the potential development that another can help the student achieve. The teacher becomes a facilitator that provides certain elements to the students to facilitate their learning. Through this facilitation the educator scaffolds with previous knowledge to help the student achieve that which is required of them. The educator permits the students to move from one level of development to another.

More Knowledgeable Other

“The Vygotskian perspective assumes that we learn in the presence of other people: *others* who have a better knowledge of certain historical and cultural practices...” (Abtahi, 2017, p. 35). The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) is a facilitator, an individual that has a better grasp of the concept and is the intermediate between what the student knows and what the student must learn in order to acquire the skills necessary to progress academically. In this sense, the social aspect of education continues to be the basis of Vygotskian perspectives as it centers on another individual facilitating the material. Nevertheless, this facilitator does not necessarily have to be the educator/adult. The MKO could be a peer that has already learned and developed in the field further than the other student, the learner, the one that needs to be guided through the process. The more knowledgeable other becomes a sort of sharer, a bridge between the topic being discussed and learning. “[T]hey appeared more prominent in the class networks and more willing to share their knowledge with their peers” (Sundararajan, 2010, p. 204). They in this sentence refers to students that are more knowledgeable than their counterparts. This is crucial for the students become the educator. And this gives the student autonomy to promulgate what he/she has already learned. Not only does the MKO help the student learn the material, but, in the case of a student, the MKO is also applying the already internalized knowledge into a useful and practical context. However, at the same time, the MKO, in the classroom, facilitates the interactions and the learning process.

On that note, pop culture can also facilitate the interactions between the students and the MKO therefore facilitating learning. The interaction would go smoother and would be more successful if those that are interacting belong to the same sphere inside of

culture. For example, low subjects such as movies, TV shows, video games, songs, among others, might facilitate the learning process if the MKO and the student share those same values and interactions. If the student is a fan of a given show, such as *Supernatural*, and the class topic is aimed at mythology, it would be useful to use a fellow classmate that is familiar with said pop culture sphere to help the student that is having difficulty with the topic at hand. This way the MKO facilitates the learning through the process of helping the student associate the topic through pop culture. In this case, the MKO would not be complete without the proper pop culture sphere to facilitate the learning process. This in turn can lead to using pop culture through an MKO to incorporate pop culture into the ZPD theory.

Vygotsky & Symbols

Furthermore, Vygotsky also delved into the concept of speech, due to the diverse types of speech that students use to learn in the educational scenario. Vygotskian theory concentrates on the speech that is both used internally to make meaning and the speech used externally that eventually becomes communication. Speech becomes the driving force for development. Without speech or the mastery of symbols, the child cannot develop properly. “Their speech and action are part of one and the same complex psychological function, directed toward the solution of the problem at hand” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 10). The development of a speech is directly linked to critical thinking.

Whichever symbols the child is getting exposed to daily will help him/her develop into a social being. However, Vygotsky’s theory does not consider the diverse languages or symbols that the child is exposed to daily in the way of pop culture. One must consider that this is due to the lack of these elements existing while Vygotsky developed his theories. The types of speech discussed by Vygotsky are egocentric, internal, and external speech.

Vygotsky (1978) states that egocentric speech refers to “...the transitional form between external and internal speech” (p. 12). Contrary to Piaget, Vygotsky sees the value in egocentric speech due to the use that it has when bridging internal thought and external speech. Egocentric speech is then used to sort out the child’s thought processes before he/she is about to speak. It is a useful process when deciding what the child will say. This also facilitates problem-solving skills in students. In other words, egocentric or self-speech is considered a tool to guide the students’ conversation and thoughts. The egocentric speech would be then the intermediate, the middleman, between the process of thought instead of internalization, and the externalization.

In addition, Vygotsky (1986) stated that “...inner speech is ... for oneself: external speech is for others” (p. 225). Inner speech is the meaning that one attributes to the language. The variables we are exposed to are interpreted in inner speech in real time. The concept of inner speech is the way humans make sense of the world around them—through analysis, interpretation, and decoding. Students use inner speech to be able to make meaning about that which they are exposed to daily. Inner speech is personal to the individual as they are making meaning through the process of analysis, which in turn will eventually become external speech.

Furthermore, external speech in essence is the product. The ideals the individual craft through the process of inner speech are then exposed through language. External speech is then the final product of the process of internalization. Contrary to inner speech which is more private, and it helps the student sort out the world around them. It permits the student to see the world through his thought, instead of just through the words and impulses that the student receives.

According to Vygotsky (1978), “[a]s a rule this speech arises spontaneously and continues almost without interruption throughout the experiment. It increases and is more persistent every time the situation becomes more complicated and the goal more difficult to attain” (p. 10). Vygotsky makes a point for the sake of difficulty, but to be able to complicate and increase the difficulty there needs to be understanding first. The symbols need to be agreed upon before the educator can increase the difficulty level, which means that the teacher must understand the symbols. Said symbols become schemata for the sake of the student to anchor the topic being discussed. The use of pop culture could be the anchor which helps the student mediate between the schema and the difficulty.

Symbols must be meaningful and relevant to the child. “A child’s speech is as important as the role of action in attaining the goal. Children not only speak about what they are doing;” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 10). The action must follow the symbol and the understanding of said symbol. However, said symbols need to be meaningful for the child to be able to relate to them. If the child does not understand how the topic becomes relevant to his life, then the child will have an aversion toward learning. The symbol or language processed through egocentric, inner, and external speech in this case is the pop culture used in the classroom.

Pop Culture, Cultural Relativism, and ZPD

Culture is a wide umbrella term which encompasses several elements of daily life.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory considers culture as a whole and does not provide a focus on the diverse spheres inside a given culture and how these affect the classroom. By taking Vygotskian theory and narrowing it down, one might use ZPD in a more specific way: as a promoter of pop culture in the classroom. In this sense, Vygotsky does not consider the difficulties in cultural relativism that exist within a given culture due to the lack of existence of these mediums. These difficulties create spheres inside an overall culture which are constantly clashing and should be considered in the education scenario. Using ZPD to motivate and facilitate learning can be done through studying the students' interests and implementing pop culture.

The educator has several mediums in which they can use in diverse spheres inside a given culture. Each sphere might consider a plethora of mediums. For example, a student that is enthralled by Star Wars might be exposed to movies, series, or comic books all within the same sphere. Educators might use Star Wars to motivate students to read science fiction novels and allude to Star Wars in the topics being discussed in class. These practices and rituals will be diverse in each setting and environment, which means that pop culture is never the same for the students involved. This is another instant where cultural relativism comes in. Educators must consider the students' current background and social reality before delving into their preferred pop culture experience. Knowing students preferred sphere might facilitate the learning process.

Vygotskian theory did not consider the specific elements within the diverse spheres of culture. The vastness of a given culture is enormous and the impact it has on

students is tremendous. Nevertheless, Vygotskian theory also focused more on how sociocultural elements affects students instead of how it facilitates the learning process. A culture is a vast collection of elements which include everything from traditions to languages spoken in the given sphere. This means that within each culture there are sub-elements and sub-spheres that demand exclusivity. A good example of this is evident in schools across the globe.

In each school scenario, students are divided in niches that appeal to their common interests. For example, there are spheres where the value within said circle is allusive to a certain type of music. The students inside said sphere will be more exposed to a certain way of thought that further expands the ideology inside said sphere. They will be more aware of terminology, ideas, and concepts inside the sphere they belong to. In another example, students that play video games are more exposed to certain types of media (TV shows, movies, music, certain genres). If a student plays *God of War*, it is more evident that the student has been exposed to Greek mythology than a student that does not play the game. This should make it easier for the student to associate the Greek mythology in class due to that specific previous exposure if mentioned by the educator. These students would be exposed to elements that other students would not be otherwise exposed to or would not be in direct contact with daily.

These sub-cultures create certain symbols/associations that only those inside the sphere will be able to identify. Certain words/terms become gatekeepers to let some individuals inside. In contrast, it also excludes some from the topics being discussed due to the fact that one needs to understand the concepts to be able to discuss them and be immersed in a given sub-culture. However, those same symbols (elements in pop culture)

might mediate education for some students. This is due to the nature of low subjects and how students are exposed to them often. By addressing these symbols as legitimate, the educator might bridge the gap between the outside world and the inside world of education. The classroom can become a place where low subjects facilitate learning due to the diverse sub-spheres that students are exposed to frequently.

Pop culture symbols are real and relevant to the student. Not only do these symbols permit some students to create links between their personal life and their educational life, but the student might be more inclined to delve into the topic if they can relate to the class discussion. Language becomes a mediation, but not just any language. The language used in certain spheres becomes the important element here. Language is not the focus of this perspective, but the symbols that are created based on the cultural spheres from which they emerge. These symbols help tailor education to the spheres which students are exposed to daily. For example, when discussing dystopian literature an educator could use an episode from *Black Mirror* to spike the students' interest. This in turn might make the students relate the elements of dystopian literature to the elements of a *Netflix* TV show. It might be easier for some to make these connections due to the exposure they have with pop culture.

In addition, since pop culture might be considered a low subject, students will not immediately associate it with work, and it might help motivate them. The importance of tying the two together comes from creating meaning for students and framing their world inside an educational sphere. In this sense, the educator might be more inclined to reach students that feel they are not reflected in the class material. Another example of such use would be using *Drunk History* in an American History class. The topic becomes framed

in the context of a *Comedy Central* show and creates a connection between the historical elements being discussed in class and the comical way it is exposed in each episode of the series. The educator then might be able to draw freely from the episodes and use them, not only to refer to those sub-spheres of culture, but to motivate students toward American History. Another example of using pop culture to venture into the history could be the use of *Hamilton*, the musical, to teach American History.

Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivation

Having defined the concept of motivation at the beginning of this review, the notions left to discuss before moving on to the use of pop culture as a motivator falls on the diverse types of motivation. There is a plethora of theories on motivation, from Maslow's needs hierarchy to Alder's ERG theory, but I will focus on the two most basic and well-known theories of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. According to Petri and Govern. (2012), "[a]nother dimension along which motivation can be studied concerns the source of motivation—internal versus external sources of motivation" (p. 8). The authors of this textbook frame intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as internal and external. "Intrinsic motivation comes from within, while extrinsic motivation arises from outside" (Santos-Longhurst, 2019). Students that are motivated by their own desire to personal development and enrichment without any external goal and/or affiliation to a prize will fall under intrinsic motivation, while students who are performing the action (i.e. getting good grades, studying) lean towards an extrinsic motivation. Both concepts are rather simplistic and easy to understand, but they play a role in safe spaces and how TESOL educators can motivate students toward literature and the topics being discussed in class. To break it down even further, students that are motivated by the use of pop culture in the classroom would fall on the former (intrinsic), due to how the pop culture

has affected them in their day-to-day life. In this case, the student is not expecting any prize in return for being interested in the classroom; the motivation emerges out of the student's interests.

Motivating Students with Pop Culture

Collins addresses the problem of maintaining students' interest when it comes to topics they despise; "...to get students to learn, one must understand their perspective..." (2012, p. 20). Understanding a student's perspective is not always easy. Today, some students are more concerned with pop culture and social media instead of paying close attention to the lessons covered in class. Hence, the use of pop culture might entice them to view their daily exposure to media in an educational way. It is my understanding that by looking, studying, and analyzing the TV shows, films, and videos they watch, one might get a better grasp of the students' perspective. Thus, it is for these reasons that pop culture should be introduced in the classroom as a tool. This tool not only permits the educator to be more in touch with what the students' experience is, but it makes the classroom interaction flow unobstructed between teacher and student. In addition, it might be possible to create a stronger rapport with the students if the teacher is exposed to their interest.

"Researchers on second language (L2) motivation have revealed that motivation is the most powerful determining factor that influences the rate and success of L2..." (Zhang et al, 2013, p. 615). Out of all the many factors (age, development, society) research has shown that motivation continues to be a crucial aspect of our drive and learning process. This, in turn, should motivate us, the teachers, to take this aspect of learning seriously. Educators already incorporate development and age into the way students learn and what they learn. In this age of technology, it is crucial that educators also introduce the mediums students are exposed to.

Blankenship and Heidorn (2012) go on to address the main reason they believe pop culture can help students understand difficult concepts. The more invested the student is in the topic, the easier it will be to understand the concepts being discussed. "...[L]earners are interested in pop culture and increasing a person's situational interest...increases their motivation to learn..." (Blankenship and Heidorn., 2012, p. 13-14). Their research concentrates on the idea that the use of pop culture becomes an additional item that might be the catalyst that helps students relate to their current situation. The concept of interest then branches from the motivation that impulses the student forward. By establishing goals that give direction to the students' actions, which requires effort and persistence, students might be able to reach the intended goals. The importance of this motivation "...is vital to the learning process (Bandura, 1986) ..." as cited in Blankenship and Heidorn. (2012, p. 14).

In their research, Kyriacou and Kobori (1998) study the diverse reasons why students go on to learn English (p. 345). Similar to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the reasons stated in their research range from personal fulfillment to an external influence. This, in turn, further cements the diversity in students' language acquisition process of learning. Some students are exposed to the English language at a young age and it becomes part of their environment, while others see it in their favorite video games, movies, or TV shows. These last elements might be the turning point for students to want to learn the language. If the goal (English) is present in environments they feel are personal and engaging, the students might be able to give the extra mile when it comes to paying attention in class.

Influence of Pop Culture on Students' Lives

Duff (2002) further exemplifies the importance of pop culture and how it affects children's lives. Characters such as "Blue...Arthur...and Madeline...are so meaningful to young children" (Duff, 2002, p. 428). Students create a connection with pop culture. Relationships emerge between the viewer and the program, feelings are elicited, and the student becomes invested in the not only the characters but the story. Moreover, Collins (2012) also believes that "...perhaps even more applicable is teaching from popular reality-television shows" (p. 22). Whether it is movies or TV series, pop culture should have a place in the classroom. These characters become part of students' lives and teachers should not take those relationships for granted. This should not be so. Lyons and Tappeiner (2008) make note that video games, as well as pop culture in all its forms, influences students' perception of the world and have a great impact in their lives (p. 121). Teachers should embrace pop culture icons and use them as examples in their classes to connect new concepts to students' reality whether it be through characters like Wolverine or Blue. The relevance of these characters comes from the fact that "children bring these characters and stories with them to school as part of their background knowledge..." (Duff, 2002, p. 482). In any given classroom, there are over twenty students being influenced by what they play, listen to, and watch from their surroundings. Adults are not exempt from these interactions: "children (and adults) who have grown up with the same narratives draw freely on them on their interactions with others..." (Duff, 2002, p. 482). Educators cannot be expected to delegitimize these mediums for the sake of education. They are valuable to students of all ages and educators should legitimize them in the classrooms.

In addition, Evans (2004) states that pop culture "...has an important place in contemporary English Curricula" (p. 37). In the words of Evans (2004), "let them practice critical thinking skills with familiar material, and they will be better equipped to tackle literature new to them..." (p. 37). Familiar material breeds confidence and lowers anxiety.

Technology & Pop Culture

In addition, the use of technology has improved the way we teach and learn.

Mahiri (2001) brings forward the terminology “pop culture pedagogy,” which “uses many modes of transmission (e.g., TV, the internet, video games, music compact discs, movies, that are capable of presenting a variety of...forms...” (p.382). Students are multimodal beings and are bombarded from different mediums daily. The lack of a projector, smartboard, or computer does not make it impossible to implement pop culture in the classroom. Pop culture pedagogy, then, focuses on the multimodal nature of students. In other words, Mahiri focuses on the bombardment of diverse mediums used in the target classroom. However, the multimodality does not necessary relate to the targeted use of pop culture aimed at students’ reality. Mahiri (2001) addressed this problem when it is stated further in this study, “pop culture works in young people’s lives in context specific ways...” (Mahiri, 2001, p. 385). This clearly tells teachers that pop culture should not be added in a void. If pop culture is to be implemented, it must serve a purpose. There must be a goal that the students are moving toward, whether it be to comprehend or simply compare.

Music, Dancing & Pop Culture

Furthermore, Ludwig (2012) delves into the topic of pop culture to "...show how to use elements of pop culture to teach biomechanical concepts through a constructivist learning approach" (p. 27). The researcher incorporated "Zumba," a form of fitness dancing, to motivate the participant into exercising. This further cements the ease with which pop culture can be incorporated into a given classroom without changing the content to be taught. The important element to keep in mind is that the pop culture used in the class must be relevant to the students. It is important to understand this because the teacher must take the students' needs into account and not focus on their own interests.

In addition, songs are also influential when it comes to a students' life. According to Schoepp (2000), songs produce a weak "affective filter." If the "affective filter" is weak (Saricoban and Metin, 2000) the necessary skill areas can be developed: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The affective filter, which states that if the student's motivation and interest are positive then the student will learn easier (Saricoban and Metin, 2000), may directly correlate to the use of pop culture in the classroom. Schoepp (2000) discusses the colloquial nature of songs, taking into consideration that colloquial English is used informally. The author goes on to explain that the student needs this variety of English because it prepares them for the real world. Most of the language they will encounter daily will be colloquial, and songs will help them assimilate. Schoepp (2000) goes on to mention two studies, Domoney and Harris (1993) and Little (1983) that researched pop music in the lives of English as a foreign language (EFL) student. These studies concluded that the only exposure to English students received outside of the classroom was limited to this medium,

which means that the use of songs in the classroom might help students correlate between the world inside the classroom and the world outside the classroom.

Video Games & Pop Culture

The use of video games in the classroom needs to be adjusted to the educational level. According to Martí-Parreño et al. (2018), "...literature review suggest that differences exist in the use of educational video games based on the educational level" (p. 370). A student that is in the 8th grade should not be exposed to the same type of video games in the classroom as a student that is in 4th grade. The age level must be appropriate to the student for various reasons: questionable material, motivation, interest, age restrictions. The topics video games touch on are numerous and the educator needs to be able to select the adequate material for the student level. In addition, the video game should not be the sole method of teaching. According to a study conducted by Ruggiero (2013) titled *Video Games in the Classroom: The Teacher Point of View*, the "...participants of this study felt that games should not be used as the main instructional activity, [and] should be used as a reward for getting work done..." The teachers that participated in Ruggiero's study focused on the use of video games as a type of motivator, be it intrinsic or extrinsic. This means that the teachers subjected to the surveys in this study understood that video games are one of the many tools that can be incorporated in the classroom, but they should not be the sole method of instruction. Also, video games should not be used in a void. The use of video games in class must be connected to the material that is being discussed in the course.

Educational video games have been used to teach a wide variety of subjects including health education (Sung, Hwang and Yen, 2015), veterinary education (De Bie and Lipman, 2012), energy education (Yang, Chien and Liu, 2012),

language teaching (Reinders and Wattana, 2014), citizenship education (Lim and Ong, 2012), Newtonian physics (Shute, Ventura, Kim, 2013), entrepreneurship (Protopsaltis et al., 2013), and nanotechnology (Blonder and Sakhnini, 2012) to name a few (Martí-Parreño et al, 2018, p. 371).

Whether the subject being discussed is literature or philosophy, the educator needs to keep the goal of educating in mind.

The research behind pop culture in the classroom has brought to light the use of video games in the classroom setting. Despite the idea that video games are for consumer entertainment, teachers have started incorporating the use of video games in the classroom to motivate students toward the topics being discussed in class. One of the main reasons to use video games in the classroom is the way games deal with the learning new skills. “Much like war games of the past, computer games engage students in virtual worlds where they can apply their knowledge, skills, and thinking in virtual situations” (Pastore and Falvo, 2010, p.49). Gamers are required to use the knowledge, skills, and strategies acquired throughout the game to solve problems. In addition, as Pastore and Falvo. (2010) comment “...games have been shown to capture students' attention...” (p.49). The fact that video games can capture students’ attention is not a new endeavor, but it can be beneficial to the development of an entertaining classroom environment. By capturing the students’ attention with video games, TESOL teachers could use this tool to motivate the students into participating in the discussion. “Research confirms that games are successful for learning, they provide a new dimension of integration into the classroom, and many students develop positive learning attitudes when using games” (Pastore and Falvo, 2010, p. 51). Creating positive bonds between the TESOL classroom

and our students is crucial to how these environments are perceived by our students. The use of video games can help foster a welcoming and engaging environment that motivates students to participate and be excited about the material being discussed and the class itself. However, it is crucial that the educators understand the advantages of using video games and other types of media in the classroom. If the educator values this media, the students will be able to identify themselves with the material. This valuation emerges from the teachers' exposure to video games. Educators must research the use of video games in the classroom to be able to use it. "...the successful implementation requires modern and sophisticated design of video games" (Mavaric et al., 2018, p. 239).

Throughout the research paper *Video Games in the Classroom: Pre- and in-service teachers' perceptions of games in the K-12 classroom*, Pastora et al. (2010) found that

[r]esults of the descriptive analysis revealed that a majority of both in-service (85%) and pre-service (84%) teachers agreed that gaming was a good use of technology for learning. They also both agreed (in- 85%, pre- 86%) that gaming enhances students' learning. Accordingly, they both agreed (91%) that gaming motivates students.

This is one example of how educators perceive the use of video games in the classroom. Most of these results highlight the positive aspects of the use of pop culture in the classroom. The majority of the teachers in this study believe that there are reasons to incorporate pop culture in the classroom, especially video games.

Interactivity also plays a crucial role in the use of video games in the classroom. When playing a video game, students are required to be attentive and make decisions based on

the tasks at hand. “Interactive and flexible video games facilitate a non-linear learning, so they could replace the print textbooks and allow learning based on practice and experience...” (Maravic and Rakic-Bajic, 2018, p. 294). Maravic et al mention the importance of interactivity in the use of video games as an option for non-linear learning, which allows the student to be in control of how he/she learns. However, the replacement of print textbooks seems like an extreme that might be detrimental on the long run. It would be beneficial if both are used in the classroom, creating a seamless interaction between pop culture and classic literature.

Counterarguments to Pop Culture

Nonetheless, all perspectives must be taken into consideration when investigating. Therefore, I have included Kimball's (2000) claims as a counterargument. Kimball dismisses the use of pop culture in the classroom. Kimball (2000) refers to the use of pop culture in the classroom as "horror stories" and "we all have our favorites" (p. 79). He goes on to appeal to the use of terms such as high and low subjects to demean some topics. Kimball (2000) states that there used to be "...divisions that once separated so-called 'high' subjects from their supposedly 'low' counterparts" (p. 79). In this context, low subjects referred to those that were not considered academic enough, pop culture elements, to be inserted into curriculums. Kimball focused on the division between high subjects, intellectual enough to be in academic scenarios, and low subjects, trivial content that had not intellectual merit. Using terms such as high and low, Kimball intends to draw a line between what should and should not be taught in schools. In other words, pop culture has no use in the classroom for it is a low subject.

Pop culture has inspired many people to dress up, write, and produce many inspiring shows, movies, video games, songs, graphic novels, among others. However, the use of pop culture in the classroom has been kept to a minimum in today's environment. There is a stigma that these mediums should not be brought into schools because they have no place in education. The problem with this statement is that it could not be farther away from the truth. Students that do not participate often can be motivated to do so through the use of pop culture that they find appealing.

Pop Culture and Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is a unique case when it comes to the use of pop culture in the classroom. Daily, the Puerto Rican population is exposed to two languages (English & Spanish) in varying degrees all over the island. This affects the type of pop culture that is used in the educational scenario. Educators must consider the cultures the Puerto Rican population is exposed to. The case of Puerto Rico is unique due to the fact that Puerto Ricans are American citizens, yet they are exposed to two sets of cultures. For example, a classroom in Puerto Rico could equally use a translation of a Bad Bunny song and/or a Billy Joel song to catch students' attention when discussing poetry. These two elements are from opposite spheres of pop culture. This is due to the nature of each musician; while Billy Joel is a classic rock musician, Bad Bunny is currently popular with the younger population in Puerto Rico and is an icon of Puerto Rican trap. This duality in the classroom can be beneficial to students who are exposed to either element due to the validation of their cultural exposure.

The influence of the Americanization process in Puerto Rico's history has created a melting pot of diverse cultures. Among these, the perception of English and the American culture has been in a constant debate throughout Puerto Rico's unique colonized history (Pousada, 1999). In turn, this means that educators can use the pop culture from either culture to appeal to and motivate students. However, historically, there has been apprehension toward the use of English in Puerto Rico. Pousada (1999) stated this best when she said, “[f]ostering English is linked in the minds of many Puerto Ricans with assimilationism, while defending Spanish is the hallmark of nationalism” (p. 1). Nevertheless, the use of pop culture in Puerto Rico could help students bridge the gap and apprehensiveness present in the English classroom.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Design

Throughout this investigation I incorporated a qualitative methodology. I chose to investigate a single TESOL classroom by the way of an in-depth exploratory case study. According to Vissak (2010) case studies “[p]rovide a holistic perspective on real-life events and the processes leading to certain results” (p. 379). This design was selected due to the holistic nature of case studies and how they incorporated all the “moving parts” of the case being studied. The classroom was the main case: therefore, the use of pop culture in a TESOL classroom was crucial to the research to pinpoint what pop cultures was used, how was the pop culture used, and what were the advantages and disadvantages of using pop culture in the TESOL classroom to create safe spaces for students.

Case studies, according to Johnson and Christensen (2012), “provide a detailed account of one or more cases” (p. 395). In this instance, the case was a single TESOL classroom. The elements looked at throughout this case study included the documents used in the classroom, the teaching material, the teacher’s incorporation of pop culture, the curriculum, and any other tools the teacher employed in the classroom to motivate students with pop culture. These elements were all essential to the case due to the way that case studies are about synergy and take into consideration all the parts that make the case a whole. Case studies are known for the “...rich (vivid and detailed) and holistic (i.e., describes the whole and its parts) description of the case and its context” (Johnson and Christensen, 2012, p. 398). The reasoning behind using a case study to acquire the data was based on the depth attributed to case studies. According to CSU, “[c]ase studies typically examine the interplay of all variables in order to provide as complete an understanding of an event...as possible”. It studied all the parts of a system and how

these worked in unison; hence, the use of a case study design to study a single TESOL classroom was to consider all the aspects necessary for the use of pop culture. The descriptive nature of a case study benefited said research due to the rich narrative that would ensue.

The researcher went through the proper CIPSHI channels. Taking into consideration that the COVID-19 pandemic had begun, the modality of the observations and data collection had to be adapted to a virtual medium. The students and the teacher were given consent and ascent documents respectively. These had to be signed prior to the data collection. The data will be stored for up to three years in password protected USB devices. All efforts were made to protect the participants confidentiality, but considering the data was collected in a virtual medium, there will always be the possibility of hacking and theft. Nevertheless, the researcher used pseudonyms for all the participants to further protect their confidentiality.

Participants

The participants of this study were a TESOL teacher, the students who agreed to be part of a focus group, and the environment of the respective classroom. These participants were selected through homogeneous purposive sampling. According to Coyne (1997) purposeful or purposive sampling considers its participants by judging “[c]ategories such as age, gender, status, role or function in organization, stated philosophy or ideology...” they might have in common (p. 624). For logistical reasons, the proposed classroom was from the metropolitan area. The target community were middle school students and the teacher. This population was selected to understand how educators at this level created safe spaces for their teenage students.

The grade level studied in this research was secondary school. The teacher selected was teaching at the secondary school level. This was done to further incorporate the world of pop culture that students were exposed to daily. Specificity was key in research; henceforth, the importance of pinpointing the grade levels was crucial to the research itself. The grade considered was ninth.

Teacher

In addition, the participating teacher was required to at least have a bachelor's in TESOL from an accredited institution. The purpose of this conscious decision was to make sure the participating teacher understood the inner workings of the English classroom. This was also done to be able to gauge the teaching-learning process in the specified context with a degree of objectivity. The participating teacher was not vetted by their age as all three teachers who were vetted were of diverse age groups. However, the participating teacher at least had a minimum of two years of experience. Since none of the administrative personal nor the colleagues were interviewed or asked, all opinion was based directly from the teacher and his opinion on the use of pop culture in the cooperating school.

Furthermore, the initial interviews sought to verify if the participants had the characteristics necessary (English classrooms, TESOL teacher, use of pop culture in the classroom) to be a part of the research. The elements considered when vetting the participants were the use of pop culture in the classroom; the subject matter being English, and the use of literature in the course description. After the initial vetting process, the teacher was invited to participate in the complete study where they were interviewed to understand their knowledge of pop culture and its use in the classroom.

This was a semi-structured interview (SSI). The questions for the **TI** (SSI) are included in Appendix C. The participant was given an informed consent form with the risks and benefits of the study. This was done to comply with the IRB. The consent form is included in Appendix B.

Students

Students who decided to participate in the research had to be registered in the targeted TESOL classroom. Students who decided to participate took part in a focus group that probed them in their day-to-day interactions with the target teacher. The students and their guardians were required to fill out an assent and consent form. I estimated at least eight students in total would be participating in the focus group, but only three students managed to answer the email regarding participation in this case study.

Data collection

The data collection consisted of classroom document analysis, teacher interview, observations, and a student-centered focus group. These four techniques were used in unison for the purpose of triangulating the data collected. The use of triangulation was vital to the data collection. “Triangulation is the combination of two or more data sources, investigators, methodologic approaches, theoretical perspectives (Denzin, 1970; Kimchi et al.,1991), or analytical methods (Kimchi et al., 1991) within the same study” (as cited in Thurmond, 2004, p. 253). Through the use of triangulation, this research observed the same phenomenon from different mediums of data collection. Therefore, assuring that the methods for data collection (documentation, observations, interviews, focus group) were adequate for the topic being discussed.

Interviews

This case study of a TESOL classroom and their respective participants aimed to use SSI to triangulate the teacher's use of pop culture in the classroom. According to Adams (2015) "[c]onducted conversationally with one respondent at a time, the SSI employs a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions" (p.493). These consisted of questions regarding popular culture and how it was employed in the TESOL classroom; however, the researcher probed the participating teacher with how or why questions to further expand on the topics being discussed. This was done to collect data to the point of exhaustion. Also, this allowed the interview to seem more like a conversation rather than an interrogation. The interview focused mainly on the main topic of motivation and how this affected the use of pop culture in the classroom. In addition, the researcher aimed to understand how it was being used, the advantages and disadvantages of pop culture, and which pop culture has been implemented the most. One must consider the educational implications of using pop culture in the classroom, the affective implications, and the ease with which pop culture can be incorporated into the curriculum. The interview was audio recorded.

The purpose of the interviews was to understand the teacher's implementation of the use of pop culture in the classroom. Furthermore, the teacher involved in the research was asked questions geared toward the difficulty of incorporating relevant pop culture, what they perceived to be pop culture, how they drafted their plans around pop culture, whether or not they always took it into account, and how often they used pop culture in the classroom. These are included in Appendix C.

Classroom Observations

The purpose of the observation was to understand the use of pop culture in the educational scenario. For this reason, the researcher acted as an observer. This means that the observer tried, to the best of his ability, to maintain neutral and not interfere with the class. However, the participating teacher knew the goal of the investigation and had knowledge of the presence of the researcher in their classroom. The investigator informed the participant that they would be observing the class prior to the beginning class.

These observations were documented using a notebook and written up into field notes after each classroom observation. This was done to maximize the number of details in the lived experience with an adequate amount of certainty. The class was not audio recorded. The researcher considered the virtual platform as the classroom (i.e. Google Classroom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams). In this case, the researcher took screenshots of the classroom to maintain accuracy for the field notes.

The researcher visited the classroom at least two times each week for a period of two months. The researcher hoped to get a glimpse into the inner workings of the class and aimed to observe a minimum of fifty minutes of each class per visit. The observations were turned into field notes. Each week the researcher spent a minimum of two hours and a maximum of four hours observing the classroom and taking field notes.

The researcher paid close attention to student attitudes, the outline of the virtual classroom, student participation, class material and how it correlated to pop culture, and the teacher's use of pop culture (both verbal and physical examples).

Document Analysis

In addition, the purpose behind this methodology stemmed from the need to investigate the system as a whole as it is customary in a case study. Bowen (2009) states “Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material” (p. 27). These different documents are analyzed for the sake of corroboration, be it digital or physical. It is a way for the researcher to make sure the data is accurate. “The qualitative researcher is expected to draw upon multiple (at least two) sources of evidence; that is, to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods” (p.28). Also, the documents, cultural artifacts, and activities alluding to pop culture were collected and analyzed.

The methodology for the collection of cultural artifacts or documents dependent on the medium the school was currently using. In other words, as classes continued to be virtual, then the researcher asked for permission from the teacher to be added to the virtual classroom (Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams) the educator was currently using. Through this platform, the researcher collected the required data from the assignments, tests, quizzes, presentations, and any related material.

Focus Groups

Students shed light in the practices that influenced them in the classroom and how the teacher could modify the use of pop culture to benefit the students through the focus group interview. “One of the distinct features of focus-group interviews is its group dynamics, hence the type and range of data generated through the social interaction of the group...” (Rabiee, 2004, p.656). The dynamic of a focus group was the main purpose of its use in this research. Each student that participated was able to give their feedback,

while interacting with fellow classmates. This created a rich tapestry of data. “Personal experience indicates that when exploring very sensitive and personal issues the use of pre-existing groups might be advantageous, as there is already an extent of trust amongst the members of the group, which will encourage the expression of views” (Rabiee, 2004, p. 656). The interactions within the group itself were richer due to the nature of a classroom: the connectedness between the classmates. It was my aim to interview the students that decided to participate through the focus group. This interview focused on how they felt toward the implementation of pop culture, how beneficial it was for them to have the teacher use pop culture, whether or not it helped the student understand the topic with ease, and whether or not they felt more relaxed in that environment. In addition, the questions focused on the material discussed in class and how it had benefitted the students involved. I estimated at least eight students in total would be participating in the focus group, but only three students managed to answer the email regarding participation in this case study.

Procedure

Four phases were conducted throughout this study. Each phase focused on a strategy for data collection. This was done to collect the data in a suitable manner without creating confusion and maintaining an adequate order.

The first phase, titled interview, focused on interviewing the selected participant and understanding their overall perspective of pop culture outside of the classroom and inside the classroom, while understanding why they used it in the classroom. The participant was interviewed on their conception of pop culture and their definition of this concept. This was done to get an overall feel for what the teacher considers valuable

outside of the classroom. These SSI ranged from thirty minutes to an hour. The researcher kept control of the main topic and probed the participants when necessary. In addition, the interview was recorded and later transcribed.

The second phase, observations, focused on observing the case: the respective TESOL classroom. This phase dealt with the use of pop culture in the classroom. The purpose of this phase was to see the use of pop culture in action in the English classroom. Seeing the material being used in real time helped the researcher understand the population, the teacher, and the material.

In addition, the third phase took place alongside the second phase, and it focused on gathering the cultural artifacts used in the classroom. The only documentation that was collected were those documents that were allusive to pop culture. Among the documents the researcher sought to collect some would be lesson plans, standards, worksheets, assignments, and additional materials used in the classroom allusive to pop culture. The researcher aimed to document how pop culture was used in the classroom, and which was used. The data was then analyzed.

The fourth phase, Exit, came in the form of a focus group with students enrolled on the focal participant's classroom in which the interviewer brought up the concept of pop culture in the classroom scenario. All of the elements came together at the end to justify and answer the research questions selected.

Data analysis

To begin, the analysis portion of this investigation was based on categorizing, coding, and analyzing the data acquired. Taking into consideration that the process of data analysis incorporates storage, segmentation, coding, developing categories, and

identifying relationships between said categories, I hoped to segment each category on the research questions themselves to lead the analysis in a straight line without deviating from the goal. The segmentation of the data was inserted into a qualitative program to be selected in the initial stages of the research.

The data recorded and observed during the interviews was transcribed. The interview was transcribed ad verbatim as to not leave any details out of the analysis (Johnson and Christensen 2012). Furthermore, this rich data was segmented into each of the research questions. The number of categories remained simply based off of the research questions. Emergent themes were not accounted for. The data was analyzed and categorized based on the research questions and what they answered and brought to the discussion. The data divided was then written in the form of a rich narrative. The purpose of this was to maintain a focus on the initial goal of the study. Therefore, by coding the results and segmenting them into their appropriate categories, based on the information gathered and the research questions, I moved forward to writing a rich description of the case being studied, analyzing, and finally interpreting it. However, this narrative description was not possible until the interviews were transcribed, the documents were collected, and the field notes analyzed. Nevertheless, if more categories arose from the data collected, they were added to the analyses and incorporated under a specific question.

Ethical Considerations

The teacher was given a consent form with the benefits and risks of the study. They were informed of the confidentiality agreement and how their data was stored. The data was stored electronically in a password protected USB drive. In addition, an assent

and consent sheet was drafted for the students that decide to participate in the focus group and their parents and/or guardians. This is included in Appendix A. It was important to consider the students as part of the study due to the nature of a case study. The principal of the school and the administration was notified prior to the start of the research.

In addition, the students were not photographed, audio recorded, or video recorded. A pseudonym replaced the names of all those involved in the study for the sake of maintaining confidentiality.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Findings pertained to the data collected throughout the entirety of this case study.

The order of this chapter was constructed in a way that the most salient elements of the use of pop culture were presented. These findings will present tokens of data that stood out within the context of the observed classroom. Both the research questions and demographic were presented once more to frame the context of the investigation. Data collected presented the main categories and subcategories with their respective tokens. Additionally, headings were created with relevant topics in their respective categories to streamline the reading process.

Research Questions

To connect the research questions to the categories that emerged from the data, the research questions were restated in this section. To summarize, this investigation focused on the use of pop culture in an English classroom, with an emphasis on the diverse spheres of pop culture and safe spaces. The purpose of this research was to view how the target teacher used pop culture in the target classroom and what were the effects of said use. The data collected consisted of field notes (**FN**), teacher interview (**TI**), documentation (**D**), and a focus group (**FG**). The researcher questions that framed this investigation were:

1. How does the TESOL teacher's incorporation of pop culture create safe spaces for students?
2. How does the teacher use pop culture in the classroom?
3. Which mediums of pop culture are being used in the classroom?

4. What are the advantages of the use of pop culture in the classroom?
5. What are the challenges of the use of pop culture in the classroom?
6. What are the most salient uses of pop culture in the classroom?

Each of these questions were addressed in the fifth chapter of this dissertation, with the analysis taking place in the fourth section.

Demographic

The target demographic was an Honors English course in a laboratory school in Puerto Rico. Said English group consisted of (30) thirty students enrolled in the target classroom. It was important to point out that these were 9th graders, and they ranged in ages from fourteen to fifteen years old. These students were in middle school. The school offered classes from seventh to twelfth grade. Contrary to the regular current grades in the school, the students in Honors English were expected to maintain a GPA of no less than 2.50. Observations, collection, and audio-recordings were conducted during the semester of April-May 2021. The classes met virtually through Google Meet.

The targeted teacher in this study had a master's degree in translation. As was customary in the cooperating school, most of the faculty members have either a masters, doctorate degree, or an equivalent, in a field. The teacher was interviewed once. In addition, the teacher gave the researcher access to the Google Classroom and the Google Meets. Throughout this study, the teacher was seen using both asynchronous and synchronous classes. It was important to point out that the teachers in this laboratory school have academic freedom similarly to the university context.

Data Collection

Data collections began and ended in April and May 2021 respectively. Seeing as this was a case study, I sought to incorporate a suitable amount of data from various methods. The four types of data collected throughout this timespan included: field notes (**FN**), documentation (**D**), a teacher interview (**TI**), and a focus group (**FG**). Each one of these methods of data collection reflected the use of pop culture in the target classroom. When it came to the **TI**, a total of forty-three minutes and nine seconds were recorded. This led to a transcribed nineteen-page document. Additionally, the **TI** totaled approximately 6,583 words.

The **FG** allowed me to understand the student's perspectives. Three students participated in the **FG** despite having eight students nominated by the target teacher. Only three out of the eight students that were recommended replied to the emails and joined the **FG**. Said **FG** consisted of twenty-six (26) minutes. When transcribed, the **FG** totaled seven pages and approximately 3,410 words.

Referring to the **FN**, the researcher logged into eleven synchronous classes. The students in this classroom met twice a week, unless otherwise specified by the teacher. This meant that students met on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1pm. The class observations totaled one hour and twenty minutes per class. In some instances, the teacher had to make up a class due to a holiday and students met through the google classroom link on a Friday. Fridays had shorter periods: classes on this day were fifty minutes. This totaled approximately twenty-one hours of observations. During the class, I was taking notes of the material, focusing on the use of pop culture in the classroom. Those observations were later turned into **FN**: a narrative that explained the main points that were discussed

during the class on the target date. Furthermore, **FN** totaled approximately 3,295 words. When it came to **D**, I compiled PowerPoint presentations, class assignments, class instructions, assessments, interest inventories, and students' works. These totaled approximately twenty documents which either included an instance of, or directly mentioned, the use of pop culture.

Cataloging System

To keep track of all the categories, subcategories, types of data, and the tokens in the data, the researcher used NVIVO. NVIVO provided the tools to upload both the **TI** and **FG** transcription and most of the files collected. The only documents that could not be uploaded to NVIVO were three PowerPoint presentations. These presentations were tabulated in word and composed into a table. Figure 1 below provides the number of tokens contemplating the data from NVIVO & the tabulations from the PowerPoints.

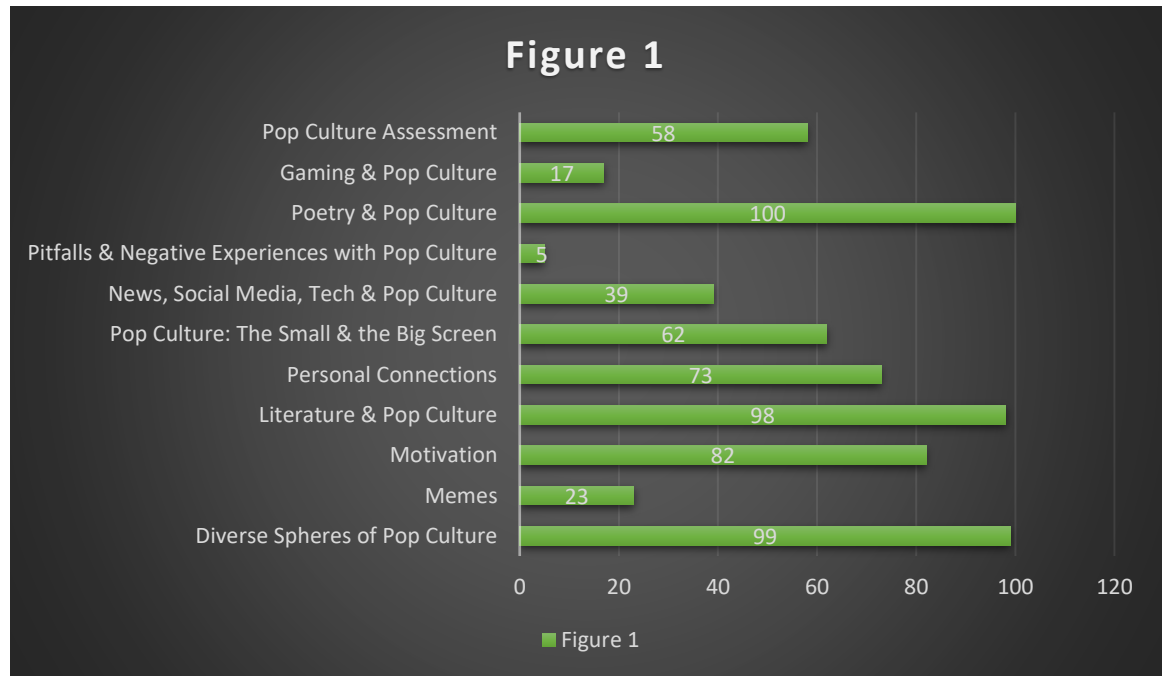


Figure 1: NVIVO Tabulations

Categories

The data analysis emerged with the creation of thirty-five categories. These categories were condensed and combined to create four main categories and fifteen subsequent subcategories. This section will be providing a detailed account of the definition of each category with the most salient content from the most salient subcategories. This was done to compile and present only the triangulated data before moving on to conclusions. The four main categories that emerged were Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture, Personal Connections, Pop Culture & Planning, and Other. These four categories encompassed the main ideas of the research paper and reflected the aim of the researcher when answering the research questions. Some categories that had been created were eliminated entirely to narrow the aim of this case study. Additionally, subtopics had to be created to better the reading process.

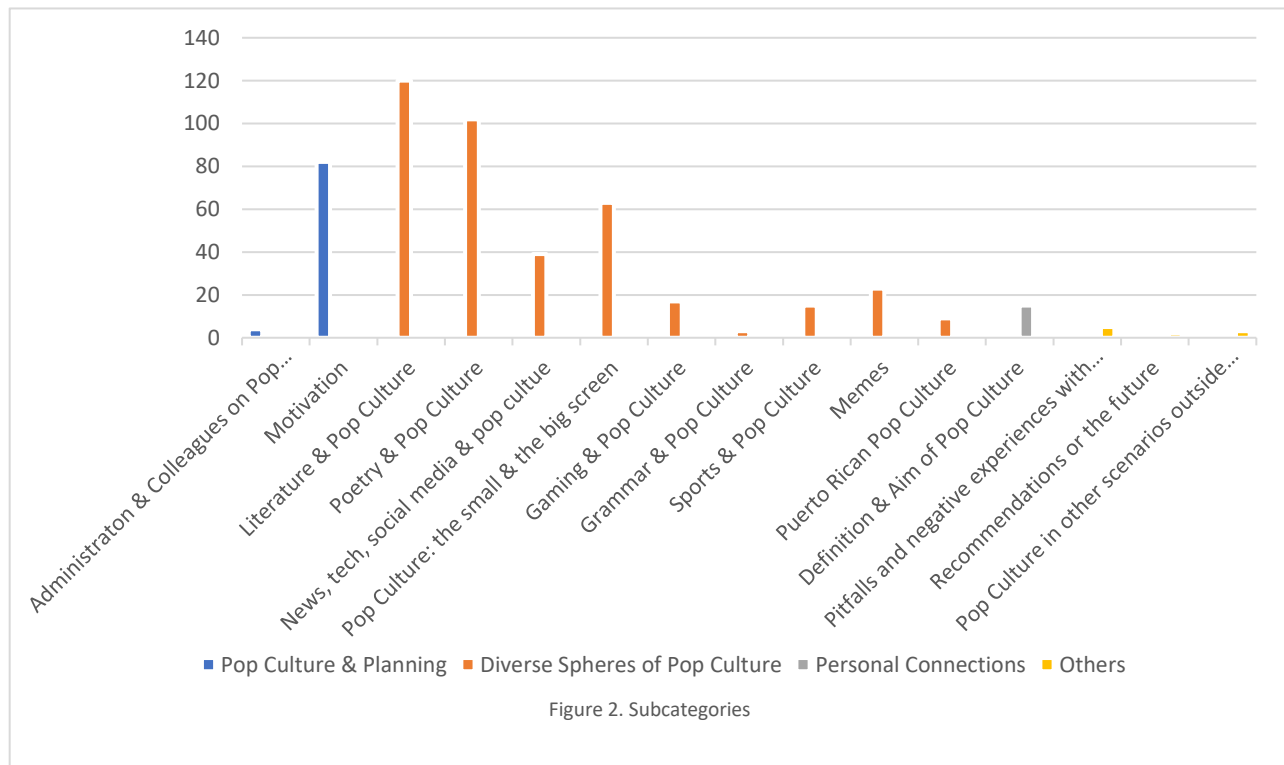


Figure 2. Subcategories

Figure 2: Main & Subcategories

Figure 3: Main Categories

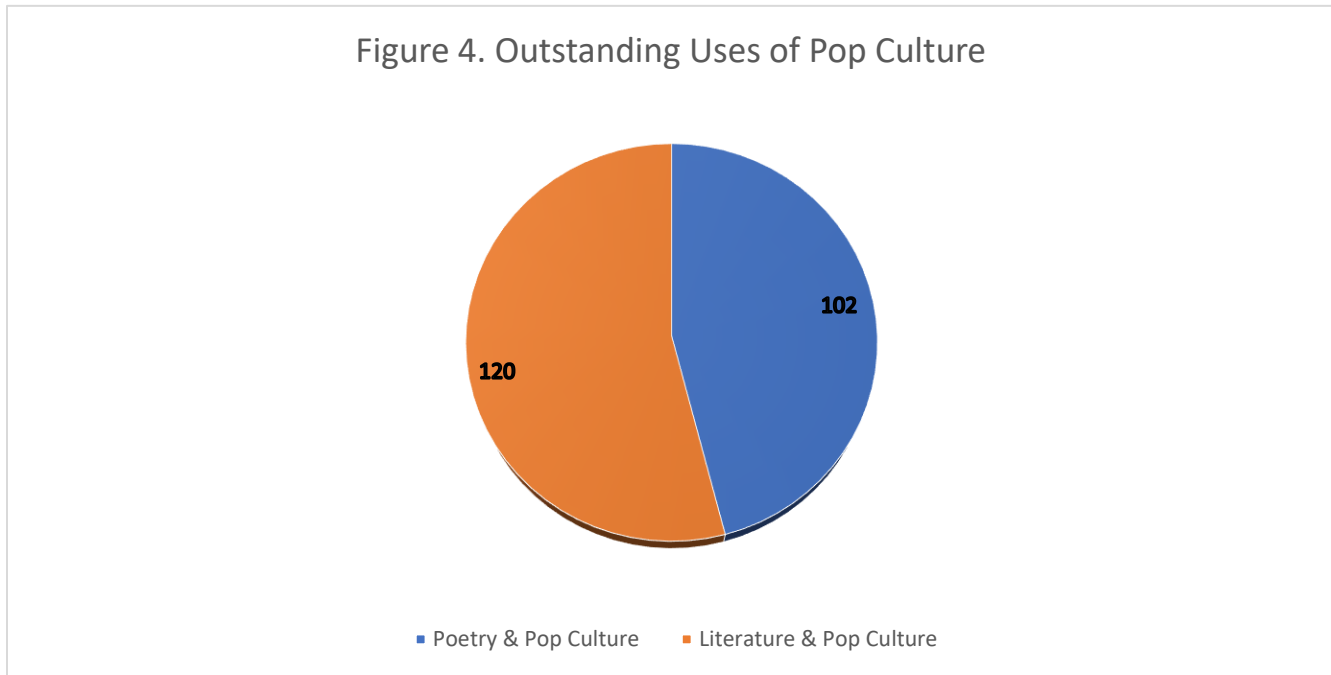
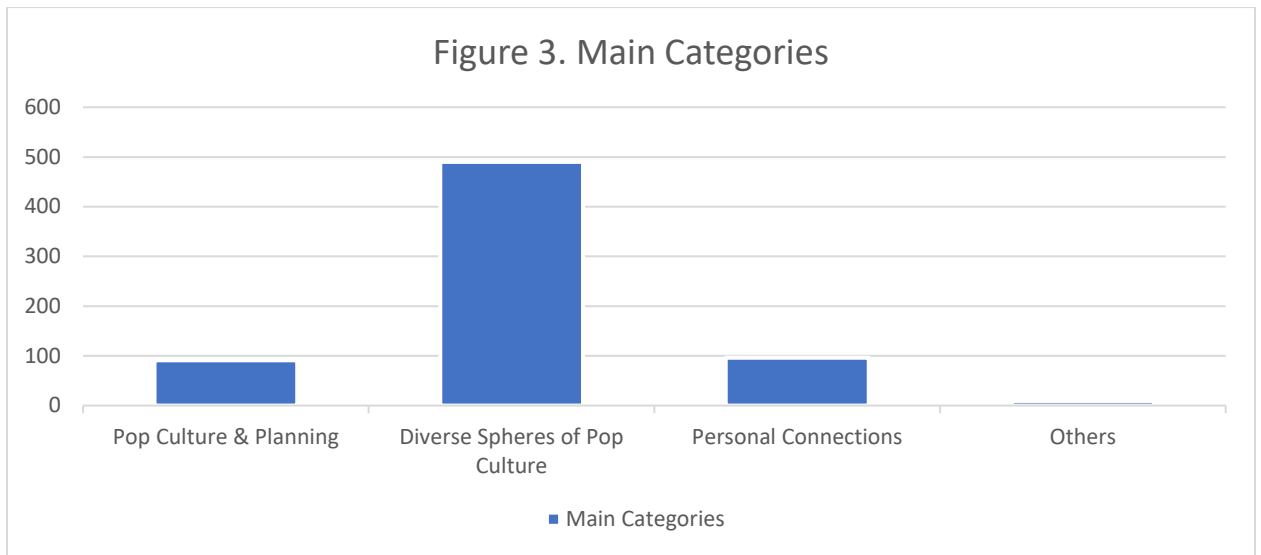


Figure 4: Outstanding Uses of Pop Culture

Data

Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture

Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture was the major category in a collection of subcategories spanning this qualitative study. Said category houses a total of seven (7)

subcategories. Some mediums were not considered in the subcategories due to the fact that they did not appear in the data recovered or did not triangulate among the data collected. What follows is a brief definition of each of the subcategories and the number of times they were referenced throughout the data.

To begin, Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture appeared a total of ninety-nine (99) times spread throughout nineteen (19) files. The subcategories housed under Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture follow. Gaming & Pop Culture focused on gaming in any of its forms (video games, board games, tabletop games) and how they were used in the target classroom. This subcategory contained a total of seventeen (17) tokens throughout five different types of data. Literature & Pop Culture focused on the use of pop culture to teach literature in the English classroom. This subcategory encompassed everything from short stories to dramatic plays such as *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Being one of the subcategories with the greatest number of tokens, Literature & Pop Culture appeared a total of one-hundred and twenty (120) times in seventeen (17) types of data. Poetry & Pop Culture focused on how the target teacher incorporated music into the target classroom for the sake of education. Being the first subcategory with the greatest number of tokens, Poetry & Pop Culture appeared a total of one hundred and two (102) times in seventeen (17) types of data. News, Social Media, Tech & Pop Culture was a subcategory that contemplated how the target teacher incorporated current social media, technological trends and current events into the target classroom. It appeared a total of thirty-nine (39) times in five (5) types of data. Pop Culture: The Small & Big Screen contemplated how the target teacher used both movies and television shows to teach in his classroom. In addition, this subcategory contemplated the use of anime in the target classroom. Pop

Culture: The Small & Big Screen appeared a total of sixty-three (63) times in nine (9) types of data. Puerto Rican Pop Culture focused on how the teacher used elements of the Puerto Rican culture, popular at the time, to incorporate into the target classroom. Puerto Rican Pop Culture appeared a total of nine (9) times in three (3) types of data. Sports & Pop Culture was a subcategory that focused on how the teacher incorporated diverse types of sports into the target classroom. This subcategory appeared a total of fifteen (15) times in three types of data.

Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture houses seven (7) subcategories that contemplated the diverse types of pop culture used in the classroom. In total, this major category housed 490 tokens. It became a shelter for all the types of data that directly correlated to the different types of spheres that appeared throughout the data. The 490 tokens were no different than those in each subsequent subcategory as this becomes the sum of all the data collected.

Poetry & Pop Culture

Poetry & Pop Culture was named appropriately due to: (1) the majority of the data collected being related to music and poetry, and (2) music has its infancy in poetic elements and poetic devices. Spread out in seventeen (17) different files, Poetry & Pop Culture appeared a total of 102 times.

Musical Elements in Lectures & Presentations

To begin, *1984: Intro and Book One* contained four tokens to poetry. From slides thirty-eight to forty-one, the teacher provided numerous tokens to the entertainment industry in an attempt to equate it to *1984's* context. There were pictures of Martin Sandberg, Ariana Grande, Taylor Swift, Ed Sheeran, The Weeknd, and Maroon 5. The question "Do you know them?" hung above the pictures almost like a warning below

About Book One: The Proles, Minitruth, and Entertainment. By placing one under the other, the teacher was hoping students compared the two worlds: the world inside the novel and the world that they were currently living in. In an attempt to make this connection more relevant, the teacher used artists from the entertainment industry. This might have driven the students to draw a comparison between these two contexts. In addition, the teacher provided a miniature biography of Martin Sandberg in slide forty for the sake of contextualizing him. The teacher might have hoped students understood that there is a difference between the artist (singer) and the creator. It was not clear, seeing as this class was not observed, but one might hope that the teacher's goal was to have students equate Martin to the ministries in *1984*. Additionally, slide forty-one required students to answer the following question: "Would it be too far-fetched to draw parallels between music and entertainment in Orwell's *1984* and music and entertainment in our world today? Explain." The teacher did not allow students to draw their own conclusions: he guided them to comparing these two. The dystopian context of the novel was not alluded to anymore but expected of them. Interesting enough, this was not done through news media alone, as presented in other subcategories, but through music.

Twelve tokens focused on the poetry unit and directly correlate to Poetry & Pop Culture. During this unit, the teacher heavily used music to discuss everything from poetic devices to the construction of sonnets. A few examples of the incorporation of music or musicians in the class discussion were the mention of the following artists: Bad Bunny, Billy Eilish, Residente, Taylor Swift, Britney Spears, Rihanna, Pink Floyd, Lil Wayne, Smash Mouth, Coldplay, Ed Sheeran, and Guns N' Roses. These artists were sprinkled throughout the introductory discussion of poetry. The use of familiar artists

created a connection between the world inside the classroom and the world outside. It allowed students to make connections with Billy Eilish, Bad Bunny, among others, and the content of the class. It might also have allowed them to see themselves in the discussion of these poetic elements. Perhaps the teacher knew this and incorporated these musicians with that goal.

In addition, one could see overlap of Puerto Rican Pop Culture with Poetry & Pop Culture. This allowed students to see that Puerto Rican artists are part of this sphere of pop culture. During this particular class, the teacher asked students if Bad Bunny, Billy Eilish, Residente, and Taylor Swift were poets: “are these poets?” This question allowed students to question the idea of being a poet; framing poets and poetry in a new light for them. It was important to point out that the teacher used Peardeck to quantify their answers. Seventeen students answered yes, and two students answered no. The remaining students did not participate. This quantification allowed us to see that the majority of students did see these artists as poets, drawing a clear comparison between poetry and music, at least from the students’ perspective. Additionally, the teacher used Britney Spears to further draw comparisons between artists and poets. The teacher pointed out that Britney created her own songs.

To continue the discussion, the teacher focused on poetic devices. The teacher mentioned Rihanna’s *Diamonds*, Pink Floyd’s *Wish You Were Here*, and Guns N’ Roses’ *Sweet Child O’ Mine* to allude to simile, metaphor, and assonance respectively. By providing these examples of poetic devices, the teacher was making a connection between the concept of poetic devices and the songs. Instead of relying on classic poets to exemplify the concepts, the teacher used songs that were familiar to himself and the

students. This allowed them to create a connection between the song and the poetic device, making it easier for students to comprehend abstract concepts such as simile and metaphor.

To further draw the comparison between songs and poetry, the teacher reminded students of an assignment where they must select one song they love and one they think cannot be a poem. This was done in an effort for students to compare the elements that make up a poem in an inductive manner. Students were required to understand the elements of poetry before they decided if a song may be a poem or not. All of the selected songs would be shared in a future class through a Padlet. Sharing encouraged students to post their songs onto the Padlet, creating a class playlist while also becoming a type of assignment.

Musical Memes

Bonus Activity: R & J Memes contained two tokens relating to an artist. One of these tokens was taken from the instructions where The Weekend was mentioned as an example of the memes that the students could use. The other example was the meme format that used the artist formerly known as Kanye West. Both of these instances were not intrinsically referring to music, but the students needed to understand who these musicians were, or the context of the musician in the meme, to be able to put it to use.

Bonus Activity: R & J Memes was mentioned four times in the **TI**. However, seeing as the catalysts for this assignment was The Weeknds' performance during the Super Bowl, it was crucial to highlight it here.

Sonnetizing Assignment

The *Sonnetizing Songs* assignment allowed students to transform their favorite songs into sonnets. All of the following tokens correlated to said assignment. The teacher

began by modeling some sonnets: all of them famous songs. Artists such as Lil' Wayne, Smash Mouth, and Coldplay were used to draw attention to the sonnet structure. The teacher used these artists and had students try to identify the original song. In addition, the teacher was already giving the students the tools for their final assessment. Students had to adapt songs into sonnets using the structure and rules of a sonnet. The teacher shared a link to popsonnet.tumblr.com. This website included numerous songs adapted into sonnets. To model the process students would have to embark on, the teacher showed his own attempt at sonnetizing songs: *The Shape of You* by Ed Sheeran and *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* by Will Smith. This was done in an attempt for students to see that the assignment was not impossible, despite what they might think.

The *Sonnetizing Songs* allowed the researcher to collect student work. When it came to student's examples, the students included:

- Perfect by Ed Sheeran
- Happy by Pharrel Williams
- Mirror by Lil' Wayne ft. Bruno Mars
- Always by Bon Jovi
- Secret of My Success by Night Ranger.

These examples provided tangible evidence of the use of music for poetry. Although the majority of the students did sonnetize their songs, only one group managed to include both the original song and the sonnetized version in the submitted document. This example was included in Appendix H. This example illustrated how students manipulated the original song by eliminated syllables to follow the rules of a sonnet.

There was a clear omission of syllables compared to the original. Students needed to understand the process of counting syllables, how many syllables were permitted in a sonnet and keeping the original meaning of the song as well. This example was telling of the process of adapting a song to a sonnet. Other examples included “I see you Wayne, I’m looking at the” V “I observe myself, I’m looking at Wayne” and “I see the blood in your eyes” V. “I notice the blood in your reflection.” Seeing as the other students did not include the comparison, we can only assume that they did it properly and that there was a difference between the sonnet and the song.

The **FG** included two tokens that were particularly important when discussing the *Sonnetizing Songs* assignment. **S3** stated

...it’s easier in way to...for example, we had an assignment about sonnetizing songs. We had to make a song that we chose into a sonnet. At first, I was like...what? But then when you actually do it is very helpful because you apply the things you learned in class to your life.

This quote reflected two things: motivation and the incorporation of music into the classroom. Students were required to select the song, understand the rules of sonnets, and then apply them to the selected song. The students ended up with a product: a sonnetized song of their own. In addition, **S3** pointed out that the assignment first seemed impossible or useless, but as time progressed, and the students used the skills learned in class, it became an easier and more enjoyable task. To further strengthen this idea, **S3** stated “...I thought it was gonna be really really really hard, but then I sat down to do it and it just took me an hour, maybe less.” This reference from the **FG** provided an insight into the

inner workings of the students and their perception of poetry, but in this case, pop culture seemed to make it easier.

Sonnetizing Songs appeared four times in the **TI**. The teacher stated “[s]o the challenge here is that they look at the sonnet and say ‘Oh my goodness so difficult.’ I’m teaching them sonnets, I’m teaching them formal verse, right.” Here the teacher clarified that the purpose of this assignment was to have students see that sonnets were not as difficult as they seemed. In addition, the teacher clarified that before the project, he had explained sonnets and formal verse. Students were exposed to the structure of a sonnet before they were allowed to make their own. The teacher modeled by showing them his “...examples and then I sell it to them like ‘I had fun doing this.’ And I did. And I do.” This quote further exemplified the fact that the use of pop culture in the poetry unit was not an afterthought. The teacher planned the assignment and the examples beforehand to give students the tools to be able to complete the assignment adequately. He brought his own examples and made students see that it was not so difficult after all. However, there were instructions for this assignment: “...*tiene que ser una cancion* that is recognizable, so it has to be popular.” Here the teacher was requiring songs that were mainstream and popular. This was both for the teacher and students’ sake. The “...objective is still there: how a sonnet is structured, but I give them the motivation...” This quote further exemplified the purpose of using pop culture in the classroom. It had to be tied to objectives, standards, and the process of learning the content. The end goal was not the song but creating a sonnet.

The *Sonnetizing Songs* was a hit among the **FG** participants. **S3** stated “...we had to make a song that we chose into a sonnet...but when you actually do it, it is very

helpful because you apply the things you learned in class to your life” and **S1** answered, “because like there’s this element of sharing with the classroom like your music tastes and what you like to listen to.” Both comments related to the same assignment, but one focused on sharing and being able to create a nurturing environment, while the other focused on how they felt while completing the assignment.

The final class of the semester had students presenting their sonnets to the rest of the class. Some of the songs that were sonnetized by students were: *Perfect* by Ed Sheeran, *Always* by Bon Jovi, *Country Home* by Blue, *Back in Black* by AC/DC, and *Happy* by Pharel. All of these sonnets were adapted from actual songs and required students to understand the rules of a sonnets.

Musicalizing Drama

Musicalizing Shakespeare’s Romeo & Juliet related to three documents: the instructions and rubric, a student’s example, and the class playlist titled R & J. The rubric provided a brief introduction to get students exposed to the idea of music being all around us. This introduction included elements like

...it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to stop ourselves from unconsciously humming the melody or chorus of a newly discovered earworm and [w]ith the purpose of extending our discussion...beyond strictly textual analysis, students will be required to put together a soundtrack for what is perhaps Shakespeare’s most famous play.

This introduction created a world where music was inherently necessary in our day-to-day lives. Perhaps this was a way to get the students in the mood to analyze one of the oldest plays from a new perspective or a reflection of the teacher’s love for music. In

addition, the teacher did address the issue of going beyond a discussion of a “textual” analysis. This allowed students to move beyond the literary element: one where music takes center stage. Three points were crucial to the instructions: it was a group assignment, students had to identify a “music track...for the scene you have selected”, and songs could be instrumental or with lyrics, but the lyrics had to be in English (or translated into English). This made the task a bit more complicated for a number of reasons: the group had to agree on the songs, scenes, and mood. If students decided to use a song in another language other than English, they would have to go through a whole different process than those that decided on a song in English. However, this also allowed students to be in total control of the songs they selected. The teacher did not limit their choices. This allowed the students to motivate themselves and pick songs that they truly believed should fit in the scenes. The last elements in this document were the criteria to which the students will be graded with. In short, these were based on the presentation of the songs and the elements previously discussed.

Musicalizing Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet’s instructions included the questions students should focus on. It was important to point out that the teacher required three songs per group, plus a bonus question. The required questions were

What song did you select for this scene? Include the title, artist, genre, and release year. Thoroughly explain why this song reflects the mood and emotions mentioned in question 2. Your explanation must include at least 4 complete sentences. The optional question was Other songs that did not make the final cut: where applicable, mention any additional songs that your group also took into consideration. Why did you not select them?

Each question was required to be answered three times, providing an explanation that made the comparison clear. Students were required to give a written justification of those songs in an attempt to show that they had comprehended the mood and atmosphere in the particular scenes that were selected. Hence, the teacher was not contemplating popular culture in a void. The use of music was used to see if the students understood the context of the play. The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet becomes the end, and the selection of the songs was just a means to getting the students to comprehend the context of the play.

Musicalizing Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet included two student examples. These two examples were included because the group completed the optional question. For the first question, the students selected Act 1, Scene 1 tying it to *Wonder* by Shawn Mendes. Their justification was as follows

the lyrics in the song...talk about what Romeo's feeling. This song is about how the singer wonders how it would be if they were loved by the person that is always on their mind...This could represent Romeo's unrequited love for Rosaline.

This connection was drawn from interpreting the play and the song, seeing as the song did not mention Romeo. Students managed to compare both concepts of unrequited love. For the second question, the students selected Act 1, Scene 5 addressing it with *Say You Won't Let Go* by James Arthur. Their justification was that

[i]n this party he saw Juliet and instantly fell in love with her...This song talks about how he thought they were destined to be together like Romeo and Juliet thought. It also talks about how he can see his future with this person.

Perhaps the hyperbole that was evident in love-at-first sight was a direct reference to Juliet from the play. Destiny also plays a major role in this answer as the star-crossed lovers also believed in the play. Whether they understood that it was a critique or not was not clear in this particular justification. However, the connection between the context of the song as it stated “I want to stay with you until we’re grey and old...” did seem to reflect the obsession Romeo and Juliet felt. For the third question, the students selected Act 4, Scene 3 using *Strong* by One Direction. The group stated

...Juliet believes she cannot live without Romeo...[b]asically, this is saying that you need the other person to survive. Also, it alludes to the story because it is asking if it is so wrong? just like Romeo and Juliet’s love was “wrong” and “forbidden”.

The students seemed to have misunderstood the purpose of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. It was not about true love, but about lack thereof. Nevertheless, it was interesting that the students use quotation marks when referring to wrong and forbidden. Maybe they were trying to be sarcastic with these quotes, but this cannot be corroborated.

Additionally, the students included the optional fourth scene: Act 5, scene 1. The students included four songs for this scene: *Happily* by One Direction, *Sofia* by Clairo, *Too Young* by Louis Tomlinson, and *Stay* by Rihanna. For each one of these songs, they included a justification as they had done for the previous three scenes:

- Stay: “That’s exactly how Romeo felt about Juliet. He didn’t think twice before saying that he was going to die with her.”
- Too Young: “It also talks about rushing into things to the point where you ruin the relationship.”

- Sofia: “This song talks about a love that is forbidden by society and how even though it is not allowed, they will try to make it work.
- Happily: “This song talks about a love that is criticized by society, but they still want to be ‘together forever’.”

Each of the songs selected in the last section had to come with an explanation as to why they were not included as the main songs. There was one common denominator among them all: students believed they were representative of the whole play rather than a single scene. The assignment focused on students making the connection with a scene. I believe this was done on purpose to have students narrow down their songs to fit a particular scene rather than being too generic. In addition, some of these songs seemed to exemplify that the type of love they were feeling was valid when in truth the “love” between Romeo and Juliet is questionable.

In this assignment, students had to select songs for a centuries-old play. These tokens related to the sharing of songs with the class, the analysis of the scenes through songs, how enjoyable the assignment was, the student’s everyday life, discovering music, and the artists used by fellow students on assignments. The students seemed to enjoy going through the process of sharing their songs and hearing other classmates share theirs. **S1** exemplified this when they stated “I discovered TXT. I discovered Alec Benjamin...Mac de Marco”; when **S3** said “...it is still nice to see the contrast between music tastes”; and when **S1** stated “[y]eah, I was gonna say that exact...project...I really liked seeing everyone’s music...” Through these quotes one could see that the assignment was not just about connecting literature and music, but also about having students discover artists and to see how these musical tastes could be connected to the

play. In addition, it allowed students to see how these scenes could have diverse moods based on the music genre. Another quote that stood out was "...so you could just kinda take the mood in the play and apply it to the songs you listen to every day...." This quote was impactful for two reasons: the student was connecting his everyday life with the class, and the student was making the connection between the mood of the play and the mood that the song might project in their head. The addition of "everyday life" provided us with an insight into how the student saw the world and what they valued. If they valued a particular song or artist, they might have been more inclined to use them in their assignment. Then again, some students might have "...used songs that [they] already knew..." like **S3**. However, this did not mean that the students could not have enjoyed seeing other student's music tastes. In addition, as stated by **S3**, this was "...a group project, the other classmates that were on my group chose like really different songs from what I chose...." Perhaps the teacher made this particular assignment a group project to have students come to a consensus on the songs that they would be using.

Additionally, in the past, it seems, the teacher had used the same musicalizing project in 12th grade, because the teacher stated "[i]t's basically the same instructions just adapted to *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, so students have a lot of fun...." In addition, the teacher mentioned that this year he was surprised by the addition of *Aventura* to some students' playlist. The teacher stated "...I had three songs by *Aventura*..." and "...[i]t was curious to *me que nenes de 15 años* that did not live through that frenzy brought songs by *Aventura*." The teacher found the mention of *Aventura* surprising because students did not live through the peak of the musicians' popularity. Pop culture focuses on the majority of the people liking, consuming, or enjoying a

particular artist. The teacher understood that *Aventura* was a thing of the past, yet the students in the classroom brought it up to exemplify their selection of certain songs for scenes in *Romeo and Juliet*. Whether this was a way to contemplate the past or if it was a way for students to bring up an artist they enjoyed into *Romeo and Juliet* was unclear. Additionally, the teacher stated that this group "...connected *Aventura* beautifully to The Tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*..." The students were allowed to use *Aventura* and incorporate the mood into a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* successfully.

Dramatic Playlists

R & J Honors [Redacted] compiled the songs students used for this assignment to share them with students. As was evident in Appendix H, this Spotify playlist had thirty-seven songs that were all compiled by the teacher and provided by the students. This provided students with a final product to view and listen to. It could be shared with other classmates, teachers, and the school population if they pleased. Also, it provided evidence of the use of popular culture that students compiled for an assignment. *Sonnetizing Songs* assignment also transformed into a playlist. The student playlist was created by the teacher in Spotify to collect all of the songs in one place. It was unclear if the teacher did this as a way to motivate students to complete the assignment, for it was never clarified in this study. Nevertheless, students could see the original versions of the songs they had sonnetized in a playlist.

The five tokens in the **D** stood out among the data in the activity titled *R & J Playlist*. It was crucial to point out that the creation of this playlist might've helped students create connections between the literary piece and their interpretation of one of the oldest plays and playwright. Both of these playlists created a welcoming space for the

students' preferred musical tastes, albeit with a purpose. The purpose was to connect those tastes and create a bridge between them and the literature. In the case of *Sonnetized Songs*, the playlist allowed them to see the songs that were sonnetized, listen to them, and expand their musical horizons while also relating among themselves.

Despite having numerous assignments including music, the teacher expressed the desire to do more.

...I think that I should use music even more. I think that I'm so obsessed with music that I don't want to make it the center of my classes and that way they might be overwhelmed or just grow tired of how much I use it basically.

The teacher drew attention of his use of music in the classroom. He was aware that he did use music and artists often in certain units, but he would like to use it even more. Nevertheless, he did not because students might not enjoy the overuse of a certain medium. In addition, the teacher also realized that it was not about his desire to use music, but about how the students reacted to this use. This was exemplified when the teacher stated "I'm a music enthusiast, if it were for me, I would just feed them a new song every day..." yet the teacher knew that this should not be his goal. The point of using music in the classroom was to connect with the students or bridge knowledge.

Literature & Pop Culture

Literature & Pop Culture included numerous cross-tokens with other subcategories as the use of literature was a crucial part of the curriculum of the target class. This category had a total of one-hundred and twenty (120) tokens coded throughout seventeen (17) types of data.

Tolkien & Pop Culture

The following three tokens were related to *The Hobbit* but were not present in other categories.

In an effort to connect the Bestiary and the monsters in *The Hobbit* to their knowledge, the teacher mentions that a lot of the inspiration for *The Hobbit* and its monsters comes from Norse Mythology and ... *The Hobbit*: create a mythological creature, they may use inspiration from mythologies (Greek, Norse, Egyptian are mentioned), but they cannot copy.

Both of these tokens related to one of the classroom assignments. Students had to create a mythological creature that could fit in the world of *The Hobbit*. Nevertheless, the teacher emphasized that a lot of the inspiration from the stories and creatures in *The Hobbit* came from diverse types of mythology. This allowed students to gather inspiration from different mythologies like the actual author of *The Hobbit*. There's a connection between the popular elements of mythology and the literature discussed in class. The third reference made a connection between the student's life outside of the classroom and the world inside by mentioning "[a] student tells a story about a pelican and the teacher connects the story to *The Hobbit* and the Eagles." This was a text-to-world connection.

Orwell & Pop Culture

Literature & Pop Culture emerged five (5) times in the **FG**. Some of them cross-referenced with another subcategory. Examples of these repetitions were when **S1** said "I remember that last semester as we were reading *1984*, [the teacher] playing this video game, I think it was called Orwell..." and when **S3** stated "[w]e played when we were reading *1984*..." Both instances equated the discussion of a literary piece to a video game. The use of the game bridged meaning. Additionally, **S1** mentioned the advantages

of using pop culture in the classroom when they stated "...an advantage of incorporating pop culture in that way is that we can understand literature way better. Like it's a way that we wouldn't otherwise understand it." Through this reference, the student pointed to bridging meaning and understanding and accepting that perhaps some students might not have understood the material if it wasn't for pop culture. Despite the fact that there was not a particular mention of a literary piece, the student used the term literature to be an all-encompassing term for any classic used in the educational scenario.

1984: Intro and Book One included its fair share of tokens related to Literature & Pop Culture. The majority of these tokens came in the form of images and videos. Starting on slide two and culminating on slide five, the teacher provided images of Donald Trump, Tik Tok, and even Netflix documentaries respectively. This was done in an attempt to parallel the literature and the real world. In addition, the teacher also provided a video from the adaptation of *The Giver* to wrap up the discussion before moving forward with *1984*. Slides twenty-eight, thirty, forty-one to forty-three, and forty-five asked students to make connections between *1984* and the real world. An example of this was "How do you picture him? Who would play him in a 2020 adaptation of the novel?" These provided an immediate connection between the world of the novel and pop culture, creating a bridge between literature and adaptations. Through the use of questions, the teacher hoped to bridge the gaps between pop culture and literature: "[d]o Goldstein and the Two Minutes Hate have parallels in our world today?", "In what ways does Winston's job in the Ministry of Truth seem to echo Sean Spicer's (former White House Press Secretary) remarks about the inauguration?" These questions provided a space to draw parallels between real-world events and their novel counterpart. The

teacher did not disregard the outside world but provided space for it in the target classroom.

Character Archetypes & Pop Culture Equivalents

The **TI** provided fifteen (15) tokens to Literature & Pop Culture. The teacher mentioned "...Disney movies are really good to teach literary devices..." and "I've used Zootopia several times...like Vanellope...leads to the fact that she's static...." The literary focus of the class could be discussed throughout diverse types of mediums if the content was not one that was required reading. In the case of Vanellope, one could see that the nature of the character provided the students with a visualization of a static character. They could see a static character instead of only reading about it in a book.

During the **TI**, the teacher clarified that he's "...used Zootopia. I've taught dynamic characters with Wreck It Ralph...Ah, Mean Girls. What else? From Disney, Soul...Monsters Inc...." It was curious that four out of five were animated Disney movies. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the target students were 9th graders. The teacher never clarified why he used these rather than other pop culture characters. Nevertheless, the **TI** focused on Wreck It Ralph, alluding to the specific role of the movie in relation to his classroom: types of literary characters. This was reinforced by "[I]ike Vanellope...I think the analysis leads to the fact that she's static...." By stating the analysis, the teacher was distinguishing between pop culture in passing and pop culture being used as a technique.

Lastly, the teacher mentioned that

I use a lot of text-to-world and text-to-self connections, and sometimes I invite them to use pop culture to make those connections like not just reading the text

and analyzing it, but making a connection to a character...in a movie or character in the series.

The teacher provided a space for the students to connect the world outside of the classroom to the world inside of the classroom. The text was referring to the literary or nonliterary piece they were reading at the moment. However, the teacher had made a clear example of how other mediums were also allowed in the classroom. The connections to literature were not only made with movies and series.

Literature & Pop Culture Multimodality

Literature & Pop Culture included a plethora of tokens in the *D. R & J: Act 4 & 5* included tokens in slides thirteen, fourteen, seventeen, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-five, and twenty-seven. Slide thirteen included two (2) tokens in the form of three questions that the teacher gave the students prior to watching *Romeo + Juliet*, and the poster of said movie. The teacher might have hoped to have students draw comparisons and analyze the intentions behind the play and the adaptation. Slides twenty-one and twenty-seven provided the students with four questions relating to terminology “catharsis, suspension of disbelief, and catastrophe”. All of these were tied to both the play and the adaptations. The students had to answer the questions and draw from their own experiences to connect said experiences with the play.

Literary Memes

There was overlap between the use of memes and Literature & Pop Culture in these instances. In the case of this activity, as explained prior, the students had to adapt a scene from *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* into meme format. This allowed students to relate to the content of the class in a medium of pop culture, hopefully bridging meaning between the literary elements and the pop culture elements. The memes were provided in

Appendix I. For example, one of them stated “Juliet deciding that faking her death was the smartest way not to marry Paris” and another “when Friar Laurence sees Juliet awake but Romeo is dead”. Both of these examples allowed students to understand the nature of the scene to be able to adapt it into meme format. Students must have understood the literature and the meme format to apply it. Additionally, the instructions of *Bonus Activity: R & J Memes* also provided a code in Literature & Pop Culture. The instructions reinforced the purpose of the use of memes in literature stating: “Select a (memeable) scene from The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet.”

Literature & Pop Culture emerged in slides one, six, seven, eight, eleven, and thirteen in the PowerPoint titled *Types of Irony*. All of these slides included a connection to memes in an effort to help students grasp the content. The teacher’s thought process might have led him to believe that through memes the students would be able to understand irony. However, the incorporation of images and videos provided a connection to the concept of irony, which implied the intrinsic connection to literature. Slides fifteen to eighteen, twenty-two to twenty-three, twenty-six, twenty-eight, and thirty-two provided examples of movies or series to illustrate the types of irony. After providing these examples, the teacher created (slide twenty-two onward) a guided practice to quantify their understanding of the types of irony discussed during the class.

Puerto Rican Pop Culture

Puerto Rican Pop Culture was present nine times spread throughout the **TI**, the **FG**, and the **FN**. During the numerous observations, the researcher documented a total of five (5) tokens referring to Puerto Rican Pop Culture. This totaled 4.12% of the codes in the **FN**. One of the first mentions of this category emerged in the anticipatory set on

March 30th. As it was stated in the **FN**, “immediately following the conversation on Basketball, the teacher turns to Puerto Rican current events (particularly a scandal with the mayor of Mayagüez)”. Despite the anticipatory set being an informal conversation about the students and their daily lives, the teacher went ahead and discussed the prominent scandal. The students expressed themselves on the topic at hand. By bringing this topic to the forefront of the class, the teacher was creating a space for dialogue. The teacher was also allowing a conversation about all things Puerto Rican in the English classroom, which is not new territory, but it helped student see themselves in the texts.

Furthermore, when discussing *The Hobbit*, the teacher “...makes a connection with the status of PR...The teacher mentions colonialism; Bilbo depends on Gandalf.” The teacher used Puerto Rican current events to provide a new view of both Gandalf and Bilbo and the relationship between Puerto Rico and the US. By using both Gandalf and Bilbo as symbols for colonialism and dependence, the teacher not only helped the students understand the literary classic, but also provided a new way for students to relate to it on a more personal level. The connections students made to the literature was crucial to bridge their understanding. The teacher demonstrated that he used Puerto Rican Pop Culture sparingly in the English classroom.

American V Puerto Rican Pop Culture

The **TI** contained three (3) tokens coded into Puerto Rican Pop Culture. This totaled 6.44% of the tokens in the transcribed document. However, most of the popular culture used throughout this study was American pop culture. These tokens focused on how students were more exposed to American pop culture rather than Puerto Rican Pop Culture. For instance, the teacher stated “...I have noticed that we’re so influenced by

American culture that sometimes I try to use an example of Puerto Rican series, or a Puerto Rican show, and it doesn't land." This direct address to the lack of knowledge toward Puerto Rican shows and Puerto Rican Pop Culture as evidenced in the previous data types, especially when it came to the **FG**. I believed this was the reason why the teacher did not incorporate or mention Puerto Rican Pop Culture in most of his classes. Even while living in Puerto Rico, most students in this school did not consume Puerto Rican pop culture. In addition, to cement this theory further, the teacher mentioned "I know that they know more about Little Nass than they know about, *que se yo...Arcangel o...Tito El Bambino*." The teacher was aware that the population of the school was not as exposed to Puerto Rican Pop Culture as other populations might be. In a sense, this highlighted the teacher's ability to understand the students and to be familiarized with what the students were constantly consuming despite not researching students likes or dislikes each year.

Gaming & Pop Culture

Gaming and Pop Culture was present in the **TI, D, FN, and FG**. To begin discussing the findings of this subcategory we will be focusing on the only two (2) instances when the code appeared in the **D** collected: the announcement of *Orwell* from the first semester and in a PowerPoint presentation. Appendix F provided a screenshot of the announcement from the Google Classroom.

Orwell: The Game & 1984

Orwell, the game mentioned, was to be played in the classroom while discussing the dystopian novel *1984* to exemplify the literature. According to the classroom announcement, the video game was used in two separate occasions during the week of December 1st, 2020. It was crucial to point out that the teacher used a game specifically

related to the topics being discussed in class. This aligned with the purpose of the class to discuss dystopian and oppressive elements in fictional worlds, relating them also to the students' reality.

The **FG** included three tokens from Gaming & Pop Culture. **S1** mentioned “[the teacher] played this video game, I think it was called Orwell, it was a video game.” This statement by **S1** corroborated the use of video games in the target classroom by a student with first-hand experience. **S3** added “[w]e played when we were reading *1984*. We played a game.” Despite these two tokens being slightly vague, they did verify the announcement. The students were not only exposed to the totalitarian and authoritarian reality in *1984*, but they could experience it through a video game.

The **TI** included a total of seven tokens to Gaming & Pop Culture, covering 8.61% of the coded document. Out of all of the data collected, the only elements that can be cross-referenced with other data were the instances in which the teacher mentioned *Orwell*. “So directly, *uso Minecraft...e uso Orwell, pero bien poquito porque este año lo use, pero I played with them for like 30 minutes cuando di 1984.*” This corroborated the **FG** and **D** in which *Orwell* was a part of the class at some point during the first semester. The teacher never specified the objectives or standards, but he mentioned that it was used during the discussion of *1984*. In addition, the teacher mentions that it was not used a lot during the semester; this could have been for numerous reasons, but chiefly because video games take time, and the pacing of the class could have been affected if the teacher had provided more time to play. Nevertheless, it was evident that the teacher was incorporating actual video games into the classroom.

Sports & Pop Culture

Sports & Pop Culture contained fifteen (15) different tokens spread throughout four (4) diverse file types (**D**, **TI**, **FG**, and **FN**). This code appeared in two **D**, six (6) times among the **FN**, twice (2) referenced in the **FG**, and five (5) times in the **FG**. The two documents in which this code emerged were the interest inventory titled *A bit about me* and *Bonus Activity: R & J Memes*. *A bit about me* made reference to Sport & Pop Culture when the teacher required students to provide: Your favorite sports team(s). Through this simple, yet important detail, the teacher hoped to understand the students. This could be to collect information to be used later or to simply acquaint himself with the students' interests. In addition, this also revealed something about the teacher: the fact that the teacher enjoyed and consumed sports. One could assume that if the teacher did not enjoy a specific type of sphere or was not familiar at all with a type of sphere, the teacher would not use said sphere or mention it. However, we could see that the teacher did include sports in the interest inventory which might shine a light on who the teacher is. In addition, *Bonus Activity: R & J Memes* was included in Appendix I and it focused on students creating memes about The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet. The reference appeared in instructions number: "2. Choose your favorite meme from the Weeknd's performance at the Super Bowl." Despite the fact that the focus was on The Weeknd's performance during the Super Bowl, students needed to have watched the Super Bowl to understand the reference. And if they hadn't been exposed to the Super Bowl, the fact that the teacher assigned creating a meme about the Super Bowl would have required students to familiarize themselves with the event. This one sentence provided a clear connection between sports and the classroom.

Sports & Pop Culture emerged in the **FG** twice covering 1.88% of the total codes in said transcript. Both tokens alluded to the anticipatory set and how students relate to the use of sports in the classroom. **S1** mentioned “I think it helps like—it’s like a bonding experience. Because he asks about basketball, fantasy basketball...” **S1** was referring to a classroom dynamic where the teacher greets them, asked about their week or weekend, and made small talk. The brief anticipatory set provided a bonding opportunity between educator and educated, in this case with the incorporation of sports. This allowed the dialogue to be tailored to the students’ reality and to the spheres they were exposed to outside of the school scenario. Additionally, **S2** commented “...we occasionally talk about baseball.” This comment emerged out of a question the researcher asked regarding the use of an interest inventory at the beginning of the academic year. The students recalled the use of the interest inventory.

On the other hand, the **TI** included 2.33% of codes relating to Sports & Pop Culture. Three tokens in the interview were directly related to the *Bonus Activity: R & J Memes*. The teacher stated “...when the Weeknd appeared in the Super Bowl...I used that at the beginning of the class to just motivate them, right? To get them to talk to me.” Apart from directly addressing motivation, which is a subcategory, the teacher focused on the goal: “To get them to talk to me.” There was a clear aim: motivation and participation. The tools were the Super Bowl and The Weeknd. Through speaking about the Super Bowl, The Weeknd’s performance, and the memes littering the internet at the time, the teacher decided to create the *Bonus Activity: R & J Memes*. In response to the results of the activity, the teacher stated “[t]hey had fun connecting the novel to The Weeknd and a performance [in] the Super Bowl and what not.” This seems to imply that

students expressed enjoyment regarding the activity either verbally or written. However, there was no concrete data to support this claim. Nevertheless, some of the memes that emerged out of this activity were collected. Lastly, the teacher used sports to connect with the students as part of his goals. “And when I show them I know a lot about basketball...*ellos se quadan como que...*” Once more, the teacher here expressed the perspective students have of teachers. Some students consider teachers to be alien or other. Despite this reference not being unique, it provided a connection between Sports & Pop Culture and Personal Connections.

Sports & Pop Culture provided a total of 6.52% to the **FN**. All six tokens to this subcategory happened in the anticipatory set and were included in the observations. During the anticipatory set, the teacher welcomed students, asked about their week, and tried to spark a lively conversation with them. What follows were three of the most salient examples of the anticipatory set referencing sports as presented in the **FN**:

- March 30th, 2021: The teacher begins the class by asking them about their weekend and how they feel today. The teacher goes on to participate in a conversation with students about basketball centers.
- April 8th, 2021: ...the teacher takes attendance. The teacher goes on to mention Moses Brown as some students bring up the topic of fantasy basketball...
- April 13th, 2021: The teacher begins by asking how their weekend went. Another student mentions basketball and the teacher mentions a couple of players from his fantasy basketball team...The student mentions Moses Brown to spark the conversation.

All of the previously mentioned **FNs** had one thing in common: sports. Be it basketball, fantasy basketball, or Tony Hawk, they could all be included in the sphere defined as Sports & Pop Culture. However, all of these tokens were only present in anticipatory set. This will be expanded further in the category Planning & Pop Culture, but it was evident that most of the tokens in **FN** are superficial. In addition, we could see that these instances of sport talk were referencing basketball and would require students to be exposed to these particular spheres of pop culture for the conversation to feel personal to them. This talk might have alienated some students because they did not have access to the platforms to watch these games nor have the interest to do so. One thing was clear: the teacher was hoping to connect with the students through the use of sport tokens in the classroom.

News, Tech, Social Media & Pop Culture

News, Tech, Social Media & Pop Culture appeared a total of thirty-nine (39) times spread through the **D**, **TI**, **FG**, and **FN**. To begin, News, Tech, Social Media & Pop Culture appeared a total of four (4) times in the **FN** totaling 2.44%. On April 20th, 2021, the teacher made reference to this subcategory while discussing *The Hobbit*: “When presenting, students make connections to their everyday lives; pandemic, [new] normal, global warming and corporations (the teacher connects it to doublethink from *1984*), dependence (the one ring) to smartphones and cellphones....” The teacher used the example of the one ring to make a comparison to their smartphones. Students seemed to be aware of the hold technology had on their life. Students admitted of the negative impact dependence toward technology can have in their lives. April 22nd, 2021 provided another examples of technology being subtly alluded to. Students mentioned using an app to draw the mythical beast for a special project on *The Hobbit*. The **FN** stated “...a

student mentions an app called Fire Alpaca that they used to draw their monster.” Despite the fact that this particular reference did not allude to a groundbreaking connection, it allowed me a glimpse into the relationship, and the environment, that the teacher created: one that allows multiple tools and pop culture tokens.

On the other hand, the teacher provided a safe space for discussions about social media. An instant of this was when the students sparked a conversation about Trisha Paytas. As was stated in the FN, “Students bring up a Youtube personality named Trisha Paytas. The class sparks with opinions weighing in on Trisha as a youtuber, model, and singer.” The teacher controlled this conversation, despite it being an open space. The anticipatory set provided a space for students to unwind and share, but the class schedule proceeded as programmed when the teacher required it. “The teacher goes on to take attendance and discuss the schedule for today’s class....” Despite Trisha Paytas not having anything to do with the class, the teacher provided a space for dialogue. Nevertheless, when it was time to continue with the class, it did not interfere with the schedule. April 29th, 2021, provided an example of the use of News, Tech, Social Media & Pop Culture to explain synecdoche: “The teacher shares examples such as Trump’s Tweet about the “China virus” to exemplify synecdoche.” The teacher used Trump Tweets to try to connect synecdoche in figurative language and the tweet. In this instance, the teacher was bridging the content of the class and social media. The teacher did not have to explain who Trump was because most of the students had been exposed to that particular knowledge through the spheres that they used outside of the classroom. That previous knowledge made this example powerful. In addition, “China virus”, despite its xenophobic tone, and perhaps because of it, was the perfect example of news & social

media being used in a classroom. It opened the discussion to understand synecdoche and xenophobia.

News, Tech, Social Media & Pop Culture emerged in the **D** fifteen (15) times. Two tokens correlated with the subcategory titled Poetry & Pop Culture. The correlations emerged out of the use of Spotify. The teacher compiled the songs in said platform to make it accessible for the entirety of the class. If students were interested in finding out what their classmates had included in an assignment titled *Musicalizing Romeo & Juliet* and the Sonnetizing Popular Songs project, they could do so easily. There was not much to add to these two tokens other than the fact that it provided a platform for students to share their songs. Perhaps this could have provided an extra incentive for students to include songs they enjoyed so classmates would be exposed to them. The remaining thirteen tokens appear in the PowerPoint presentation titled *1984: Intro and Book One*. What follows was an analysis of these thirteen tokens ranging from technology to authoritarianism. *1984: Intro and Book One* was included in Appendix G. To begin, the teacher used an image of Mark Zuckerberg and Donald Trump to begin his comparison of the world in *1984*. In addition, to connect the ever-watchful government of *1984* to our world, the teacher included the Tik Tok logo as the social media. To highlight this reality even further, the teacher used the image of *The Social Dilemma*: a Netflix documentary which focuses on privacy and how companies are constantly monitoring, manipulating, and selling user's information. This excessive use of News, Tech, Social Media, & Pop Culture was done so on purpose. It created a clear connection between them and the class discussion. These images were just the tip of the iceberg as they were an introduction to the topics that will be discussed throughout *1984*.

A comparison of the world of *1984* and our reality was at the heart of *1984: Intro and Book One*: “*1984* reappeared as a best seller quite recently (2017). What seemed to spark this newly-acquired interest in the novel?” The PowerPoint provided two links (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/25/books/1984-george-orwell-donald-trump.html?mcubz=1>; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/news-trend-watch/conway-alternative-facts-20170122>) to help students compare the ministries in *1984* to fanatics in the 2000s. Both the links and the questions were direct world-to-text & text-to-world connection, but it also included popular culture as it tackled our current political environment. As if that wasn’t enough, the following slide included a Daily Show video clip that dissected Alternative Facts. This context framed *1984* as a powerful book that reflected the present culture. The teacher framed literary texts through political commentary. After viewing the video, the teacher asked students to answer the following questions: How does this story from The Daily Show resonate with *1984*? In what ways does Winston’s job in the Ministry of Truth seem to echo Sean Spicer’s (former White House Press Secretary) remarks about the inauguration? The connection between news and literature became palpable as students were required to draw comparisons.

Appendix G included all of the content of *1984: Intro and Book One*, including pictures used to highlight topics such as xenophobia, sexism, and racism in America. Furthermore, the teacher also presented the pictures in Appendix G to draw parallels not only with the context and setting present in *1984*, but also with the characters and organizations. Said images reinforced a parallel between refugees, xenophobia, ISIS, Osama Bin Laden, Trump’s Muslim Ban, sexism, and even racism in America of the

problems that the world was facing. The students were not only exposed to the literature, but to the real-world equivalent of that literature.

News, Tech, Social Media & Pop culture totalled 19.41% in *1984*'s Final Evaluation. All of the tokens in this document related to the use of citations in the final evaluation for *1984*. According to the document, students must "cite a news article (from a reliable source or news outlet) that provides evidence for the connections that you have made between the novel and the world today." For the sake of brevity, one example was provided as they all relate to the same use of citations in an essay evaluation. All of the five tokens contemplated the use, or lack thereof, of accurate and relevant news article in their final evaluation. This directly tied to *1984: Intro and Book One* PowerPoint which showed made text-to-world connections. In addition, this reference was also coded in Pop Culture & Planning due to the assessment.

The **FG** provided three (3) tokens to News, Tech, Social Media, & Pop Culture, but they were all provided by the researcher. None of the tokens were stated or uttered by students.

News, Tech, Social Media & Pop Culture arose twelve (12) times in the **TI**. Two of the tokens were related to the definition of pop culture and the teacher's perception: "...with the advent and the rise of social media...has become the main source of consumption for popular culture." The teacher equated social media to the vast number of spheres of pop culture. He stated, particularly from his own experience, that the medium that we use the most to consume pop culture is social media. This was not necessarily always so, but it seemed to be accurate to the teacher's reality. In addition, the teacher stated "[i]t's so easy to share links on social media that I think that the phenomenon of

what we know as pop culture today I would say it's even more massive...." The teacher seemed to imply that popular culture has grown thanks to social media. Perhaps he might have been trying to say that it was more accessible because of said media. In addition, three comments relating to Puerto Rican Pop Culture were coded to News, Tech, Social Media, & Pop Culture, but were discussed in their respective subcategory. Similarly, there were two tokens related to quarantine corner and those were also discussed in their subcategory. However, it was cross-referenced with this subcategory due to the nature of social media. These cross-tokens might have something to do with the accessibility nature of social media.

During the **TI**, the opportunity arose to directly address social media in the target classroom, and the teacher stated, "[s]ocial media is not my strong suit. I only have Facebook...I don't have Instagram...I don't have Twitter...I don't have snapchat." This unfamiliarity with the majority of the social media platforms created a gap in the teacher's knowledge. Said gap might have highly limited his ability to create activities that take advantage of social media platforms. Nevertheless, the teacher suggested that he had been exposed to some words and concepts: "I'm familiar with the nomenclature of Snapchat like they use terminology sometimes and they tell me...." This is a clear example of how students related to the teacher, by educating him on the spheres of pop culture that they were exposed to. However, this did not change the limitations the teacher might have possessed when it came to using social media in the target classroom. On the other hand, the teacher admitted to having used a handful of activities relating to social media. "...I have used Whatsapp, like a Whatsapp template" and "...stuff like what would this character have in their Facebook account, what's their favorite song, but

really I haven't exploited nor used a lot of social media in my classes." Despite the mention of Facebook and Whatsapp templates, this could not be cross-referenced with any of the other data types throughout this study.

Contrary to the use of social media, the teacher admitted to having used news outlets to stay up to date with current events. "I have un app de Google: Google News...Local news, *pero tambien aveces me da pop culture*...So, I read about it and that gives me an idea...so I give it its place." The teacher presented two sides in this short statement: up-to-date news savvy and pop culture aficionado. The teacher stated "give it its place" referring to popular culture. The teacher seemed to believe that pop culture should have a place in the classroom scenario. Lastly, the teacher also mentioned the use of tweets for teaching grammar. This reference was already coded in the subcategory titled Grammar & Pop Culture. Nevertheless, since it contemplated the use of a social media platforms, it was crucial that it be mentioned: "I remember as a matter of fact I've used celebrity tweets for grammar" Furthermore, despite the fact that the teacher did not personally use, or have a Twitter account, made this reference particularly interesting. He still included tweets from celebrities in the discussion of proper grammar conventions while simultaneously not being aware of the use of Twitter.

Pop Culture: The Small & Big Screen

Pop Culture: The Small & Big Screen appeared in nine (9) diverse types of data collected, and it was one of the most prolific codes in the study. It emerged in the **D**, **TI**, **FG**, and **FN**. The **FN** totaled 5.85% the narrative.

Fantastical Pop Culture

Five out of the eight tokens were related to the discussion of *The Hobbit*. An example of this was presented when a student pointed out, during a discussing on the

literary character Gandalf, "...the similarities between two literary characters from different pop culture spheres: Gandalf and Dumbledore" and "[t]he student makes the comparison because both of these characters push the protagonist to take action." It was important to point out that the target classroom did not include the discussion of any of the Harry Potter novels or movies. Despite this, the student made the connection between these two wizards, and how they both shared the role of helper to the protagonist. The three remaining tokens relating to *The Hobbit* addressed an assessment that had students create their original mythical creature. For example,

[The teacher] mentions that some students took creative inspiration from *The Hobbit* movies; [a] student mentions fantasy movies to exemplify the creature's weakness; [s]ome students used inspiration from fantasy dragons for their own creature, other students mention anime as a style for drawing their own creatures.

As previously stated, all of these mentions focused on a single assignment, yet the students voiced out their experience. The *Hobbit* movie reference provided a frame of reference for the students to understand and experience the novel through the visual medium, even if it was not assigned in class. Through this, the students were able to visualize and provide a backdrop of their creature. The fact that the teacher did not prohibit the use of the movie allowed students the freedom to understand and bridge meaning through both the book and the movie adaptation. In addition, the mention of anime also provided a frame, context, or backdrop, for students to create their interpretation of the creatures that would be part of this universe. The student's previous knowledge or style was then readily available. By allowing the use of anime as an inspiration, the teacher was validating the student's world inside the classroom.

In addition, the researcher asked, “did your group watch clips from The Hobbit?” To which S3 answered, “I don’t think so.” Despite the fact that the students stated that they watched the movies of the books they read in class, they did not do so for The Hobbit trilogy.

TV & Pop Culture

Pop Culture: The Small & Big Screen also provided the space for students to discuss TV shows in the anticipatory set, while also tying it to the world of literature. “The teacher begins by asking how their weekend went. Students go on to share what they did on their weekend. This leads to a discussion of Black Mirror—the teacher mentions dystopian literature....” Also, “[a] student mentions binge-watching Netflix....”. These tokens quoted directly from the FN provided a glimpse into the anticipatory set as a welcome and to recall previous knowledge. The interpretation and the connection of Black Mirror to dystopian literature was used to recall *1984*. It provided a space to use TV as a reflection of the real world, while also allowing students to understand the purpose of these TV shows other than entertainment.

Adaptations

The PowerPoints with the remaining twenty-nine (29) tokens were: *R & J Act 4*, *Types of Irony*, and *1984: Intro and Book One*. *R & J Act 4*’s first reference, as was present in Appendix G, focused on guide questions that students were required to answer while watching the Romeo + Juliet adaptation. These questions included:

what are the most salient differences between the movie and the original play?

Which details from the original text did the director (Baz Luhrmann) preserve?

Based on what you have watched so far, what is your overall opinion of this movie adaptation?

These questions had a comparative nature in common. By comparing the original to the adaptation, the teacher hoped to have students create a connection between the original piece and the adaptation, but the teacher also hoped to have students criticize the adaptation. Either option forced students to use their critical-thinking skills to understand the key differences and why these differences were employed. In addition, in slides seventeen and twenty, the teacher included images of *Romeo + Juliet* in an effort to maintain the connection between the play and the adaptation. Perhaps this was also done to maintain the student's interest in the discussion of the play. Furthermore, in slides twenty-one & twenty-seven, the teacher was asking students to draw comparisons between suspension of disbelief and catharsis in the play and in pop culture. As presented in slide twenty-one, "[w]hat role do these concepts play in how we perceive literature and film? Mention a film or series that has evoked suspension of disbelief and catharsis in you." These two points bridged the classroom and the student's perception of movies. It was curious to point out that the teacher did not mention *Romeo + Juliet* in these two questions. The teacher was using other movies to have students understand the terminology. He was directly requiring them to analyze the ones they had seen and connect them to the concept of catharsis and suspension of disbelief. Lastly, the teacher closed with a scene from *Romeo + Juliet* in slide number twenty-nine. This closed the discussion of *R & J: Act 4*.

The last four tokens in *1984: Intro and Book One* required the students to visualize what a modern adaptation of *1984* would look like. This was present in slides forty-three to forty-six. The slides provided students with the following question: "How do you picture him? Who would play him in a 2020 adaptation of the novel?" (relating to

O'Brien) and "How do you picture her? Who would play her in a 2018 adaptation of the novel?" (referring to Julia). It was important to point out that the second question was a little outdated seeing as the teacher did not adapt the presentation to 2021. Nevertheless, both questions made students analyse a piece of literature and come to conclusions about which actor/actress would suit an adaptation. Students were forced to consider the qualities of the characters in order to attribute an actor/actress to these dystopian literature characters. In addition, on slide forty-four and forty-six, the teacher provided his own selections for the possible cast: Stanley Tucci as O'Brien & Zooey Deschanel as the Dark-Haired Girl (Julia).

Personal Connections

Personal Connections included the subcategory titled defining pop culture. However, the main category included instances when the data reflected how the teacher created relationships with the students, examples of personal connections with pop culture, and personal connections without the use of pop culture. Personal Connections had the purpose of compiling the moments when students or the teacher demonstrated a relation between the world inside the classroom and the world outside of the classroom. Personal Connections included a total of ninety-six (96) tokens throughout the vast data collection. Defining pop culture housed in Personal Connections focused on the standard definition and the aim of pop culture provided by the participants of this investigation. Throughout Personal Connections one could see how the teacher and students strengthened their bonds in hopes to relate to the target classroom, with and without popular culture. Personal Connections with instances of pop culture appeared a total of thirty-eight (38) times spread out among twenty (20) different files. Moments when the teacher drew connections without the use of elements of pop culture was also considered

in Personal Connections and there were thirty-four (34) appearances spread out among ten (10) different files.

Personal Connections included twenty-three (23) coded tokens in the **FN**. All of these tokens have been discussed in their respective spheres of pop culture. However, those that were crucial to the analysis of the underlying features will be contemplated in the analysis that follows.

Relating in the TESOL classroom

To begin, one of the key factors of Personal Connections was how the students and the teacher created connections in the classroom with the world outside of the classroom. By definition, the world outside of the classroom did not necessarily contemplate the use of pop culture. This could be seen in moments when the teacher did not use any specific pop culture elements but drew attention to a student's life outside of the classroom. This was rather evident in most of the teacher's anticipatory sets where he would do things like "...begins by asking students about Easter Week" or "...teacher begins the class by asking them about their weekend and how they feel today." Not only did this strengthen their relationship by creating rapport, but also it created a connection between the outside world and the world inside the classroom.

In addition, these connections could be seen when the teacher decided to share "...his unique experience at the cooperating school when he was first hired." Despite the discussion of the class material, the teacher showed students his vulnerability in an attempt to help students who were second guessing themselves to relate to the teacher. This way students could see that it could happen to everyone. Perhaps this might seem like a superficial experience to some, but the teacher was creating a safe space for

students to explore how they felt. Additionally, these connections were also evident when the teacher “takes some time to have all the students unmute and sing Happy Birthday to the student.” These personal connections that fortified the teacher and students’ relationships appeared a total of thirteen (13) times in the **FN**, seven (7) in the **FG**, five (5) in three (3) of the numerous **D** collected, and eight (8) tokens in the **TI**.

The interest inventory created by the teacher during the 2020-2021 academic year expanded on the connections between teacher and student. The interest inventory was included in Appendix E; it included the following elements of popular culture: favorite music genre and artist, favorite sport team, movies and series, literary genre and books. Through this interest inventory, the teacher hoped to get to know his students. In addition, the interest inventory provided enough information for the teacher to create material based on the students answers or use those answers as examples. It was crucial to point out that the teacher not only assigned this document in the Google Classroom, but he also participated in answering the interest inventory in video format. This provided the students with a glimpse at the person their teacher is outside of the classroom.

The **TI** provided eight different instances when these relationships blossomed.

The teacher stated

...I told them that I really like music, a little about myself. I love basketball that I love the NBA, so I try to connect with them, and I try to make them see I’m human and I also consume popular culture....

The teacher aimed to tackle the idea that educators are aliens with this quote. The teacher directly addressed this misconception by providing students with information about his

likes and dislikes. This provided a holistic perspective of a teacher: one that is aware of the reality of the student. By doing so, the teacher allowed himself to connect with his pupils instead of hiding himself behind the construct of a teacher. Through the mention of music and the NBA, students might have been able to see themselves in the interest of the teacher and not be alienated. This relationship with music and the perception of the teacher as ‘other’ was also exemplified when the teacher stated “...I had three songs by *Aventura*. You know what, I told them I like *Aventura*. Sometimes they think that we’re aliens. ‘The teacher only consumes music in English.’” The connections in most of these examples were implied rather than directly stated, but the teacher did go on to address the purpose of popular culture and how it ties into relationships: “Secondary purpose, to connect with them. To make them see that I’m human...*Tienen esta imagen de que el maestro es este tipo que llega a la casa a leer Shakespeare, y preparar exámenes, a corregir exámenes....*” The teacher smashed the misconception that teachers are not intrinsically human.

In addition, the teacher hoped for them “...to see that I really value what they value and that I can connect with what they connect.” Value is not an intrinsic quality in any type of media; value is added. Said value was being given by the teacher to the spheres of pop culture that students were exposed to through the interest inventory. An example of this was when the teacher used the assignment on *Romeo & Juliet* to create relationships with students through the incorporation of their musical tastes.

...[B]ecause I have them play like excerpts, and I comment on ‘Oh, I like that artist, I like their sound.’ And then I try to make connections with my own taste

like ‘they sound like this’ and ‘they sound like this other artist’ and I get to know them a lot better.

Pop culture seemed to be an accessible way for the teacher to relate with his classroom.

The FN displayed the majority of the tokens. Through what would’ve seemed like mundane questions, the teacher formed bonds with his students and made them feel comfortable in the classroom. An example of this was when “[t]he teacher begins the class by asking them about their weekend and how they feel today. The teacher goes on to participate in a conversation with students about Basketball centers.” The mention of topics that interests the student helped them understand that the teacher partook in the same experiences they did. However, there were instances when those connections did not contemplate pop culture. For instance, “[t]o bring the class to a close, the teacher brings up a previous assignment: a riddle competition. Students take turns trying to guess the riddles fellow classmates created. The teacher plays along.” This riddle contest allowed the students to participate among themselves, guessing the answers to numerous riddles, giving everyone the chance to interact with their other classmates. The environment was playful and joyous. And to top it all off, the teacher took part in this activity, hoping to be an equal at some level with the students.

In the TI, the teacher also directly mentioned that he knows “...their appeal and their reach and that all of my students will have an idea of who they are and I’m going to be able to connect with them.” The teacher addressed one of the many purposes of popular culture in the classroom scenario: connecting. Connecting with the students at some level must be part of the dynamic in the classroom, but also one must know how and who to make those connections with. Teachers have to be exposed to the popular

culture that students are consuming on a daily basis to understand the appeal and the reach of the targeted popular culture.

Text-to-world Connections

Many of the assessments used for the target classroom required students to draw connections between the literature or poetry and the real world. I highlighted a few that were present in the Personal Connections. When it came to the assessment titled Final Evaluation *1984*, the teacher required students to “...make a text-to-world or a text-to-self connection with the novel to produce a three-paragraph essay.” By allowing students to select between the two options (self or world), the teacher allowed students’ autonomy to flourish. The vast options opened the door for students to draw comparisons from any form of media, whether they include pop culture or not. This not only helped them understand *1984* better, but it also helped them draw comparisons between the literature that they are reading and the real world. Let us not forget that pop culture could be part of this real world.

The **D** exemplified the connections students made between their every-day life and the literature in class. This is exemplified in the document titled Final Evaluation *1984*. This document had seven (7) tokens relating to student’s daily life and the novel *1984*. It was evident in tokens such as

[e]stablish parallels between the novel and your own reality in 2020; [y]ou may also choose to write a brief reflection about this issue and how it affects you and those around you; [d]escribe the social issue, event, ideology, or practice from the novel with which you will establish a text-to-world connection.

All of these particular tokens focused on how students can understand the world of a literary piece reflecting their own. These elements were intrinsic to a final assessment on *1984*. The teacher provided these in the rubric for students to be able to form these connections as it is part of the standards that were being used in the targeted grade level. Despite the fact that this document did not include tokens to pop culture, it did allow students to form connections and to bring their own elements of pop culture into the analysis. Nevertheless, it was not something required in the rubric.

Another example of these text-to-world connections was present when, during the **FG, S3** commented

I just guess that maybe some people don't want to include, you know, their actual life in their learning life. Other than that, I don't really think there's any disadvantage to it...When you're talking about dystopian literature, and you compare it to our real world....

This reference equated our reality to that of literary elements. **S3** seemed to comprehend the reality of the connection between the two worlds. In addition, the comparison with the real world provided the student with a context that can be used to find differences and similarities between both worlds. As **S3** also stated referring to the comparison between both worlds, "...that might be a bit scary for some people." This fear emerged from seeing that our real world was not that much different than a dystopian world. Other examples of the data coded that also appears throughout the subcategories were mentions of the anticipatory set, the purpose of pop culture in the classroom, the motivational aspect of pop culture, and the numerous music related assignments and assessments.

Defining Pop Culture

Defining Popular Culture emerged as a subcategory to address both the aim and definition of pop culture. The vast number of tokens in this subcategory appeared in the **FG** and **TI**. Both had three (3) tokens coded in each case. The two types of populations, students and teacher, gave us a useful way to gauge how each population perceives popular culture.

The Educator's Definition

The teacher defined pop culture as

...any sort of manifestation of art, which is sort or massive, it's accessible to a lot of people as opposed to literature...So, I would say it's anything, any manifestation of art, I think it's a form of art, but that it appealing to a lot of people. And we consume it for fun, for pleasure, and not necessarily to enrich our intellect and what not.

The teacher differentiated between enriching one's intellect and pop culture. However, the teacher expressed that he did not believe pop culture was without value. The teacher

...think[s] that that the phenomenon of what we know as popular culture today I would say it's even more massive and even more widespread, because of social media. I would say yea like I said in terms of sources: music, videos, memes. All that.

Here the teacher made an effort to point out some forms of popular culture while leaving out others. It is clear that the teacher valued some spheres of pop culture more than others due to the fact that he began the list with 'must' and 'uses' music often in his classes. The exclusionary nature of the statements made it evident that other spheres like video games,

comic books, and graphic novels were not as important or relevant to the target teacher. This could be for numerous reasons: a lack of comfort in those topics, lack of knowledge, or lack of confidence. However, one must point out that the teacher did use video games in the classroom. Perhaps the teacher did not directly mention those other mediums as part of the definition because it slipped his mind. Lastly, the teacher also mentioned that pop culture makes him

...think about like sitcoms and series. Like that's the first thing that comes to mind...I think immediately about like Friends and The Office. And like really famous people like, like, I don't know, ah, Bad Bunny, Katy Perry, The Weeknd.

Once more the examples here provided us with a preference: music and sitcoms. This was crucial to understanding the category titled Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture, because it cemented the idea that people are exposed to different mediums based on their contexts. And based on these definitions, we could assume that the teacher used what he was most familiar with.

The teacher understood the “appeal [of pop culture] and their reach and that all my students will have an idea of who they are and I’m going to be able to connect with them.” The connections that emerged out of the use of pop culture appeared to be one of the teacher’s goals. It is not just about connecting with the students through popular culture, but also having students connect with the content of the class. This was evident as both the word appeal and reach have been used in the **TI**. Through pop culture the teacher hoped to reach them and that reach allowed him to accomplish his goals, standards, and objectives of the class. The teacher continued “...but when it comes to pop culture *nos gusta el mismo mofongo, nos gusta los mismos tostones....*” It was interesting

that the teacher mentioned food as a way to connect and to feel that the students and himself shared the same identity and the same popular culture.

The Students' Definitions

On the other hand, the students in the **FG** also gave their definition of pop culture.

Student three (**S3**) initiated by stating,

[w]ell, I mean before I have like an actual definition for it, my first thought was just like music, because of pop...But I guess it can just be anything that's popular. I guess. Something that we all know what is and we experience, like movies and stuff that we've watched it.

S3 drew attention to the assumption that because the word pop culture includes pop as part of its etymological make up, then we could assume that it was related to the genre of pop music. However, **S3** corrected themselves due to the nature of the question. Similarly to the teacher, **S3** believed that one of the main elements of pop culture was its widespread nature. It needs to be popular to be considered pop culture, and the majority of people had to be exposed to the experience in some way. Student two (**S2**) strengthened **S3**'s definition by adding, "I agree with student three. It's anything that's popular. It usually has to do with something cultural or with entertainment." **S2** broadened the definition of pop culture by adding two elements that **S3** did not include: cultural and entertainment. Entertainment correlated with the teacher's definition because pop culture was "consume[d]...for fun...." On the other hand, there was a cultural aspect that was intrinsic to pop culture because it dictated who was exposed to which types of pop culture. Social, cultural, and geographical factors will influence which types of pop culture students were more exposed to. This was due to the nature of popularity,

language, and cultural norms. The pop culture students in Russia were exposed to will be widely different than those in Puerto Rico. Lastly, Student one (S1) said, “I agree with student two and student three...it’s stuff that has to do with our current culture and things that shape us as a generation, I guess.” Interesting enough, S1 added a crucial layer to the definition of pop culture that up to this point was missing; pop culture is generational. What is considered popular culture to a millennial will not necessarily be considered popular culture to a boomer. This highlighted the importance of teachers being up to date with current events, trends, TV shows, movies, games, among others. If the teacher is not in touch with what the current generation is being exposed to, it will be difficult to accurately employ the use of popular culture in the classroom.

Pop Culture & Planning

Pop Culture & Planning aimed to collect tokens to planning, administrative duties, classroom scheduling, assessment, and the inner workings of the classroom. Pop Culture & Planning also included two subcategories: The Anticipatory Set & Pop Culture and Motivation. The Anticipatory Set & Pop Culture contemplated the fifteen minutes at the beginning of class and how the teacher used these to create a nurturing and welcoming environment: it appeared a total of sixteen (16) times spread out among three different files. Motivation pondered how the teacher used pop culture to motivate students either toward assessments or the material being discussed in class: it appeared eighty-two (82) times spread out among nineteen different files. Most of these tokens have been coded into Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture. Pop Culture & Planning housed two subcategories and contains details about the planning process from anticipatory set to the incorporation of pop culture in assessments. It also contains tokens to the classroom

atmosphere. Pop Culture & Planning contained ninety-one (91) tokens in twenty (20) different types of data.

Presentations & Memes

For the sake of brevity, the analysis will begin with *R & J: Act IV and V*. We will be focusing on slide thirteen, twenty-one, and twenty-seven. These were all interactive slides and required students to answer the following questions: “What role do these concepts play in how we perceive literature and films? What are the most salient differences between the movie and the original play?” These questions provided a glimpse into the concepts discussed in class and the integration of popular culture when it came to literature. However, these mentions of literature have been discussed in Literature & Pop Culture. The focus here was in the way the teacher plans. Prior to the discussion of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, the teacher created this presentation with two things in mind: literature and pop culture. The teacher made a conscious effort to incorporate popular culture into the class. Not only was pop culture mentioned throughout the presentation, but the questions provided guided practice for the students to relate the play and TV. On closer analysis, one could assume that the teacher was purposefully incorporating these for the sake of motivation, student engagement, and the classroom atmosphere. But these were all assumptions. However, the teacher established a process prior to the class of incorporation.

The use of memes correlated five times with Pop Culture & Planning, included in the student examples and the instructions *Bonus Activity: R & J Memes*. These assignments required planning and structuring. Even if this activity was not a required assignment, students had the opportunity to create memes related to *The Tragedy of*

Romeo and Juliet for bonus points. This distinction was important because it meant that not all students participated in the task of memefying the play. However, the instructions stated that students had to use a meme they were familiar and must correlate with the material discussed in class. Through this, the teacher was using the content of the class to bridge knowledge.

Planning to use Music

Musicalizing Romeo & Juliet contained eight tokens that cross-referenced with Pop Culture & Planning. *Musicalizing Romeo & Juliet* required students to be divided in groups, in which they would select three scenes from *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. They would then have to select songs that reflected the scene they had decided. Students had to summarize and state the mood of the scene, but also justify their music selection while stating song title, genre, artist, and release year. Students had to include these elements for all of the scenes. Students needed to have an understanding of the mood and the atmosphere of the scene to be able to explain their choices. From this perspective, the teacher was asking numerous tasks from the students: teamwork, analysis, adaptation, and understanding. The assignment was requiring students to synthesize their selections and summarize the scene. In this way, the teacher was both incorporating pop culture as a way to motivate students, but also making it essential to the assignment. Without pop culture, this assignment would be very different. The musical elements of this assignment have been discussed in Poetry & Pop Culture.

Then V Now

The researcher asked the teacher if he [the teacher] researched what the students were exposed to and what they considered pop culture: The teacher answered "...no. I think it's something I intuit or surmise..." The teacher did not actually go through a

process of researching what was popular at the moment. One must remember that pop culture must be relevant to the majority of a target population at the time. I found it essential to highlight that the teacher did the research to understand what was considered pop culture to the students. Despite this, the teacher did include interest inventories as part of the class, so to an extent, the teacher was aware of what the students were exposed to. Nevertheless, it should be more thorough. On the context of planning the teacher stated “[a]t the beginning it used to be at the moment...after a few years of teaching, maybe 3 or 4 years, I started planning my classes purposely...including pop culture.” This quote directly addressed the idea that the teacher has not always incorporated pop culture with a purpose. This might have been one of the pitfalls of using pop culture in the classroom. However, the teacher addressed that that was not the case anymore. The use of pop culture was now purposeful. In the past, it could have been used sparingly to make connections with the content. This was corroborated by the assessments, assignments, and the **D**.

The Anticipatory Set

The Anticipatory Set included seven out of the eighteen (18) tokens. These related to the interest inventory, and the classroom atmosphere created in the anticipatory set. The interest inventory provided an opportunity for the teacher to know his students. It was the catalyst for the knowledge he obtained about them at the beginning of the semester. Through the interest inventory, the teacher hoped to collect the data to later create a nurturing environment, evidenced through the anticipatory sets. The students seemed to agree as **S2** stated “I really like it, because it makes our dynamic in the class really good and not as shy as with others...” and **S1** mentions “I think it really helps to like—it’s like a bonding experience....” These two statements collected the vast majority

of the tokens to pop culture and planning in the anticipatory set. The students understood that the teacher was using the popular culture to connect with them, yet they did not see this as a problem, or an over exertion from the part of the teacher. They believed that it helps them be more interested in the class and it created a bond between the teacher and the students. This created the foundation for a nurturing environment.

The Anticipatory Set was referenced nineteen (19) times totaling 21.07% of **FN**. Twelve tokens related to the anticipatory set. During these fifteen minutes, the teacher welcomed students, set the class atmosphere for the day, and introduced the topic of the day. In addition, sometimes the anticipatory set also provided a moment to talk about topics that were not related to the content. Most of the **FN** included a section that had the teacher welcoming and gauging student's moods. This set a caring and nurturing environment between the students and the teacher. Often, the teacher would socialize with students mentioning elements of pop culture, during the anticipatory set. For example, the teacher referenced basketball, Puerto Rican current events, Tony Hawk, Playstation, Music, Black Mirror, Trisha Paytas, NBA, Netflix, among others, during the observations. All of these spheres, discussed in their respective subcategories, helped students believe that they could bring their spheres into the classroom. Students came with ideas and memories of the world that they were living in, instead of shedding them before entering the digital or physical classroom, they were encouraged to bring them. Most of the time, these were not planned, seeing as the students often initiated the discussions and became an active participant. The teacher had to be prepared to answer and interact with the students. Nevertheless, the teacher always managed to transition to the scheduled content without a hitch.

Motivation

Motivation included tokens to the majority of categories throughout the research. In an effort to be concise, only the data that directly mentions the word motivation will be discussed. All other tokens have been addressed in their respective categories or subcategories. For example, if the reference was previously stated in a category such as video games, then the number of times this category crossed with motivation will be mentioned but not discussed.

Motivation differs from all other categories in the respect that it was heavily weighted by the researcher's perspective. In the **FN**, the target teacher did not mention or directly quote the word motivation. Hence, it was up to the researcher to perceive the use of motivation. Motivation was coded nine (9) times in the **FN**. Seven out of the nine tokens refer to Poetry & Pop Culture. The majority of the tokens related to motivation cross-referenced in Poetry & Pop Culture. Hence, these tokens, as was unique to the sphere of pop culture, were discussed at length in Poetry & Pop Culture. As stated in the **FN**, and written by the researcher, "[t]o motivate [the students], the professor shares his unique experience at the cooperating school when he was first hired." It was relevant to highlight that the teacher mentioned this in a discussion on self-worth. This example, once more, could have motivated the students, from the researcher's perspective, to participate and relate to the teacher's reality. It highlighted their ability to empathize with others.

Seventeen (17) out of the forty-five tokens connected Motivation and Poetry & Pop Culture. These tokens were spread throughout many data types. However, none of these tokens included the word motivation. The incorporation of music, as will be seen

shortly in the **TI**, was used to motivate students. It was imperative that it be included in this subsection and quantified among Motivation. Some examples of the assignments cross-referenced in Poetry & Pop Culture and Motivation were all of the documents collected relating to *Musicalizing Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet*.

The **FG** provided fourteen tokens to Motivation. The students highlighted four words: fun, entertainment, comfort and enjoyment. Ten out of these fourteen tokens included one of these four words. This provided us with the students' perspective when it came to the use of pop culture in the classroom. What follows are three snippets out of the ten tokens that mentioned one of the target words previously stated:

“Student one: I think it also makes it more entertaining. Because like there's this element of sharing with the classroom...”

“Student three: Because it does help us understand what we are dealing with that moment, and it makes the class funner for everyone”

“Student two: It makes the class more enjoyable, and I think it also helps us to a certain point to learn better...”

Taking these three tokens into consideration, one could assume that students enjoyed the use of pop culture in the classroom for one particular reasons: the assignments and the discussions become less hectic and more fun. Students seemed to suggest they feel more motivated to interact in the class and with the assigned material. Using pop culture became a catalyst for students to view the material, the discussion, and the classroom in a more easy-going way. Whether the teacher hoped to motivate students when he used pop culture or not became irrelevant as the impact that said pop culture was having on students happens whether the teacher believed it or not. In addition, the students

understood that they were being motivated, but did not mention motivation. The terminology used was uniquely their own and further strengthens the argument of using popular culture for motivation's sake. In addition, the last four tokens were relating to literature, music, movies, and TV, and each has been addressed in their respective categories.

The **TI** contained fourteen (14) tokens to Motivation. Despite the fact that three tokens have been previously dissected, I will be mentioning one example: "I just heard like a lot of things about The Weeknd's performance, so I remember I used that at the beginning of my class to just motivate them...." This reference related to the anticipatory set that later became a bonus activity. The teacher mentioned it at the beginning of class to spark a conversation on the Super Bowl. Nevertheless, after the discussion, the teacher created an activity based on their discussion. Five tokens in the **TI** addressed the use of music in the classroom and have been coded into Poetry & Pop Culture. Two related to movies and TV shows and were coded into Pop Culture: The Small & Big Screen. One reference mentioned *Minecraft* and has been discussed in Gaming & Pop Culture. However, the final three tokens focused on the purpose of popular culture and the way the teacher used it to motivate students. For example, the teacher stated "Main purpose is for them to see that the content of a class doesn't always have to be reading books and completing exercises and handouts. It's for them to see that we can relate those things that they consume...." The teacher was equating the use of pop culture in the classroom to a way of bridging the world inside the classroom to the outside. It seemed the teacher was helping the students be motivated toward the content. In addition, the teacher stated, "[l]a primordial es to make the content of the class relevant to them." This relevance was

an attempt to have the students feel more connected to the material in class. The teacher was using pop culture as a tool, hoping that the students will pay closer attention now that they were not exclusively talking about high subjects. This allowed the teacher to use popular culture with a purpose: motivation. The teacher also mentioned "...I give them pop culture as the means to an end: the end product being the sonnet..." Despite the fact that this had been primarily discussed in Poetry & Pop Culture, it was crucial that it be mentioned in Motivation. The teacher used pop culture, popular songs in this case, to bridge the concepts and structure of a sonnet in a context that the students might be able to easily grasp. The teacher gave them the opportunity to motivate themselves, while they were adapting their favorite songs to the format of a sonnet. Through these and all the other elements discussed in Motivation, and those that correlate with Motivation, one could see that the teacher did incorporate pop culture for the sake of motivating his students.

Other

Other focused on compiling numerous subcategories under one name. This main category did not have any tokens but became an umbrella term to all other categories that did not fit in the previously discussed data. The subcategories under Other were Pitfalls & Negative Experiences with Pop Culture and Recommendations for the Future. What follows is a brief description of each of the subcategory and their respective tokens. Pitfalls & Negative Experiences with Pop Culture focused on how either the teacher or the students had negative encounters or shortcomings with popular culture: It appeared a total of five times in two different files. All of these tokens were present in the **TI** and the **FG**. Recommendations for the Future compiled all instances of recommendations

provided by either the students or the target teacher on the use of pop culture: It appeared a total of two times in a single file. This subcategory appeared exclusively in the **FG**.

Pitfalls & Negative Experiences with Pop Culture

Pitfalls & Negative Experiences with Pop Culture received tokens once in the **FG** when the researcher asked if students had had a negative experience in the classroom with the use of pop culture. Only one of the participating students weighed in stating

“...so the other day he used a picture of like *Residente*, Bad Bunny. And like it was cringy ‘cause some people didn’t know who they were. Cause it’s like ‘you should know who these people are’. And they were like ‘I don’t know who that is’.”

In this instant, **S1** highlighted how some students were not exposed to some spheres of pop culture. However, we did not see a pitfall or a negative experience that stemmed from the teacher’s incorporation of pop culture in the classroom. Rather, we saw how the diverse spheres of pop culture were intrinsically tied to understanding and exposure to pop culture. By mentioning *Residente* and Bad Bunny, the teacher was hoping to create connections between the material of the class (poetry), and the students’ outside world. In addition, the teacher was trying to elicit a response by also incorporating music into a class that focused on poetry. Nevertheless, one of the students that participated in the **FG** saw this as a negative experience because the pop culture mentioned should have been, according to **S1**, common knowledge. This presented us with a dilemma when it came to the diverse spheres of pop culture; neither the teachers nor the students were familiar with all spheres of pop culture. In addition, this reference covered 1.32% of all the tokens coded in the **FG** transcript.

The **TI** included the most tokens to Pitfalls & Negative Experiences with Pop Culture with three tokens totaling 2.19% of the **TI**. One of said tokens that stood out the most from the **TI** stated "...sometimes I've missed terribly... 'oh, like teacher that was a month ago. That's old' I don't know. I thought it was relevant to you still." The teacher mentioned two important details when considering pop culture: student population and relevance. The teacher experienced a type of rejection despite trying to incorporate popular culture in the classroom. When it comes to the student population, the teacher incorporating popular culture needs to understand and show an interest to what the students were exposed to on a daily basis. On the other hand, the teacher also needs to be up-to-date with current trends, musical artists, TV shows, movies, video games. In essence, for a teacher to incorporate popular culture adequately, they need to research constantly, or fear being left in the past. Students often consume new forms of media on various services, and if teachers want to incorporate them, it was crucial that they remain relevant without seeming like "...he's trying so hard. I try to make it as natural as possible. *No lo halo por los pelos.*"

Recommendations for the Future

The bulk of Recommendations for the Future prevailed in the **FG**. When asked if pop culture should be used more often in school, the students answered "[s]tudent Three: Yeah. I think it would be good for other classes. Because you know, music's good and all, but other types of pop culture might help some people get more into the class and understand better." In this reference, the student was hoping the teacher employed other mediums of pop culture. It was interesting to point out that at a subconscious level, the students understood that there were diverse spheres of pop culture without the terminology ever being mentioned. The student called the teacher to use other forms of

pop culture alluding to video games, movies, series, among others, to motivate other students. In addition, the student accepted that the use of music had been beneficial in helping them understand, but not all people are acutely aware of new artists or new songs. Also, the tokens continued "...yeah, I agree with student two. TV shows and movies. I mean, obviously, it's not going to be easy to watch a whole movie in class, but maybe just like a show, a bigger portion of it. That like more than had been shown to us..." Once again, another student was suggesting that the teacher used other mediums other than music. It was crucial to point out that the student accepted that the teacher had used fragments of movies or series. Nevertheless, the recommendation seemed to stem from a concern for other individuals to partake in the same type of learning experience that those that are more aware of music have experienced.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This research consisted of a case study on the use of pop culture in a single TESOL classroom in a laboratory school in Puerto Rico. The target population was a ninth-grade classroom and its teacher. Four types of data were collected throughout the course of this investigation: teacher interview (**TI**), focus group (**FG**), documentation (**D**), and observations (**FN**). This data was collected, analyzed and presented in chapter four. However, this chapter will come to conclusions based on the data and the review of literature. What follows is an effort to answer the six research questions presented in chapter four.

How does the TESOL teacher's incorporation of pop culture create safe spaces for students?

This safe space was constructed through numerous anticipatory sets. To recap, according to Helley and Steiner (2005), a safe space was described by including "...a classroom climate that allows students to feel secure enough to take risks, honestly express their views, and share and explore their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors" (p. 50). The anticipatory set became the best example of a healthy classroom community. It did not just focus on completing roll call, but also allowing the students, and the teacher, the space to relate. Most of these relations occurred through conversations, with his students, on everything from basketball centers to Tony Hawk's Pro Skater. The diversity in these conversations always depended on the students and what they brought from the world outside of the classroom. In other words, the teacher had to be ready to create a nurturing and welcoming virtual classroom, with any topic. A day did not go by when the teacher did not ask students how they were feeling or ask them about what they'd done

on a long weekend. It was interesting to see the students relate to the teacher and, despite the cameras being off, they opened their microphone to announce what they had done on the weekend. These conversations were natural and had no ulterior motive other than creating an environment where students wanted to be. This safe space “[encouraged] students to speak honestly...” (Holley and Steiner, 2005, p. 51). Through the anticipatory set, the teacher set the foundation for the feeling, atmosphere, and motivation for that day. Those fifteen minutes were key to how the class was going to function. At times, there was little participation in the anticipatory set, and it was also reflective of the rest of the class. However, this was not a constant. I hypothesized that the use of the anticipatory set allowed students to be themselves when it came to answering questions, participating, and answering assessments. This related to the concepts discussed by Holley and Steiner (2005), which focused on the creation of spaces that students want to be a part of. Perhaps if the teacher had not created a nurturing, safe, and welcoming environment, the students would not have allowed themselves the opportunity to present their songs for *Sonnetizing Songs* and *Musicalizing’ Shakespeare’s Romeo & Juliet*. The anticipatory set might have set the stage not only for the remainder of the class on a given day but for the whole semester. The energy students and the teacher gave during the anticipatory set could have been the drive for the rest of the class.

The data provided numerous instances in which the teacher used diverse spheres of pop culture to motivate students, even going as far as to letting them use video games to complete assignments. However, this did not necessarily provide a safe space for students. Nevertheless, the teacher did not shy away from creating nurturing environments for his students. Numerous examples of this were accumulated in the

anticipatory sets. These fifteen minutes proved crucial to how the teacher understood his students and how he related to them. Apart from the customary, how was your weekend, the teacher extended discussions to sports, social media, movies, TV shows, and video games. This in turn provided the students with an opportunity to relate and connect to their teacher. Students provided information about their day-to-day life and how they viewed the world. The fact that the teacher allowed this space made students feel safe and validated. Hence, a safe space did not simply mean a nurturing space, but one where the students could feel that their world mattered. In this sense, the teacher did not focus on a single sphere of pop culture but allowed students to present their spheres. In other words, the teacher learned to speak the student's pop culture language as I proposed by connecting the ZPD to pop culture. The moments when the teacher did not know what the students were talking about during the anticipatory set became learning experiences for the teacher.

Bonus Activity: R & J Memes was an excellent example of a learning experiences. The teacher had not planned to have students make memes, but through the anticipatory set, the students felt comfortable enough to discuss the Super Bowl and the Weeknd's performance. The teacher exposed himself to the students' reality to understand their sphere of pop culture, creating connections between the content and the students' pop culture language. Perhaps in another classroom, with another teacher, this might have not been possible. This, among other examples, became a clear representation of how a safe space can have positive effects, not only on learning, but on teaching. If students are allowed to bring the outside world into the classroom, the teacher will be seen as someone students can trust. And that trust might lead to assignments that were inspired

by student's reality. The teacher provided himself the opportunity to use the students' spheres of pop culture to develop an activity, and the students felt that they could trust the target teacher and talk to him.

Additionally, the teacher used an interest inventory. An interest inventory, as is customary to use at the beginning of the semester, allowed educators to gauge the students' interests. In most cases, this was just a formality. One that allowed the teacher to have a record of who the student was, their mental state, and their abilities. However, the target teacher used the interest inventory for other purposes. The interest inventory provided the teacher with information on what the students liked. Information the teacher could use for his classes. The teacher stated, however, that he did not research students' likes or dislikes. I believe that this is a wasted opportunity. However, I understand why the teacher did not research the pop culture that he received in his interest inventory. This came down to time. Nevertheless, the interest inventory was a way for the teacher to use the information the students give him to create bonds. For example, if the teacher knew a student liked *The Office*, the teacher could use *The Office* to draw the student's attention. Additionally, this would create stronger bonds with the students. By acknowledging the student's interests, the teacher was validating that student. He was allowing the student to be seen and appreciated reinforcing the definition of a safe space. One must remember that a key part of this validation emerged out of the influence that pop culture had on students' lives. They created meaningful relationships with these mediums. As mentioned prior, "children bring these characters and stories with them to school as part of their background knowledge..." (Duff, 2002, p. 482). Not only does the use of the interest inventory give the teacher material, ideas, and pop culture elements to use, but it allowed

the students the opportunity to see themselves as important. In the case of the interest inventory provided by the teacher, there was an additional element that made it even more compelling: the teacher recorded himself.

The teacher's recording sent students a clear message: he cares. This caring was reflected in the fact that the teacher took from his time to complete it. The teacher answered the same questions and provided insight on himself as a person. This gives students a clear message of equality. The teacher was showing his humanity to the students. That was a powerful message when creating a safe space. Safe spaces are not created out of imbalances; they emerge when there is a balance and mutual respect.

How does the teacher use pop culture in the classroom?

In plenty of cases, the teacher used pop culture tokens to connect with students in various ways. The teacher targeted the anticipatory set as the place to make these connections. That was why the teacher used a range of diverse spheres of pop culture during the first fifteen minutes of class. This plethora of spheres allowed the teacher to relate to most students. The teacher hoped to spark a conversation with at least one. These conversations were a place for students to allow themselves the opportunity to discuss topics and elements that were not necessarily linked to the course. Nevertheless, the teacher monitored the types of pop culture that are mentioned and discussed during the anticipatory set. This was evident in the data when the teacher mentioned that he would not use "...Lil Nass X..." with the ninth-grade group because it would not be appropriate. It was evident that the teacher addressed the why and the how simultaneously in the teacher interview when he stated "[i]t's for them to see that we can

relate those things that they consume....” The teacher hoped to use pop culture to connect with students, to relate to them through the anticipatory set.

One must remember that within each culture there were sub-elements and sub-spheres that demanded exclusivity. This could be seen in the mediums that the students in the target classroom were exposed to. Some students were familiar with *The Office* while other enjoy Bad Bunny. Speaking the student’s language, or understanding the sub-sphere of pop culture, was essential to understanding how to speak their language. The diverse spheres of pop culture, as mentioned in chapter 3, became ZPD: “...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.79). That connection and knowledge the teacher has of the mediums was crucial to helping students bridge knowledge through pop culture. The teacher used pop culture to motivate students toward in-class discussions. This motivation was tied to my adaptation of Vygotskian ZPD as the language spoken was not only English but pop culture. Additionally, “[p]roviding popular culture texts in the classroom allows students the opportunity to analyze rhetorical strategies, make thematic connections, examine allusions, develop background knowledge, and question race, class, and gender issues” (Page, 2012, p. 130).

Motivation and pop culture become a language of their own. The language of the student’s outside world. The language that was often pushed away in our classrooms. The teacher motivated them through the clever incorporation of musicians, artists, and pop

culture icons into the class discussion. The teacher sparked student's curiosity to connect the content in the classroom to the artist mentioned, showed, or alluded to. In other words, the teacher bridged the content with the knowledge of pop culture. An example of this was when the teacher used Residente, Bad Bunny, and other artists to draw a comparison between poets and musicians. In this discussion, the teacher was purposefully drawing a comparison between these artists and the content being discussed in class. The students were provided the opportunity to weigh in on their perspective of the artists projected on their computers. These images then provide the students with an opportunity, a moment to voice out their opinion on the connection between musician and poet. The teacher was allowing them to make the connection before the class plunged into the structures and definitions of poetry. The teacher stated that his "[m]ain purpose is for them to see that the content of a class doesn't always have to be reading books and completing exercises and handouts." By this the teacher was not hoping to simply forget all literary content, but to show students that through pop culture one can discuss, dissect, and understand the same content that was being taught to them throughout the academic year: Therefore, the teacher is using the students' pop culture language as an MKO.

Another way in which the teacher uses pop culture to motivate the students was through the incorporation of pop culture in assignment and assessments. This was most evident when the teacher incorporates music into the Drama and Poetry units. A couple of examples of the use of pop culture to motivate students were *Musicalizing Romeo and Juliet*, *Sonnetizing Songs*, *Bonus Activity: R & J Memes*. All these assignments and/or assessments have the same element in common: the teacher was using pop culture not just as a medium to see if the students understood the material, but also as a way to make

the assignment and/or assessment more appealing to the students. Perhaps the use of pop culture made the assignment more attractive to the students in question, therefore making them try a little bit harder. This was evident in the **FG** transcription when student two stated “[i]t makes it feel easier since it has to do with our lives...it makes you more motivated to do it.” The students internalized that the incorporation of pop culture in the assignments was not just simply for the sake of allowing the space for discussion, but it also provided the students with the extra nudge to find it appealing.

Which mediums of pop culture are being used in the classroom?

The teacher used several mediums in the TESOL classroom for this case study. As stated in chapter 3, often students had a More Knowledgeable Other to help them through the process of learning. It had been my intention to see how peers could be these MKOs, but it did not pan out that way. However, pop culture became a facilitator between the students and the material. The teacher became the MKO in those instances that he had both the knowledge of the content and of pop culture. The interaction went smoother when the teacher understood the medium the students were exposed to outside of the classroom. Throughout the academic year, the teacher used memes, music, video games, sports, tech, social media, movies, and TV shows. Some of these mediums were used more than others. Video games, tech, and social media were used sparingly. There were examples where the teacher uses the mention of video games to make a connection between suspension of disbelief and Skyrim or Hitman. These were moments when the teacher did not create a plan for the use of these mediums. Instead, the teacher addressed these topics in the spur of the moment.

Out of all of the data collected, the medium of music was one of the most used by the teacher in the target classroom. This ranged from assignments focusing on the use of music to class playlists that allowed students an opportunity to, not just understand the topics being discussed in class, but also discovered new artists and opportunities. Music was this teacher's strong suit. The teacher demonstrated a love for music and diverse musical genres and genuine hope to use the medium for the sake of helping the students understand. As was specified in the analysis, the teacher has also verbalized the wish to incorporate more music into the classroom. This implied that the teacher has been holding back from overexposing students to music. It was my belief that through the data collected one could reach the conclusion that music had been a catalyst for some students to understand the material and that the teacher was using this medium to the best of his ability. The data suggested that the teacher was not using music for the simple sake of using music, but as both an MKO and part of the ZPD modified with pop culture. The data suggested that the use of music was purposeful and guided. It was used to help the students enjoy and understand the units being discussed in the target classroom. Particularly, one may be able to assume and conclude that the use of music in this classroom created a nurturing environment for the students. The ability to look at the literature being discussed in class from diverse modalities allowed the students to grasp the concepts, themes, characters, settings, and plots of the literary work being discussed holistically. For instance, instead of just reading a particular piece, the students were adapting it to a song. It made the students look at the elements of figurative language and the elements of storytelling while also considering rhythm, mood, and lyrics. Through these types of assignments, the students were forced to imagine the scene vividly

compared to just reading the piece and imagining the words being spoken. With the addition of music in *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, for example, the students were immersed in the scene. They were immersed in the plot, characters, and setting through the text itself, but they were also forced to image what the play sounds like in their head. It allowed the students to get a complete picture of the literature being discussed in class.

In addition, the teacher used memes to bridge understanding through assignments and class discussions. Bridging understanding was one of the main purposes of the MKO, in this case, the teacher armed with pop culture. These memes were presented in PowerPoint presentations on the nature of irony and the discussion of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. In these two examples, the teacher provided the memes. Memes were used to attempt to help students understand the content that would be the focus of the target class. Through the incorporation of multimodal examples like memes, the teacher might have hoped to help students understand the concepts being discussed. Like the examples provided that dealt with verbal and situational irony in which the irony was written on the picture, but the picture was exemplifying the contrary. This was a way to have students visualize the concepts being discussed in class beyond the mere mention and definition of the terminology. This gave students an example that was close to their reality, allowing them to visualize the material and perhaps make the connections they would otherwise not make. Additionally, memes were used in *Bonus Activity: R & J Memes*. This activity provided a space for students to use memes they were familiar with to connect the memes to the literature being discussed in class. The memes, the students' language, in this case became a medium for the discussion of the themes, characters, and motifs of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. Vygotsky's theory did not consider the

diverse languages or symbols that the child is exposed when it came to pop culture, but the teacher did. Symbols must be meaningful and relevant to the child. “A child’s speech is as important as the role of action in attaining the goal. Children not only speak about what they are doing;” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 10). Vygotsky focuses on speech as a language system rather than focusing on that fact that the multimodal nature pop culture becomes a system of symbols that student can understand. Each meme and song became an adaptation of the ZPD. Each medium became a language of its own. Those that the teacher used and understood, as well as his students, facilitated the learning process. The teacher used these mediums as a language that is often ignored.

What are the advantages of the use of pop culture in the classroom?

Motivation played a crucial role in the target classroom. According to Petri and Govern (2012), “...motivation...concerns the source of motivation—internal versus external sources of motivation” (p. 8). It seemed like most of the additions of the use of pop culture in the English classroom related to motivating students. Both external and internal motivation played a crucial part in this study: students could have been motivated by the mediums the teacher used in class, and that led students to desire to go to class and see said mediums. External motivation birthed internal motivation. Whether it be thorough the use of music or playing a video game in the classroom, the teacher was using the diverse spheres of pop culture to entice students. Motivation can then be translated to grasping students’ attention. Attention getters could come in many shapes and sizes. The teacher used pop culture in PowerPoints, assignments, assessments, and anticipatory sets to help students with the process of being motivated by the material being discussed. An example of this was evident in Grammar & Pop Culture when the

teacher used *The Office* to discuss ostracized. The teacher could have used any other example that was not related to a sphere of pop culture, but he settled on *The Office*. This could have been due to his personal fascination with *The Office*, but it seemed more likely, that despite his enjoyment, he used it to find common ground with his students. The use of spheres of pop culture in grammar, literature, or drama created a connection between the student's reality and that of the classroom. The student might be able to associate the content of the class with *The Office*. This activated the student's prior knowledge and helps them make connections.

Playlists presented the perfect example of using pop culture for the sake of motivation. The teacher created two playlists throughout the 2020-2021 semester. As discussed in *Poetry & Pop Culture*, the two playlists related to *Sonnetizing Songs* and *Musicalizing Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet*. The fact that these two playlists emerged out of two distinct assessments provide us with information about the context of the tasks, but it also gave the students a prize: an external motivator. Students not only got to submit their assignments for grading, but they got to see their songs on a playlist that was shared with the group. This allowed students to see themselves in the playlist, and, also, discover new artists and songs, motivating them to complete the assignment.

Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture presented an opportunity and a conundrum: vastness. Seeing as the conundrum will be discussed in the next question, let us focus on the opportunity. Teachers and students were exposed to numerous spheres of pop culture with unique entries in each sphere and different opinions of those: numerous sets of languages. This gave the teacher the opportunity to pick those that were relevant to the

class and discard those that were not. An example of this was the teacher's mention of Skyrim when discussing Suspension of Disbelief. The teacher could have picked any video game, book, or drama, but he used a game that RPG gamers were quite familiar with. Another example of the perks of selecting from the diverse spheres was the *Bonus Activity: R & J Memes*. This assignment was initially created with *The Weeknd* memes, but the teacher adapted it to his needs. It was not about the sphere of pop culture being used, but what that sphere, the connector, could accomplish in the target classroom. The teacher added a section in the instructions that allowed students to use any meme format. This meant, that despite the teacher initially using a specific meme format, the teacher would allow any meme as long as they related to *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*.

Additionally, *Musicalizing Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet* and *Sonnetizing Songs* provided the same flexibility. For the former, the teacher required students to use any song, if it conveyed the mood, to exemplify each act selected. The latter required students to select popular songs and turned them into sonnets. Each of these assignments were discussed at length in *Poetry & Pop Culture*, but both were excellent examples of how the Diverse Spheres of Pop Culture were advantages to the use of pop culture in the classroom. The students were allowed freedom to select their favorite songs if they answer the questions required of them. If the teacher did not allow the use of any song, then it would be a bit limiting and would force students to simply focus on those that they did not enjoy. By being flexible, the teacher made the diverse spheres of pop culture students were exposed to an advantage of the target classroom. The teacher reinforced the importance of the affective filter by allowing students to be exposed to the diverse spheres of pop culture. Saricoban and Metin (2000) stated that if the affective filter was

high students are less willing to learn. By incorporating these diverse spheres of pop culture, and enticing students' motivation, the teacher was purposely lowering students' affective filter, therefore helping them concentrate on the content.

What are the challenges of the use of pop culture in the classroom?

Diverse Spheres presented the most challenging element of pop culture. Students were exposed to numerous types of pop culture. These were the different sources of media that students consume every day, i.e., video games, movies, music, TV shows. And inside each of these spheres there were different types of genres and subgenres. This made it virtually impossible for the teacher to know all spheres of pop culture. It virtually meant the teacher needed to learn a language per sphere. It was my belief, based on the data, that the teacher needed to have a clear understanding of the spheres of pop culture that students are exposed to. This meant that the teacher must continuously research, every academic year, or as often as his students change. To make things clear, the diverse spheres of pop culture did not become the problems, but the knowledge of all possible spheres of pop culture. The teacher's ability to know them all, and be exposed to them, was what made this the most challenging aspect of the use of pop culture in the classroom.

In the case of the target classroom, the teacher included one of the most used techniques to try to understand who his students are: an interest inventory. However, for an interest inventory to function properly, contemplating all types of pop culture spheres, the teacher must include questions that relate to TV, movies, sports, music, video games, news, tech, anime, comic books, among others. This was not the case when dissecting the

interest inventory. This became a problem because the teacher was only considering those instances of pop culture that he was exposed to, rather than focus on those students were exposed to. One cannot expect the teacher to know all of the spheres students were exposed to prior to the beginning of the class. And even when the teacher was familiar with the students, it was basically impossible for the teacher to be familiarized with all of the series, movies, games, and other spheres students were exposed to.

Additionally, researching students' interests became a challenge. This challenge emerged for two reasons: the teacher's preparation and time. Seeing as different students have different likes and dislikes, it was obvious that there will be numerous types of pop culture spheres that students enjoy. This meant that the teacher needed to familiarize himself with the content in every sphere. Let's take the example of Bad Bunny. Some students did not know about Bad Bunny and others did. This meant that the use of pop culture landed for some of the students and the example helped them bridge meaning, but others did not understand the reference. The teacher, during the interview, also mentioned the example of Arcangel. This was a perfect example for why researching students' interest was important. The use of Arcangel went over the students' heads. They did not understand the reference. This meant that it did not reach its intended audience. If students were unfamiliar with the content, or if the teacher was unfamiliar with the content, the material will not be able to be used. This related to the ZPD & MKO once more. If the teacher did not speak the students' language, the teacher would not be able to relate to the students' reality making it harder to bridge knowledge between the content and pop culture. Teachers needed to prepare themselves prior to the class with pop

culture elements that students were exposed to, or else they ran the risk of not getting through to the students.

The second element that might have proved challenging when researching was time. Teachers had numerous responsibilities (grading, planning, meetings, parent-teacher conferences, teaching, creating assignments) and might have had a difficult time structuring a researching slot. Researching was crucial to understanding students. In this case, it was crucial to understanding the pop culture sphere students were exposed to. This included researching the content, viewing, reading, or even playing games that were related to the pop culture sphere students mentioned. Even though this might have seemed common sense when it came to the planning process, teachers did not consider this as planning. Most teachers considered it like an extra part of their planning. And they were right to believe so because the use of popular culture to bridge meaning required time. If teachers did not do their research, they might have found themselves falling victim to a silent classroom and disinterested students. Pop culture should have a goal and a target in any unit that the content was used. If the teacher did not take the time to get ready, the use of pop culture will come off as simply being used for the sake of innovation rather than complementing the teaching process.

On this note, the teacher admitted that he did not research beforehand. The teacher did not go through a process of viewing, playing, or reading what student were exposed to. However, I must make the clarification that the teacher did listen to the songs students suggest and used for their assignments. This was particular to the teacher's love for music. Nevertheless, the teacher, verbally, stated in the interview, that he did not

research the spheres that students were exposed to. As the teacher referred to it, he believed it was common sense and it happened intuitively. Here I must disagree. Nevertheless, the lack of research could be because the teacher did not have enough time to complete the tasks. Researching popular culture would add an additional task that teachers would be required to complete. It might have been too much for some teachers. This places us at an impasse: teachers either incorporate pop culture into their planning process or they do not. If the teacher contemplated pop culture in the planning process, as the target teacher admitted he did, then it becomes part of the regular preparation for the class. This was done by the target teacher after years of using it sparingly or in the spur of the moment. The teacher admitted that the use of pop culture is now an intrinsic part of his planning process. However, it seems like the lack of research left a chink in the teacher's armor.

What are the most salient uses of pop culture in the classroom?

Throughout all of the data, the most salient uses of pop culture in the target classroom emerged in the poetry unit. The teacher used music, everything from instrumental to trap, to motivate students toward their evaluations. Be it through the mention of artist like Bad Bunny or Residente, the teacher hoped that students made connections with poetry and the music they were exposed to. The use of music became common place in the target classroom. Students even alluded to it in the **FG** as something that the target teacher did often. This revealed that the teachers created fond memories with the incorporation of music into the target classroom. If this wasn't enough, this sphere of pop culture was extensive. The teacher included it in his assessments, planning, anticipatory set, and even in passing tokens. At times this saliency might be perceived as

negative, even by the target teacher, but it provided enough evidence to say with certainty that the use of music was the most salient medium in all of this research. In addition, it was important to point out that the unit that excelled in the use of music was the poetry unit. The category that alludes to music and poetry was amply titled Poetry & Pop Culture. It was named so because of how both music and poetry were connected. This subcategory provided enough evidence in its assessments to point to an overwhelming use of music. It was fair to conclude that the use of assessments with music as an initiator or a motivator helped students connect with poetry and/or literature. The use of music in assignments such as *Sonnetizing Songs* allowed students to use their own musical tastes to select songs to sonnetize. This was just one of example of the many times music was used in the **FN**, **TI**, and **FG**. There was no doubt that music was an intrinsic part of the teacher's classroom. Perhaps without the addition of musical elements, the curriculum, assessments, and assignments in *The Tragedy of Romeo & Juliet*, and the discussion of sonnets would be very different.

Literature & Pop Culture emerged often in the data as the second most salient use of pop culture. Unlike the use of music, the use of pop culture to discuss literary elements was broader and less overwhelming. Literature was an intrinsic part of the cooperating school's curriculum, which meant that if the teacher used pop culture, he would need to tie it into the literature heavy curriculum in some way. This emerged in many forms: discussions on *Suspension of Disbelief* using *Skyrim* and Disney movies, playing Orwell during the discussion of dystopian literature, having students cast the characters of *1984* with current actors, drawing comparisons between the News in our world and that of literature, among others. These were discussed in their entirety in their subcategories, but

it was crucial to point out that they provided us with a second place for most salient uses of pop culture. The teacher gave himself more room when it came to the discussion of literary elements using pop culture, because it depended on the topic being discussed that day. This was not as restrictive as with Poetry & Pop Culture. When it came to the use of pop culture in literature, it could be any story, novel, drama, or literary element. And the teacher provided enough examples to make this subcategory one of the broadest. These came in the form of memes, which almost all of the data cross-referenced with Literature & Pop Culture, The Hobbit Bestiary project, among others.

Limitations

COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several issues arose. Initially, the proposed investigation would have taken place in a face-to-face environment in which students would have been able to attend an actual brick-and-mortar classroom rather than a virtual classroom. The researcher hoped to collect more observations from the actual physical classroom and the mannerisms and body language that the teacher employed. This was not possible since the platform used, Google Classroom, only allowed a limited amount of customization and the teacher had to sit in front of the camera so students could see him properly. This in turn could've created a type of apprehension from the class toward participation, seeing as students had to unmute themselves, turn on their cameras, and make an extra effort to participate in class. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic clearly affected everyone in the school scenario (teachers, students, administrative employees) in both physical and emotional ways. This could have been expressed in ways that the researcher and the teacher had no control over like for example students suffering from mood swings, depression, a lack of motivation, among others. The COVID-19 pandemic

also made the classroom environment more detached than in face-to-face environments. Teaching is not just a visual medium, but a physical one. Physical activities and just being in the same classroom with the teacher was impossible, which could have affected how students perceived the English classroom. The COVID-19 pandemic could have also affected those students that did not have the economic possibility of buying the necessary equipment to partake in the virtual classes in the way they would've wanted. Also, the lack of stable internet connection, constant power outages, and outdated equipment could have affected some students' or the teacher's ability to teach or learn at any given time. The impartiality of the teachers and the students due to virtual education could have added another layer of animosity that perhaps neither the students nor the teacher wanted to express but was presented due to the format that teaching took place during the lockdown.

In addition, since the platform used was Google Classroom and Google Meet, it was impossible for the researcher to use the poster checklist. The virtual classroom did not contain any posters. If the class had been in a face-to-face medium, the researcher could have been able to see said posters. Additionally, the teacher's background was blurred while he taught the class. This made it impossible to use the created checklist.

Focus Group

Throughout the approximately three months of collecting data, only one **FG** meeting was held. This **FG** was initially meant to have ten (10) student participants in which they would be answering and discussing the guide questions included in Appendix D. However, when speaking to the target teacher, and taking into consideration that there was only one target classroom, ten (10) participants became difficult. The target teacher

recommended eight (8) students from the target classroom to participate in the **FG**. With this in mind, the researcher sent an email to the eight (8) participants inviting them to the **FG** with the assent and consent sheets attached. Nevertheless, out of the initial eight students that were recommended, only three (3) students answered the call for participating in the **FG**. The researcher is aware that in normal circumstances, **FG** should be larger than the number of students that decided to participate in this **FG**. This was because it permitted more interactivity among the participants and allowed more opportunities for ideas to be shared and discussed in a controlled and safe environment. However, the factors previously mentioned in the COVID-19 section of the limitations (apprehensiveness, unmotivated, shy, detachment) might have influenced the students to disregard the email or avoid participating entirely. Nonetheless, the three participating students managed to bring their own perspectives and weigh in on the discussion questions. Despite this, further investigation on the topic should be done, focusing on the students' perception of the use of pop culture in the classroom. It might be adequate to focus a future investigation solely on how students perceive, interact, and feel toward the use of pop culture inside the English classroom.

Suggestions for Future Research

The data collected in this research was vast and could not be exposed in its entirety. The main categories and subcategories were condensed after careful consideration. Initially, the number of subcategories was way over twenty. To be concise, these were narrowed down to the most necessary ones for the sake of the goal of this investigation. However, the data provided numerous other topics relating to the use of pop culture in the classroom that could be discussed in the future. This ranged from uses for the data already collected, future research in the field of pop culture, and new studies relating to the use of pop culture in TESOL classrooms.

Out of all the data collected, the teacher interview provided a glimpse into bilingualism. Due to the teacher switching between languages, the educator was able to use both linguistic repertoires to communicate. It would be interesting for future research in the field to see how teachers are so comfortable with using both repertoires and how these could correlate to the classroom. Recently, the study of translanguaging has taken center-stage in bilingual classrooms. Perhaps translanguaging could connect to the use of pop culture in the classroom. Other scenarios in Puerto Rico could paint a different picture of this phenomenon in the classroom, particularly additions of Spanish to the English classroom. The teacher often used both English and Spanish throughout the interview and this made the interview feel much more familiar and less like a Q&A. Would the addition of more Puerto Rican pop culture in the English classroom feel the same way?

Additionally, the teacher used numerous types of pop culture throughout the study, particularly music, but future researchers could tackle how the use of adaptations

affect the students' perspective of a particular literary piece. Does the use of Romeo + Juliet change the student's view of the characters and the story? Are the adaptations accurate? How does the accuracy, or lack thereof, influence the students' perspective on the piece? Adaptations, in numerous mediums, are more common with the passing of time, and students are often drawn to them rather than reading the literary work. Seeing as one of the categories with the most tokens was Literature & Pop Culture, it seems legitimate to ask these questions. Focusing on the use of adaptations, or focusing on deciding not to use one, could be an interesting lens for a study. Would students be more enthralled using the adaptations, or would they be less willing to pay attention? Perhaps future studies relating to adaptations could help broaden the concept of diverse spheres of pop culture.

Due to the miniscule incorporation of gaming into the target classroom, I would like to focus on its use in the future. Literature is littered with tropes, character archetypes, and themes; this is something that both gaming and literature share. In the future, I would like to focus on how gaming can be used to highlight these connections, be it through genre tropes or character archetypes. I hope to implement the use of video games to analyze how students react to the similarities in both. Be it through creating their own games or playing particular games that share the same themes, students would be exposed to the literary piece and its gaming equivalent. This investigation particularly interests me due to my connection with video games and the lack of its use in the target classroom.

For future investigations, I hope that a similar case study can be conducted in a face-to-face modality. The modality of the class might have changed the research

entirely: students might've been more enticed to participate, the researcher would have had the opportunity to see the classroom and any paraphernalia the teacher had relating to pop culture, and the dynamic would have changed entirely.

To compare the use of pop culture, it is my belief that future research in the field should look at both public and private schools. This recommendation stems from the singular perspective that was collected from the target teacher. In this case, the teacher was known for using popular culture. It would be interesting to compare to what extent public school teachers and private school teachers use popular culture. This might add another contextual and social layer to the view of the use of pop culture in the classroom. In addition, this recommendation emerges out of the limited number of participants in the **FG**. To further understand the use of pop culture in the classroom, future studies should lean heavily on the students' perspective of the use of pop culture in the classroom. This due to the reality that the pop culture used must be relevant to the students, and who would know what is relevant to students better than themselves.

Furthermore, it is my hope that future research investigates the planning process to document how pop culture can be implemented into a classroom from the inception of a lesson plan. This includes, but is not limited to, teaching resources, teaching strategies, assessment techniques and activities. This would shine a light into the way teachers that incorporate pop culture go through the process of preparing said pop culture for their students. It would be interesting to see how the addition of pop culture can strengthen the teaching strategies used by the teachers. In addition, it would be interesting to see if other teachers are creating teaching resources for their respective students, and if they are making these readily available for other teachers to use.

Last, I believe that other studies relating to the use of interest inventories should be conducted. The interest inventory should be implemented in all classrooms throughout the world. However, I believe that researchers looking to expand on this study should focus on how often pop culture elements are included in the interest inventory. It would be interesting to see the correlation between the incorporation of pop culture in the interest inventory and the teacher's use of pop culture in the target class. The interest inventory is a tool that many teachers use to get to know their students, but do teachers use the interest inventory to construct their classes? It would be interesting to see further research highlight the importance of the interest inventory in both the public and private systems.

Conclusions

Throughout this investigation, the aim was to answer six research questions focusing on the use of pop culture in a single TESOL classroom. This emerged out of an interest for the use of pop culture in the classroom and how it might be advantageous to the students. This research proved numerous things: pop culture does motivate students, the use of pop culture creates its own challenges, and creating safe spaces for students can be done using popular culture. This was proven through the collection of data such as **FG**, **TI**, **FN**, and **D**. Each data type proved to bring its own revealing factor of how the teacher used pop culture in the classroom. The literature review and framework provided a lens to analyze the use of pop culture and reveal how it can be its own language. Vygotsky's ZPD emerged as the star for each sphere of pop culture was uncovered as a language. The students' reality and the world they are exposed to outside of the classroom can then become part of the world inside of the classroom, providing a detailed glimpse into their minds and a connection between both worlds. Nevertheless, pop culture has been discussed in the past by other theoreticians such as Evans, Blankenship & Heidorn, Kidd, among others, and the discussion of these topics will not cease. It is my belief that teachers should continue to use pop culture in the classroom to help students make connections. Perhaps through this incorporation, the teachers can also make connections with the students that inhabit our classrooms every year. These connections must be the driving force that impulse us to create new connections, safe spaces, and incorporate pop culture, for at the end of the day, the incorporation of popular culture is not for the sake of the teacher. The use of pop culture must be solely for the sake of the student, the student's education, and the student's well being. That is why popular culture

must remain in the target teacher's classroom. I hope the future reveals more uses of popular culture throughout more TESOL classrooms in PR.

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FG

Reviewed 02/28/2021

Informed Consent Focus Group

Investigation: The Use of Pop Culture in a TESOL Classroom

Investigators: Michael Báez Arroyo

Chair: Dr. Joseph Carroll

Dear Parent or Legal Guardian:

Michael Baez Arroyo from University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedra campus has an interest in conducting a research study in your child's respective English classroom. The study would focus on the use of pop culture in the classroom to create safe spaces and motivate students. This research is done in an effort to see how students can connect to the literature being studied in class and how their educators can motivate them. I am hoping to gather evidence from eleven (11) participants in total. Out of these eleven participants, one would be the teacher (the focus of the study) and the other ten would be the students who decide to participate from the target group in the focus group interview. Your child is being invited to participate in this investigation in the form of a focus group centered on their experience in the English class when it comes to the use of Pop Culture. In addition, the researcher will be observing the class for a period between 2-3 months. The investigator aims to observe twice a week for a period of 50 minutes per session.

Focus Group

If it so happens that the students decide to participate in this study, they would be exposed to a focus group interview centered on their feelings, concepts, and understanding of pop culture and how their respective teacher uses it. This is done to

bridge the gap between literature and pop culture and spike the students' interest in literature. The foreseen month when the focus group will take place will be by the final week of May 2021. The focus group will meet only once for a duration of 1-2 hours. Each students' participation, as well as that of your imparting permission in this study, is voluntary. Your son or daughter has been selected to participate in this investigation due to the following reasons: (a) participates in class often, (b) shows an interest in the topics discussed in class referring to the curriculum, (c) shows an interest in pop culture and its use in the classroom. If at any moment the student decides to withdraw from the aforementioned study, there will be no penalty as it will have no effect on the students' class grade. Should you elect to stop participating, any comments, discussions, and wording of said student will be discarded. The results of the research study may be published, but the student's name or identifying information will not be used. The focus group will be audio recorded for the sake of maintaining accuracy when transcribing. The results and conclusions will be published, but all identifying information will be stripped away and replaced with pseudonyms to protect the participants. No part of the session will be video recorded. The focus group will be held through Google Meet. The students do not have to download any application to participate. The focus group will happen once during the investigation and will have a duration of anywhere between 1-2 hours.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits in this study for the participants. However, students might be benefited in the information acquired throughout the research. This might motivate them to continue discussing pop culture in their given classrooms and connecting it to literature.

Risks

Students might be at risk of addiction due to the nature of pop culture, which include video games, TV shows, movies, graphic novels, among others. In addition, the participant might feel apprehensive toward being part of a focus group. This might affect their performance during the interview. This might discourage participants from being part of the study. In addition, there might be implied risks when it comes to internet charges based on the amount of bandwidth used for the interviews. This might mean that you will undergo additional charges if your internet connection or bandwidth has reached its limit. Furthermore, due to the pandemic and the nature of virtual education (asynchronous and synchronous), your child might experience burnout due to the use of a computer for the majority of the day. The option to segment the focus group into various sessions rather than one sessions is a possibility and will ultimately depend on the participants' ptokens. This is done to try to lessen the load and the strain technology might have on each individual. In addition, the researcher will use the same platform the teacher is using in the classroom to maintain a simplicity and to avoid overwhelming students and the teacher with new platforms. Moreover, the fact that the school's name will be published might put the student at risk of being identified as the participating students.

The student's participation is voluntary, they will not have to participate in this study if they do not want to. If the student decides to stop after it has begun, all the data recovered will be discarded and will not be used. If the student decides not to answer a question or leave the investigation at any moment, there will be no objection, risk or penalty to their person.

Confidentiality

The identity of the participating students will be protected through the process of eliminating any identifying information. The researcher will not include names, surnames, or any other identifying information in the data collected or the final published dissertation. Instead, the researcher will create pseudonyms for all the participants of the investigation. The students will either be referred to by the term *student* or by the pseudonym created for the specific student. The only two individuals that will have access to the raw documents would be myself (Michael Baez Arroyo) and the supervisor (Joseph Carroll Miranda) including this assent and consent sheet. In addition, officials from the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras Campus or Federal Agencies responsible for upholding the integrity of ongoing research might ask the investigator for the data obtained in the study, including this document. The documents and data collected from this investigation will be saved in a password protected USB. The documents will be stored for a period of three years. After this period, the USB will be formatted to erase any and all of the raw data collected and any printed material will be shredded. The dissertation will be the only document that will be conserved indefinitely to be used in any other investigation. None of the raw data will be stored indefinitely. The data will not include identifying information.

However, the investigator that will undertake the process of this investigation will secure the data under a password-protected USB. This data will be stored in two separate USB and will not be provided to anyone outside of the main researcher and supervisor. In addition, in the place of their names, the participants will be given pseudonyms to

maintain a degree of security and confidentiality. Nevertheless, there is always a risk of loss of confidentiality.

In addition, due to the nature of a focus group the researcher cannot guarantee that the participants will not divulge the information shared throughout the session. It is of the utmost importance that each participating student in the focus group maintain confidentiality, but the researcher cannot assure the participants that such confidentiality will be respected by the members of the focus group. Moreover, the fact that the school's name will be published might put your child at risk of being identified as having participated in the study.

The information that is shared electronically through a device (computers, cellphones, among others) or platforms used may be compromised and revised by third parties. These individuals could have legitimate or illegitimate access to the information like a family member, patrons, hackers, or pirates, etc. Moreover, the device used may register the information you have accessed and/or sent.

Officials of the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico or of federal agencies responsible for ensuring the integrity of the investigation may request the raw data obtained in this study from the investigator, including this document.

Rights

The researcher, Michael Baez, is an eleventh grade professor at the University of Puerto Rico Secondary School. The purpose of this disclosure is for you to determine whether this relationship affects your willingness to participate in this study.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may leave the investigation at any time. There will be no repercussions for leaving the investigation. Due to nature of virtual education, always remember to end the call by clicking the red button in the middle of the Google Meet. This is crucial to protect your data and personal information. Always remember to sign out. You have the right to receive a copy of this form. Please be sure to save it to your personal documents. Participating or not participating in this research will have no effect on grades, the teacher/student relationship, the services received at school, or future classes the student may take with the course teacher.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or claim or complaint related to your participation in this study, you can contact the Compliance Officer of the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico, at 764-0000, extension 86773 or cipshi.degi@upr.edu.

If you have any questions concerning this research study or about the students' participation in the study, please email Michael Baez at michael.baez1@upr.edu or you can reach me at (787) 428-5992. Also, you may contact Dr. Joseph Carroll Miranda at joseph.carroll@upr.edu or (787) 764-0000 ext. (89230).

Sincerely,

Professor Michael Baez

I give consent for my child _____ to participate in the above study.

Parent's or Guardian's Name # 1 (print): _____
Parent's or Guardian's Signature _____
(Date) _____

&

I give consent for my child _____ to participate in the above study.
Parent's or Guardian's Name # 2(print): _____
Parent's or Guardian's Signature _____
(Date) _____

(Researcher's Signature)

(Date)

Informed Assent Students

Investigation: The Use of Pop Culture in a TESOL Classroom

Investigators: Michael Báez Arroyo

Chair: Dr. Joseph Carroll

Michael Báez Arroyo is conducting qualitative research on the use of pop culture in a single TESOL classroom. Through this research, I hope to learn about how the target English teacher is using pop culture to create safe spaces and motivate students toward literature. In addition, I seek to see how teachers select pop culture to motivate their respective students. I am hoping to gather evidence from eleven (11) participants in total. Out of these eleven participants, one would be the teacher (the focus of the study) and the other ten would be the students who decide to participate from the target group in the focus group interview. You are being invited to participate in this investigation in the form of a focus group centered on your experience in the English class when it comes to the use of Pop Culture. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in said focus group on the incorporation of pop culture in your English classroom.

Most of the study will take place in the target teacher's English virtual classroom, but the focus group will take place at some point in the last week of the investigation. This focus group will take place in a virtual meeting through Google Meet. The focus group will be audio recorded for the sake of maintaining accuracy when transcribing. The results and conclusions will be published, but all identifying information will be stripped away and replaced with pseudonyms to protect the participants. No part of the session will be video recorded. If you decide to participate, you will be asked questions referring to your feelings, thoughts, and questions about how your teacher uses pop culture and

how it affects you. The data will be analyzed and I will extract a number of themes that are the most salient in most of the data collected.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits in this study for the participants. However, students might also be benefited in the information acquired throughout the research. This might motivate you to continue discussing pop culture in your given classrooms and connecting it to literature.

Risks

You might be at risk of addiction due to the nature of pop culture, which include video games, TV shows, movies, graphic novels, among others. In addition, you might feel apprehensive toward being part of a focus group. This might affect your performance during the interview. This might discourage participants from being part of the study. In addition, there might be implied risks when it comes to internet charges based on the amount of bandwidth used for the interviews. This might mean that your parents/legal guardians will undergo additional charges if your internet connection or bandwidth has reached its limit. Furthermore, due to the pandemic and the nature of virtual education (asynchronous and synchronous), you might experience burnout due to the use of a computer for the majority of the day. The option to segment the focus group into various sessions rather than one sessions is a possibility and will ultimately depend on the participants' tokens. This is done to try to lessen the load and the strain technology might have on each individual. In addition, the researcher will use the same platform the teacher is using in the classroom to maintain a simplicity and to avoid overwhelming

students and the teacher with new platforms. Moreover, the fact that the school's name will be published might put you at risk of being identified as the participating student.

Confidentiality

Your identity will be protected through the process of eliminating any identifying information. The researcher will not include names, surnames, or any other identifying information in the data collected or the final published dissertation. Instead, the researcher will create pseudonyms for all the participants of the investigation. The students will either be referred to by the term *student* or by the pseudonym created for the specific student. The only two individuals that will have access to the raw documents would be myself (Michael Baez Arroyo) and the supervisor (Joseph Carroll Miranda) including this assent and consent sheet. In addition, officials from the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras Campus or Federal Agencies responsible for upholding the integrity of ongoing research might ask the investigator for the data obtained in the study, including this document. The documents and data collected from this investigation will be saved in a password protected USB. The documents will be stored for a period of three years. After this period, the USB will be formatted to erase any and all of the raw data collected and any printed material will be shredded. The dissertation will be the only document that will be conserved indefinitely to be used in any other investigation. None of the raw data will be stored indefinitely. The data will not include identifying information.

However, the investigator that will undertake the process of this investigation will secure the data under a password-protected USB. This data will be stored in two separate USB and will not be provided to anyone outside of the main researcher and supervisor. In

addition, in the place of their names, the participants will be given pseudonyms to maintain a degree of security and confidentiality. Nevertheless, there is always a risk of loss of confidentiality.

In addition, due to the nature of a focus group the researcher cannot guarantee that the participants will not divulge the information shared throughout the session. It is of the utmost importance that each participating student in the focus group maintain confidentiality, but the researcher cannot assure the participants that such confidentiality will be respected by the members of the focus group. Moreover, the fact that the school's name will be published might put you at risk of being identified as having participated in the study.

The information that is shared electronically (computers, cellphones, digital platforms, among others) used can be compromised and reviewed by third parties. These individuals could have legitimate or illegitimate access to the information like a family member, hackers, or pirates, etc. In addition, the device used may register and save the information you have accessed and/or emailed.

Your participation is voluntary, you do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to stop after it has begun, all the data recovered will be discarded and will not be used. If you decide not to answer a question or leave the investigation at any moment, there will be no objection, risk or penalty to your person.

Rights

The researcher, [Michael Baez](#), is an eleventh grade professor at the University of Puerto Rico Secondary School. The purpose of this disclosure is for you to determine whether this relationship affects your willingness to participate in this study.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may leave the investigation at any time. There will be no repercussions for leaving the investigation. Due to nature of virtual education, always remember to end the call by clicking the red button in the middle of the Google Meet. This is crucial to protect your data and personal information. Always remember to sign out. You have the right to receive a copy of this form. Please be sure to save it to your personal documents. Participating or not participating in this research will have no effect on grades, the teacher/student relationship, the services received at school, or future classes the student may take with the course teacher.

Officials of the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico or of federal agencies responsible for ensuring the integrity of the investigation may request the raw data obtained in this study from the investigator, including this document.

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If you have any questions concerning this research study or about the students' participation in the study, please email Michael Baez at michael.baez1@upr.edu or you can reach me at (787) 428-5992. Also, you may contact Dr. Joseph Carroll Miranda at joseph.carroll@upr.edu or (787) 764-0000 ext. (89230).

If you decide you want to be in this study, please sign your name.

I, _____, want to be in this research study.

(Participant's Signature)

(Date)

(Researcher's Signature)

(Date)

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT TI

Reviewed 03/14/2021

Informed Consent Interview

Investigation: The Use of Pop Culture in a TESOL Classroom

Investigators: Michael Báez Arroyo

Chair: Dr. Joseph Carroll

Michael Báez Arroyo is conducting qualitative research on the use of pop culture in a single TESOL classroom. Through this research, I hope to learn about how the target English teacher is using pop culture to create safe spaces and motivate students toward literature. In addition, I seek to see how the teacher selects pop culture to motivate their respective students. I am hoping to gather evidence from eleven (11) participants in total. Out of these eleven participants, one would be the teacher (the focus of the study) and the other ten would be the students who decide to participate from the target group in the focus group interview. You are being invited to participate in an investigation centered on the use of pop culture in the classroom. You have been selected due to various reasons: (a) you are known to use pop culture in the classroom to create a more welcoming environment, (b) you have been recommended by other professionals in the TESOL field. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in two interviews (Entrance and midsemester), open your virtual classroom for observations, and volunteer lesson plans, class material, and assignments used in the day-to-day interactions of your English classroom. The researcher will observe the participating teacher's classroom between 2-3 months for a minimum of 50 minutes per class. These observations will take place twice per week for a total of two classes per week.

Interview

Most of the study will take place in the target teacher's English virtual classroom. This will encompass class observations, interviews, and data collection. The interviews will happen in the first week of the investigation and three months into the research. The data collection will be happening simultaneously until the research concludes. In addition, there will be a focus group with students that decide to volunteer. The students selected to participate in this investigation have to follow the following criteria: (a) a GPA between 3.00-4.00, (b) shows an interest in the topics discussed in class referring to the curriculum, (c) shows an interest in pop culture and its use in the classroom. Both the interview and the focus group will have a length between 1-2 hours. The interviews will be audio recorded for the sake of transcribing them ad verbatim. The results and conclusions will be published, but all identifying information will be stripped away and replaced with pseudonyms to protect the participants. No part of the session will be video recorded. If you decide to participate, you will be asked questions referring to your feelings, thoughts, and questions about how you uses pop culture in the classroom. The data will be analyzed and I will extract a number of themes that are the most salient in most of the data collected. The interview will be held through Google Meet. Neither the teacher nor the students will have to download any application to participate.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits in this study for the participants. However, teacher might be benefited in the information acquired throughout the research. This might motivate you to continue discussing pop culture in your given classrooms and connecting it to literature.

Risks

You might be at risk of addiction due to the nature of pop culture, which include video games, TV shows, movies, graphic novels, among others. In addition, you might feel apprehensive toward being part of the interviews. This might affect your performance during the interview. This might discourage participants from being part of the study. In addition, there might be implied risks when it comes to internet charges based on the amount of bandwidth used for the interviews. This might mean that you will undergo additional charges if your internet connection or bandwidth has reached its limit. Furthermore, due to the pandemic and the nature of virtual education (asynchronous and synchronous), you might experience burnout due to the use of a computer for the majority of the day. The option to segment the interviews into various interview sessions rather than two interview sessions is a possibility and will ultimately depend on the participants preference. This is done to try to lessen the load and the strain technology might have on each individual. In addition, researcher will use the same platform the teacher is using in the classroom to maintain a simplicity and to avoid overwhelming students and the teacher with new platforms.

Your participation is voluntary, you do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to stop after it has begun, all the data recovered will be erased and will not be used. If you decide not to answer a question or leave the investigation at any moment, there will be no objection, risk or penalty to your person.

Confidentiality

Your identity will be protected through the process of eliminating any identifying information. The researcher will not include names, surnames, or any other identifying information in the data collected or the final published dissertation. Instead, the

researcher will create pseudonyms for all the participants of the investigation. The teacher will either be referred to by the term *teacher, educator, professor*, or by the pseudonym created for the specific teacher. The only two individuals that will have access to the raw documents would be myself (Michael Baez Arroyo) and the supervisor (Joseph Carroll Miranda) including this assent and consent sheet. In addition, officials from the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras Campus or Federal Agencies responsible for upholding the integrity of ongoing research might ask the investigator for the data obtained in the study, including this document. The documents and data collected from this investigation will be saved in a password protected USB. The documents will be stored for a period of three years. After this period, the USB will formatted to erase any and all of the raw data collected and any printed material will be shredded. The dissertation will be the only document that will be conserved indefinitely to be used in any other investigation. None of the raw data will be conserved indefinitely. The data will not include identifying information.

However, the investigator that will undertake the process of this investigation will secure the data under a password-protected USB. This data will be stored in two separate USB and will not be provided to anyone outside of the main researcher and supervisor. In addition, in the place of their names, the participants will be given pseudonyms to maintain a degree of security and confidentiality. Moreover, the fact that the school's name will be published might put the teacher at risk of being identified as the participating teacher seeing that there's only one teacher participating in this investigation.

The information that is shared electronically through a device (computers, cellphones, among others) or platforms used may be compromised and revised by third parties. These individuals could have legitimate or illegitimate access to the information like a family member, patrons, hackers, or pirates, etc. Moreover, the device used may register the information you have accessed and/or sent.

Officials of the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico or of federal agencies responsible for ensuring the integrity of the investigation may request the raw data obtained in this study from the investigator, including this document.

P.O. Box 23304 San Juan, Puerto Rico 00931-3304 Tel. 787-764-0000 ext. 89195, 89203 <http://ege.uprrp.edu>
Rights Patrono con igualdad de oportunidades en el empleo M/M/V/I

The researcher, **Michael Baez**, is an eleventh grade professor at the University of Puerto Rico Secondary School. The purpose of this disclosure is for you to determine whether this relationship affects your willingness to participate in this study. Neither your decision to accept or refuse to participate in this research nor the results will be used to evaluate your performance as an employee at this institution.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or claim or complaint related to your participation in this study, you can contact the Compliance Officer of the Río Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico, at 764-0000, extension 86773 or cipshi.degi@upr.edu.

If you have any questions concerning this research study or about your participation in the study, please email Michael Baez at michael.baez1@upr.edu or you can reach me at (787) 428-5992. Also, you may contact Dr. Joseph Carroll Miranda at joseph.carroll@upr.edu or (787) 764-0000 ext. (89230).

If you decide you want to be in this study, please sign your name.

I, _____, want to be in this research study.

(Signature)

(Date)

(Researcher's Signature)

(Date)

APPENDIX C: TI QUESTIONS
Semi-Structured Interview (SSI) Questions
Teacher Participant

The purpose of this individual interview with the teacher participating in this study has an aim to understand the use of pop culture in the classroom and how it is applied. The interview will be recorded through which the interviewer will ask for consent. The following questions are guide questions and may lead to other questions.

Questions:

1. What is your definition of pop culture?
2. What elements do you think pop culture considers?
3. What are a few examples of pop culture that come to mind?
4. Does pop culture carry an intrinsic value? If so, why?
5. How do you get to know what pop culture elements your students are exposed to?
6. Do you use the internet as a tool in the classroom?
7. How do you incorporate pop culture in the classroom?
8. Do you plan your classes around pop culture?
9. What do you consider when planning your classes with pop culture?
10. How do you select which elements of pop culture to use?
11. Do your lesson plans reflect the use of pop culture?
12. Do your assignments focus on the use of pop culture? How?
13. What is the view of the administration toward the use of pop culture in the classroom?
14. What is the view of other colleagues about your use of pop culture in the classroom?
15. What activities have you used in the past that incorporate pop culture?
16. For what purpose do you use pop culture in the classroom?
17. Should there be an aim when one uses pop culture?

18. What mediums of pop culture do you use in the classroom?
19. Do you use social media in the classroom?
20. Do you incorporate movies & TV shows in the classroom?
21. Do you incorporate music to your classes?
22. Mention a couple of movies, TV shows, songs, or video games you have incorporated in the classroom.

APPENDIX D: FG QUESTIONS
Semi-Structured Focus Group Questions & Procedure
Student Participants

The purpose of this focus group is to understand how the teacher's implementation of pop culture affects the students in the targeted classroom. In addition, I hope to see what the participants think (advantages and disadvantages) of the use of pop culture in their classroom. The interview will be recorded through which the interviewer will ask for consent. The participants will be given a pseudonym, either a name or a number, and they will be address by the given pseudonym throughout the focus group interview. The following questions are guide questions and may lead to other questions.

Questions:

1. What do you consider pop culture?
2. How do you think pop culture affects the teaching of literature?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of talking about pop culture in the classroom?
4. How does your teacher use pop culture in the classroom?
5. Have you been exposed to video games, movies, tv shows, among other mediums in the classroom?
6. Does your teacher use pop culture that you watch, play, read, or interact with on your free time? If so, which ones?
7. How do you feel when the teacher uses pop culture in the classroom?
8. Do you feel more motivated when the teacher uses pop culture rather than just classic literature?
9. Are the assignments harder or easier when they incorporate pop culture?
10. Should your teacher continue to use pop culture in the classroom? Why?
11. What has been your favorite instance when the teacher used pop culture?
12. What has been your least favorite moment while using pop culture?
13. Does the teacher use an interest inventory?
14. How has the teacher implemented the interest inventory?

APPENDIX E: INTEREST INVENTORY



A bit about me



· Aug 12, 2020 (Edited Aug 19, 2020)

Assignments (formative) (S1) • 15 points

Due Aug 21, 2020

Record a short video in which you share some general details about you. Use the Flipgrid link included below to record and submit your video. While you may choose to add more information than the one requested here, you must make sure that you include the following:

1. Your full name and age
2. Your birthplace and hometown
3. Your favorite hobbies (sports, reading, dancing, writing, drawing, composing, etc.)
4. Your expectations for this school year
5. Two to three adjectives that best describe your personality

Optional details

6. Your favorite music genre and artist(s)
7. Your favorite sports team(s)
8. Your favorite movies and/or series
9. Your favorite literary genre(s) and books
10. Your favorite places on the island and/or around the world

I will soon be adding my own video so that you can get to know me a bit more as well.



Rubric: 2 criteria • 15 pts



Flipgrid | 86d713d2
<https://flipgrid.com/86d713d2>

APPENDIX F: ORWELL



About the Upcoming Week: December 1-4



• Nov 27, 2020

Dear students-

Here's our agenda for the upcoming week:

Tuesday, December 1 (Synchronous class on Google Meet / 1:00 PM)

1. Class discussion of Orwell's 1984: Book One (Chapters 1-8)
2. Orwell videogame on Steam

Thursday, December 3 (Synchronous class on Google Meet / 1:00 PM)

1. Class discussion of Orwell's 1984: Coercive and discursive power
2. Orwell videogame on Steam

Friday, December 4 (Asynchronous class activities)

1. Making predictions about Book Two: Winston, O'Brien, and the dark-haired girl
2. Read Book Two

Literature and pop culture Motivation and Gaming and Pop culture Diverse Pop culture

Class comments

APPENDIX G: POWERPOINTS

2/16/2022



What is something *ironic* that has happened to you or to someone you know?

What is irony?

Irony (n.) a technique of indicating, as through character or plot development, an intention or attitude opposite to that which is actually or ostensibly stated.

What types of irony do you know?

There are three types of irony:

- verbal
- situational
- dramatic



Verbal Irony

A character or narrator says something other than what they mean. It's all about saying one thing, but meaning something else, oftentimes entirely the opposite. When said verbal irony is used to insult or mock someone, then it's sarcasm.







APPENDIX H: POETRY & MUSIC

Sonnetized Song

Always- Bon Jovi

This hopeless romantic is dripping blood.

But the red fountain is not visible.

It's nothing but an emotional flood.

That this old animal made doable.

Pouring it's been since you abandoned me.

I can not breathe under these emotions.

As y'know, I don't give up, I guarantee

But without you I give up the notions.

I can't sing a single love melody.

Like the way it is supposed to be done.

I am not what I accustomed to be.

But girl that's just the way I am, as one

Love you i will, no matter what the ways

For you I am here, no matter the days.

Happy by Pharrel Williams

What I'm about to say may seem
insane

Because the sun's here, you can take
a break

I will float away, in space I'll maintain
I do not care, baby, make no mistake

Making noises because of happiness
Joining in if you feel like there's no roof
Clapping of happiness and nothing
less

Come along when happiness is the
truth

Now the lies arrive, saying what they
want

Do all you can and do not hesitate
I will warn you though, you will be
aflaunt

No offense, don't let your time go to
waste

Nothing could bring you down
when you're happy

Cuz such energy just leaves you
laughey

(We sonnitized the first 14 verses)

I hold the world in the palm of my hand
I comb my hair and head out for some more
It just seems like a dream at my command
These normal people, their sights at the floor

Never once did I doubt I could make it
For the new man, there's only change, how bizarre
The streets are filled with fire, now I've seen it
It's just like the sound of electric guitars

Once worlds collide, these hearts will be broken
Night and day, I find it's just the same thing
Once worlds collide, all our doors will open
Till then, it'll all be coming from the same spring

How could I think of what's just a display
My success takes more than the hours in'a day

Song Chosen: Secret of My Success (By Night Ranger)

**Perfect by Ed Sheeran
Sonnetized Song by Student 1 and Student 10**

I have found a beautiful love for me(A)
and hold my hand(B) Darling, just dive right in
I found a girl, and got down on one knee(A)
for me, it wasn't our plan(B) You were waiting

'Cause we were just kids when I fell for you(C)
know who we were(D) Oh, although we did not
You are the one I will always pursue(C)
slow 'cause of my love for her(D) I'll kiss her

And darling in your eyes, you hold my heart(E)
danced in the rain(F) With you in my arms, I
Barefoot on the grass, we can't stay apart(E)
me that you looked too plain(F) When you said to

I whispered softly, it was very slight(G)
perfect tonight(G) But you heard it, you look

Sonnetized Song by: Student 6&7

Mirror

By: Lil Wayne ft. Bruno Mars

With everything happening in this day A
Don't know whether you're coming or
going B

But you believe that you are on your way
A

Life lined up on the mirror don't blow it
B

Looking at myself I start to question C
You're looking at me, I'm looking
through thee D

I notice the blood in your reflection C
I can notice the hidden love in me D

Mirror on the wall, here we are again E

Amazing how throughout my ups and
downs F

At all times, you have been my only
friend E

Told me they can see the man I am now
F

I may see the pain, the scars that remain
G

I observe myself, I'm looking at Wayne G

Original Lines:

**With everything happening today =
With everything happening in this day A**

Spotify

- Home
- Search
- Your Library
- Create Playlist
- Liked Songs

PLAYLIST

R&J

5 likes • 37 songs, 2 hr 13 min

Next To You (feat. Justin Bieber)
Chris Brown, Justin Bieber
F.A.M.E. (Expanded Edition)
Feb 25, 2021

Un Beso
Aventura
God's Project
Feb 25, 2021

#	TITLE	ALBUM	DATE ADDED
1	Next To You (feat. Justin Bieber) Chris Brown, Justin Bieber	F.A.M.E. (Expanded Edition)	Feb 25, 2021
2	Un Beso Aventura	God's Project	Feb 25, 2021

Cookies
Privacy

Spotify

- Home
- Search
- Your Library
- Create Playlist
- Liked Songs

PLAYLIST

Sonnetized Songs [2024]

A collection of sonnetized songs by [redacted]
2 likes • 17 songs, 1 hr 7 min

Somewhere Only We Know
Keane
Hopes And Fears
3 days ago

Perfect
Ed Sheeran
+ (Deluxe)
3 days ago

Blank Space

#	TITLE	ALBUM	DATE ADDED
1	Somewhere Only We Know Keane	Hopes And Fears	3 days ago
2	Perfect Ed Sheeran	+ (Deluxe)	3 days ago
~	Blank Space	1989	7 days ago

Cookies
Privacy

APPENDIX I: MEMES

Bonus Activity: R & J Memes




Feb 18

Due Feb 23

Instructions:

1. Select a (memeable) scene from The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet.
2. Choose your favorite meme from The Weeknd's performance at the Super Bowl*.
3. Create a meme.
4. Make us laugh.

*Note: You may choose other popular memes if you wish.

 Class comments

Juliet finding out Romeo is a Montague



Juliet deciding that faking her death was the smartest way not to marry Paris



when Friar Laurence sees Juliet awake but Romeo is dead



APPENDIX J: CIPSHI APPROVAL

University of
Puerto Rico

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN
RESEARCH (CIPSHI, SPANISH ACRONYM)
IRB 00000944
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cipshi.degi@upr.edu ~ <http://graduados.uprp.edu/cipshi>

PROTOCOL AUTHORIZATION

Protocol Number: 2021-072

Title: The Use of Pop Culture in a TESOL Classroom

Principal Investigator: Michael Báez-Arroyo

Type of Review: Initial Renewal

Reviewed by: Full Board
 Expedited review:
Expedited Category(-ies): 6 & 7

Date of approval: March 15, 2021



Any proposed change in the research protocol or consent document must be approved by the CIPSHI-IRB in advance of its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated incident involving subjects or participants must be reported immediately. Please, complete and send the Protocol Closure Form once the study is concluded.


Claudia X. Alvarez-Romero, Ph.D.

IRB Chair or designated reviewer

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BIOGRAPHY

Michael Baez Arroyo was born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. At the moment, he is a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction specializing in TESOL in the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus.

In the academic scenario, Michael Baez has been a part-time English professor at the Interamerican University, Metropolitan Campus. Here has taught education, language, and literature courses. Michael Baez is currently a full-time professor at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus.

In addition to his academic credential, Michael Baez is a published author with pieces in *Tranforming Being Anthology*, *Revista Trasuntos*, *600 Second Saga*, *Corpus Litterarum*, *The Hound Magazine*, *Tonguas Magazine*, and *Flores Nuevas Poetry Anthology*.