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**Fostering Critical and Creative Thinking in the (ELT) Classroom**

**Spodbujanje kritičnega in kreativnega mišljenja pri pouku  
(angleščine)**

Magistrsko delo

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## Acknowledgements

If you put fleas in a shallow container they jump out. But if you put a lid on the container for just a short time, they hit the lid trying to escape and learn quickly not to jump so high. They give up their quest for freedom. After the lid is removed, the fleas remain imprisoned by their own self-policing. So it is with life. Most of us let our own fears or the impositions of others imprison us in a world of low expectations.

(Gatto 2010: 141)

I will be ever grateful to my teachers (family, friends, professors and others), who helped loosen or twist open the tight container lid for me, and in their own significant ways, encouraged me to at least occasionally stubbornly try to jump out of the box.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Fostering Critical and Creative Thinking in the (ELT) Classroom**

This MA thesis explores the purpose of education, and presents suggestions for promoting critical and creative thinking in the (ELT) classroom. It is divided into four parts. The first and the second part speak in favour of the “problem-posing education”, which, unlike “banking education”, where students are rarely encouraged to critically and creatively examine the world outside the school walls, bases itself on creativity and stimulates reflection and action upon reality. The third chapter introduces three approaches teachers could use to promote “problem-posing education” and foster critical and creative thinking in their classrooms: live, socially-engaged theatre; controversial issues classroom discussions; and hearing/sharing stories. The three approaches can be used to tackle a variety of controversial issues about society and fundamental questions about life. The fourth chapter describes how the three approaches could serve to fight the waves of xenophobia upon the arrival of refugees (to Slovenia). First through students’ own experience, when they go to see a socially-engaged play and reflect upon it (The play *6* by Žiga Divjak), then through critically engaging debates in the classroom (“The 6 Thinking Hats”), and last but not least through storytelling approaches (such as “The Living Library”), which allow students to have conversations with people from different cultures, backgrounds and disciplines. The chapter focuses only on issues pertaining to refugees, however using the three approaches, similar analyses can be applied to, for example, issues of race and racism, the rights of women and workers, global warming etc. These are very important, controversial topics that could and should also be discussed in the ELT classroom.

**Key words:** problem-posing education, critical thinking, creative thinking, socially-engaged theatre, controversial issues classroom discussions, xenophobia

## IZVLEČEK

### **Spodbujanje kritičnega in kreativnega mišljenja pri pouku (angleščine)**

Magistrsko delo se prevprašuje o namenu in smislu izobraževanja in predstavlja predloge za spodbujanje kritičnega in kreativnega mišljenja pri pouku (angleščine). Sestavljeno je iz štirih delov. Prvi in drugi del zagovarjata »problemsko izobraževanje«, ki se v nasprotju z »bančniškim izobraževanjem«, kjer se učence redko spodbuja h kritičnemu in ustvarjalnemu proučevanju sveta zunaj šolskih zidov, opira na ustvarjalnost in spodbuja kritično razmišljanje o svetu ter reševanje problemskih situacij. V tretjem poglavju so predstavljeni trije pristopi, ki bi jih učitelji lahko uporabili za spodbujanje »problemskega izobraževanja«, ter kritičnega in ustvarjalnega mišljenja v svojih učilnicah: družbeno angažirano gledališče; razredne razprave o spornih družbenih vprašanjih; ter deljenje osebnih zgodb in izkušenj. Ti trije pristopi lahko pomagajo nasloviti različna polemična vprašanja o družbi in temeljna vprašanja o življenju. Četrto poglavje opisuje, kako lahko omenjeni pristopi služijo boju proti valovom ksenofobije ob prihodu beguncev (v Slovenijo). Najprej skozi lastno izkušnjo učencev, ko si ogledajo družbeno angažirano predstavo in razmišljajo o njej (predstava 6 režiserja Žige Divjaka), nato skozi kritične razprave v razredu (»metoda šestih klobukov razmišljanja«) in prav tako z različnimi pripovedovalskimi pristopi (kot je na primer »živa knjižnica«), ki učencem omogočajo neposreden stik z ljudmi iz različnih kultur, okolij in disciplin. Poglavje se osredotoča samo na vprašanja, ki se nanašajo na begunce, vendar se lahko s pomočjo teh treh pristopov obravnava tudi druga družbenokritična vprašanja in probleme, kot so na primer rasizem, pravice žensk in delavcev, globalno segrevanje itd. Gre za zelo pomembne družbenokritične teme, o katerih bi morali razpravljati tudi pri pouku angleščine.

**Ključne besede:** problemsko izobraževanje, kritično mišljenje, kreativno mišljenje, družbeno angažirano gledališče, razredne razprave o spornih družbenih vprašanjih, ksenofobija

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# 1 INTRODUCTION: Exploring the Educational Purpose

I often had a feeling, when I was a student in different classrooms throughout my years of schooling that I was like a fly trapped in a small crowded place, desperately bumping my head against the window, trying to get out of this cube, the boredom and insignificance to my experience. I even wrote a poem in my secondary school (a haiku I am too embarrassed to include) about this feeling. I thought about this poem of mine as I was reading the book *Weapons of Mass Instruction*, where Gatto (2010:141) gives a similar example of fleas trapped in a container I quote in the *Acknowledgements*. He comes to the conclusion that he as a teacher is partly at fault for putting the jar lid on that container, by treating his students as passive receivers of knowledge, and feeding their heads with information unconnected to their lives. Reading this, I came to the conclusion that it should be the part of the teacher to leave the window or the lid open and prevent that fly or flea from bumping its head on the window or the jar lid. In this MA thesis I suggest that one of the many ways (English) teachers can engage students is by using creative approaches to involve them in meaningful critical discussions about the world outside the school walls.

The idea and motivation for this small research came about as I was browsing through a big pile of different English course books, and realized most of them are culturally and content neutral landfills of random texts that do not encourage students to think critically or creatively about the society they live in. The study of a language should be, in my opinion, not just operation with grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, and at least every once in a while language teachers should strive towards a more topical, content-rich syllabus, and a more critically oriented classroom. One of the many ways to do that would be to opt for the “problem-posing” education I describe in the first chapter with a focus on critical and creative thinking (chapter two), to bring some more engaging and critically-charged topics into the (ELT) classroom, discuss the issues related to these topics, and incorporate these themes through different creative approaches I describe in chapter three and more concretely in chapter four.

## 1.1 The “Narrative” or “Banking” Education

Reasons for becoming a teacher are very personal. hooks (2010: 33) categorizes teachers into three groups: those who decide to become teachers because they believe it is an easy job that comes with long vacation; teachers who see their role as the one of curriculum deliverers of easily-testable knowledge, who simply plan to teach the exact same way they were taught; and finally those who question what is offered by and what is excluded from the curriculum, so that they can impact and change the lives of their students for the better, help them follow their individual paths and shape the person they will one day become. This final group inspired me the most and continues to do so, and I will be forever grateful for their efforts.

The teachers of the first and the second category are usually the promoters of the education Freire (1971: 57) calls “narrative” or “banking”. The “narrative” or “banking concept of education” (*ibid.*: 58) is characterized by the active puppet master (the teacher) and patient and passive puppets (the students) or as Freire portrays this narrative teacher-student relationship:

Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse yet, it turns them into "containers," into "receptacles" to be "filled" by the teacher. The more completely he fills the receptacles, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are. [...] This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is men themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system.

(Freire 1971: 58)

As Freire (1971: 58) argues the common practice of teachers in many classrooms is to prepare the material they want their students to “patiently receive, memorize, and repeat”. They either memorize what the teacher says or copy notes from the board. Freire (1971: 60) argues that “[t]he more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world”. Banking education, he states, will “never propose to students

that they critically consider reality” and is capable of “minimiz[ing] or annul[ing] the students’ creative power” (*ibid.*: 60).

This type of education treats students as robots with no consideration of their creative or cognitive potential. Such an educational system is perfectly portrayed in the official video of Pink Floyd’s *Another Brick in the Wall* where school children stripped of their individuality by the school system - which is symbolized by the horrifying masks they wear - are thrown into a meat grinder. Banking education, just like the mincing machine in the video, continues to “grind out incomplete men and women,” instead of encouraging critical curiosity, imagination and character (Gatto 2010: 54).

It is therefore no wonder that many such school classrooms are filled with boredom on the part of the students and the teachers. As Gatto (2010: 143) states “the imagination and the inner life [of the students] have been paralysed by endless memory drills, the synthetic crises of continual testing, and a thorough conditioning in rewards and punishments, the game of winners and losers”. The school’s prevailing debates evolve around tests and performance of the students (*ibid.*: 8). Students quickly learn that the school is not about what they want to know and are interested in, about their anxieties, interests and futures. The burning questions the students have and “problems encountered outside school walls are treated as peripheral” (Gatto 2010: 63), because “the prison model school” as he calls it (*ibid.*: 123), divides “the world into disciplines, courses, classes, grades, and teachers who would remain strangers to the children in all but name” (*ibid.*: 68). Gatto (2010: 123) goes even further to argue that winning, not learning, is the goal of schooling, because “attention is never placed on quality of thought or performance, but on something entirely different; reaching the winner’s circle”. What is more, he argues that academic excellence (grades and test scores) does “not correlate [...] with real-world excellence,” and upon leaving the institution of schooling “nobody ever asks after [that] data” (*ibid.*: 194).

Students, as have already been argued, are merely passive recipients of knowledge and thus better adapted to the “[h]ighly centralized mass production economies” who cannot “function well without colonizing minds and converting them into a mass mind” (*ibid.*: 43). Schools only rarely equip them to know about and encourage them to participate in “the concrete realities of their world” (Freire 1971: 11), which is, as Freire (1971: 63) argues, “well situated to the purposes of the oppressors, whose [tranquillity] rests on how well [students] fit the world the

oppressors have created, and how little they question it". As Gatto (2010: 66) argues "capital operates most efficiently in climates without public opposition, where critical thinking among ordinary people is in a primitive state," because, he adds, "[t]he official economy we have constructed demands constantly renewed supplies of levelled, spiritless, passive, anxious, friendless, family-less people who can be scrapped and replaced endlessly, and who will perform at maximum efficiency" (*ibid.*: 64).

Apple (1990: vii) argues that "the immense pressure on the educational system in so many countries [is] to make the goals of business and industry into the primary if not the only goals of schooling". This means that "political debate [is limited] to minor issues" (Chomsky 1999: 9), which results in a "depoliticized citizenry marked by apathy and cynicism" (*ibid.*: 10) and a society of "disengaged individuals who feel demoralized and socially powerless" (*ibid.*: 11). Because they enter and leave "the field of education apolitical" (Orlowski (2012: 1) it is therefore no wonder that the students "have little or no interest in feminism or its goals," they are not interested "in voting in elections or engaging in other forms of the democratic process," and not many understand "that the corporate media support corporate interests" (*ibid.*). He also suggests that "the corporate sector is much happier with the current emphasis on preparing workers for employment [...] rather than on promoting critical thinking skills" (*ibid.*: 19).

School institutions therefore "create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination" (Apple 1990: 3). Apple argues that they [educational institutions] are "the main agencies of transmission of an effective dominant culture," which is "always passed off as 'the tradition,' the significant past" (*ibid.*: 6). However, he warns that selectivity is at work, because out of the "whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded" (*ibid.*). He further warns that what is taught is often "reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture" (*ibid.*).

Social control is also maintained with the help of "the hidden curriculum in schools," which is, as Apple (1990: 14) indicates "the tacit teaching to students of norms, values, and dispositions that goes on simply by their living in and coping with the institutional expectations and

routines of schools day in and day out for a number of years". Gatto (2010: 127) concludes that "[t]he function of these collective rituals [...] has very little to do with intellectual development," that they are more about "habit training, about practicing attention and fealty to authority". Both Gatto (2010: 43), Apple (1990: 43), hooks (2010: 60) and Fisher (1990: 23) agree that this is best achieved if started early in a person's life, in kindergarten or later in primary school, because in this way "independent consciousness can be undermined in its formative stages" (Gatto 2010: 43) and students can be effectively taught "allegiance to the status quo" (hooks 2010: 28).

## 1.2 The "Problem-Posing" Education

Luckily, as hooks (2010: 29) points out, there have always been the teachers she classifies in the third category "who questioned, who saw clearly that much of what they taught was aimed at reinforcing the politics of imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy". They are the promoters of the so-called "problem-posing education" (Freire 1971: 68-73). This type of education encourages students to "develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (*ibid.*: 68). Unlike banking education, such an educational approach constantly encourages students to deal with "problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world," so they are constantly "challenged and [even] obliged to respond to that challenge" (*ibid.*: 68-69). Unlike banking education which "anesthetizes and inhibits creative power," this type of education, Freire argues, "involves a constant unveiling of reality" and "strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality" (*ibid.*: 68). He makes a clear distinction between the two educational approaches in the following lines:

Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers. Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates (although it cannot completely destroy) the intentionality of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying men their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more 'fully human. Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality,

thereby responding to the vocation of men as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation.

(Freire 1971: 71)

Problem-posing education is, as hooks (2010: 19) argues based on the assumption that “we learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student[s] and teacher[s]”. Teachers, she argues, must therefore be willing to “discover what the students know and what they need to know” and to “engage students beyond a surface level” (*ibid.*). This means that they need to take a lot of time “to assess who and [what they] are teaching” (*ibid.*). hooks (2010: 19-20) suggests that before starting any course, teachers should take time to “ask students to introduce themselves or to share a bit of information about where they [are] coming from and what their hopes and dreams might be”. Gatto (2010: 101) similarly suggests that teachers first gather “a fairly accurate biography of every individual student” and then “add a personalized Wishes and Weaknesses component (*ibid.*: 102),” where students are asked three things they would like to learn by the end of the year, and three weaknesses they would like to overcome. If this is done, he argues that each student will be motivated to learn, because then they will have “a personal reason to work hard” (*ibid.*).

Murphy and Fleming (2010: 148) point out that “[t]eachers must be committed to learner-centered values, and they must be willing to risk making their own professional judgments rather than having those totally dictated by externally imposed authorities and priorities”. In that way “[s]chools can provide a safe arena in which students can safely bring particular sets of lifeworld resources to their formal learning in school, ones that can be very different from that which shapes the assumptions and expectations of other students or that of the school itself” (*ibid.*: 145). Grigg and Lewis (2019) however state that:

This goes much deeper than child-centred practices and is not about children ‘doing their own thing’ because it involves pupils thinking interdependently, taking responsibility, demonstrating initiative and recognising the consequences of decisions. In the classroom this means pupils actively discussing problems and issues, asking questions, justifying viewpoints, listening emphatically to others, offering suggestions for improvement, reflecting on their actions, self-regulating their thinking in caring for others and the environment.

(Grigg and Lewis 2019: 220)

Grigg and Lewis (2019: 15) argue that by “developing dispositions such as open-mindedness, curiosity and flexible thinking, children are more likely to become lifelong learners, effective problem-solvers and decision-makers”. But in order for that to happen a classroom needs to be changed into “a place of fierce engagement and intense learning” (hooks 2010: 5). Grigg and Lewis (2019) give five arguments that speak in favour of problem-posing education and the teaching of critical and creative thinking in schools:

First, if education is taken seriously, we maintain that one of children's basic human rights is to be taught how to think well. Second, if schools are successful at doing this, then pupils' love of learning will be enhanced across the curriculum and beyond school life. Third, when people are good at applying their thinking the evidence clearly shows that their overall wellbeing improves. Fourth, developing critical and creative thinking within schools improves young people's prospects for getting decent employment that benefits themselves, their families and society at large. Finally, if we consider what underpins the most successful educational systems in the world (at least judged by standardised test scores), it transpires that they make time for the teaching of creative and critical thinking or aspire to do so.

(Grigg and Lewis 2019: 50)

Murphy and Fleming (2010: 142) argue that unlike banking education, where the main focus is on “improving the knowledge, skills and other competencies directly required for employability”, problem-posing education resists the “reduction of citizenship to an economic system’s logic” (*ibid.*). Crick and Joldersma (2007, in Murphy and Fleming 2010: 142) report that it is based on “a model of lifelong learning with emancipatory dimension”. Such a model of lifelong learning is not “geared only to supplying the skills and knowledge for the economy” (Murphy and Fleming 2010: 142). Its main goal is “to provide competencies for active and ethical citizenship” (*ibid.*). Grigg and Lewis (2019) promote engaging the students in such a model of lifelong learning and argue that:

And in the future, these dialogues should increasingly focus on the global challenges that are likely to impact on pupils' lives. A good starting point to generate creative and critical thinking among young people is to show a video of which there are various versions, which reduces the world to a community of one hundred people. This illustrates the inequalities in the world — 15 people would be malnourished and one starving, while 21 would be overweight. Overall, one person would control 50 per cent of all the money in the world (Osborne, 2016). If children and young people are to become genuine global citizens, they need to acquire the knowledge,

skills, values and attitudes to enable them to behave in an ethical, responsible manner. As John Dewey (1916: 239) famously said, 'Education is not a preparation for life, it is life itself'.

(Grigg and Lewis 2019: 222)

Murphy and Fleming (2010: 137) suggest that “[s]uch pedagogy spills permanently beyond formal schooling and becomes lifelong learning, a vital aspect of the continuing active role citizens might assume in society.” Through it, Orłowski (2012: 51) points out, students “become informed about current political debates, knowledgeable about the insidiousness of power, and aware of what is in their own best interests”. Murphy and Fleming (2010: 143) report that such an education helps “students [...] become learners who will critically examine the content of their own assumptions in each of these three areas – world, society, person.” hooks (2010: 88) argues that educators who are in favour of this approach teach their students that “there is safety in learning to cope with conflict, with differences of thought and opinion” and by “teaching [them] to value dissent and to treasure critical exchange,” teachers “prepare their minds for radical openness”. Indeed, as Orłowski (2015: 51) argues, “[t]his type of education holds great transformative potential.”

## 2 CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

### 2.1 Critical Thinking

hooks (2010: 7) states that the “heartbeat of critical thinking is the longing to know – to understand how life works.” Young children are, she argues, “organically predisposed to be critical thinkers” (*ibid.*), because they are as Grigg and Lewis (2019: 12) point out “curious, imaginative and eager to learn”. She (2010: 8) argues that children are sometimes “so eager for knowledge they become relentless interrogators [with questions like] who, what, when, where, and why of life”. Sadly, instead of building on these passionate inclinations, they “encounter a world that seeks to educate them for conformity and obedience only” (*ibid.*). hooks (2010: 8) argues that this happens either in primary socialization, “with parents who teach via a model of discipline” where children are encouraged “to choose obedience over self-awareness and self-determination,” or through secondary socialization, “in schools where independent thinking is not acceptable behaviour.” Therefore they are taught “to suppress the memory of thinking as a passionate, pleasurable activity” (*ibid.*). Luckily, as she argues “there are some classrooms in which individual professors” feel obliged to create settings where “thinking, and most especially critical thinking, is what matters” (*ibid.*).

Critical thinking “is a process of questioning sources to make well-informed judgements,” state Grigg and Lewis (2019: 18). They also argue that thinking critically is defined by “healthy scepticism and involves challenging assumptions” (*ibid.*). But they argue that critical thinking “does not mean simply finding fault or exposing weaknesses,” rather “it seeks a solid basis on which to judge something,” which “should involve commenting on strengths, weaknesses and raising further questions” (*ibid.*). Willingham (2008, in hooks 2010: 8-9) reports that critical thinking “consists of seeing both [or more] sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that discomforts young ideas, [...] demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts [and] solving problems.” To simplify the matter hooks (2010: 9) defines critical thinking as “first discovering the who, what, when, where, and how of things – finding the answers to those eternal questions of the inquisitive child – and then utilizing that knowledge in a manner that enables you to determine what matters most”. Critical thinking’s gist is “a way of approaching ideas that aims to understand core, underlying

truths, not simply that superficial truth that may be most obviously visible" (*ibid.*). Paul and Elder (2001, as cited in hooks 2010: 9) list the following characteristics of critical thinkers:

Critical thinkers are clear as to the purpose at hand and the question at issue. They question information, conclusions and points of view. They strive to be clear, accurate, precise, and relevant. They seek to think beneath the surface, to be logical and fair. They apply these skills to their reading and writing as well as to their speaking and listening.

(hooks 2010: 9)

hooks (2010: 11) argues that the "most exciting aspect of critical thinking in the classroom is that it calls for initiative from everyone." She claims that it is an interactive process, "actively inviting all students to think passionately and to share ideas in a passionate, open manner". But not only that, it requires "participation on the part of the teacher and students alike" (*ibid.*: 9). She argues that in "such a community of learning there is no failure" (*ibid.*: 11), as long as one keeps a radically open mind, because as she argues "it [is] far too easy to become attached to and protective of one's own viewpoint, and to rule out other perspectives" (*ibid.*: 10). She points out that the field of education often "encourages teachers to assume that they must be 'right' at all times," and suggest instead that educators "be open at all times, [...] and willing to acknowledge what [they] do not know" (*ibid.*). Critical thinking, she indicates, demands the use of imagination, "seeing things from perspectives other than our own", and so does not only "place demands on students, [but] also requires teachers to show by example that learning in action means that not all of us can be right all the time, and that the shape of knowledge is constantly changing" (*ibid.*).

However, as Robinson (2014, in Grigg and Lewis 2019: 51) reports, many students feel "conflict in their thinking between wanting to lead aspects of their own learning," while at the same time expecting a teacher to take responsibility for their learning, as they are "perceived as more knowledgeable and able to provide the information pupils need to help them achieve well in national tests and examinations". hooks (2010: 10) also argues that students at first "resist the critical thinking process," because they are "more comfortable with learning that allows them to remain passive". What is more Grigg and Lewis (2019: 51) report that teachers too "struggle with the dilemma of supporting autonomous thinkers while responding to pressures to achieve good examination results by taking [full] control of pupil's learning."

hooks (2010: 10) points out that even “[p]rofessors who work diligently to teach critical thinking often become discouraged when [and if] students [at first] resist”.

However as Apple (1990: xi) argues, teachers who do not “engage [...] in continual questioning [...] abrogate [their] responsibility to the current and future lives of the thousands of students who spend so many years in schools.” As Gatto (2010: 93) points out, the role of teachers is to help students “jettison the lives of spectators which have been assigned to them, so they could become players.” hooks (2010: 16) calls such teachers “progressive educators” because they see that “democratic education is being undermined as the interests of big business and corporate capitalism encourage students to see education solely as a means to achieve material success”. Such teachers work hard to create a classroom environment “where learning is valued, where the ability to think is the mark of responsible citizenship, where free speech and the will to dissent is accepted and encouraged” (*ibid.*: 17). Murphy and Fleming (2010) argue that

Learners are more effective when they become aware of the possible desire, perhaps deep down inside, to investigate and comprehend things about which they know or understand very little. When they become aware of their own critical curiosity, they will want to get below the surface of things and try to find out what is going on. They are more likely to ask their own questions try to uncover assumptions, and struggle towards the truth. Those who are not aware of their own curiosity are more likely to remain passive with respect to that which they do not know or understand.

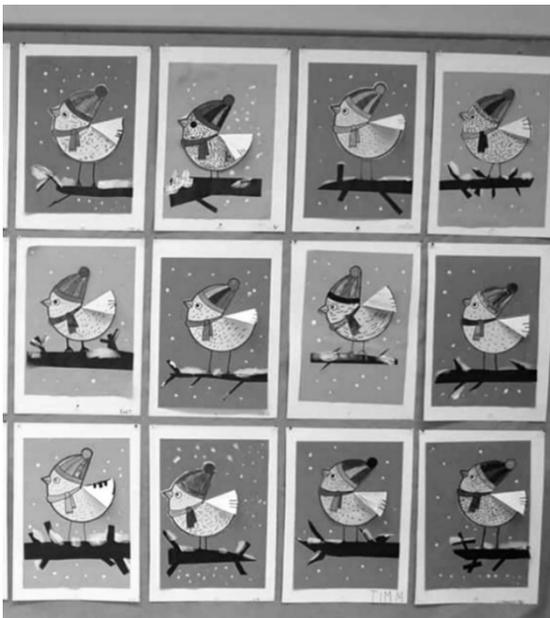
(Murphy and Fleming 2010: 146)

Another reason why “schools should consider raising the profile of [critical] thinking skills in the curriculum” is the fact that there is a “huge inflow of information available at our fingertips,” and therefore “[b]eing able to think critically about the value of this information is of increasing importance” (Grigg and Lewis 2019: 20). What is more, as hooks (2010: 10) points out “when the student does learn the skill of critical [and creative] thinking,” even though “it is usually the few and not the many [that] do learn,” this is “a truly rewarding experience” for both the teacher and the student.

## 2.2 Creative Thinking

I often have a look at the pictures of paintings elementary school teachers post on the Facebook page where they share and exchange their ideas. One thing I cannot help but notice is that they often publish the works of their learners where the paintings of the students look almost exactly alike. What some teachers do is present their students a model, a picture, and they expect them to reproduce it using the same colours, the same motives, the same composition and lighting, as if they were workers in a car production factory producing the same vehicle part. Such paintings remind me of the old floral ceramic wall tiles in the houses of my grandmother's friends. The plant pattern is the same on all tiles, none of them stands out, and they are all equal parts of the covered wall.

*Figure 1: Downloaded from the Facebook group Razredni pouk-učitelji in February 2019.*



Just like with kitchen tiles, there is nothing really original in the works the students are prescribed to produce. All they are required to do is to copy that product as closely as possible, and then the teachers display around twenty paintings that look like two peas in a pod, or in this case twenty, in a pod. Such a display would make a great wall tapestry or a floor carpet. As Bizjak (1997) concludes, there is not enough time for students to express themselves and promote their creative ideas in the classroom, which she illustrates with the story about a little boy:

"We will be drawing today," the teacher announced. "Great," thought a little boy. "I like to draw. I can draw cars and trucks and horses and fish ..." But the teacher said: "Wait! Today we will draw flowers." "Great," the boy thought. "I really like to draw flowers." And he began to draw flowers of all kinds and colours. But the teacher said, "Wait, I'll show you how." She painted a red flower with a green stem. The boy thought that his flowers looked nicer, but took a second paper and drew a red flower with a green stalk and the teacher praised him. "Today we will play with clay," the teacher announced. "Great," the boy thought. "I like to form clay. I can make cars and elephants and houses and birds ..." But the teacher said, "Wait! Today we will make clay pots." "Great," the boy thought. "I can make great clay pots," and he started

making pots of all shapes and sizes. But the teacher said: "Wait! I'll show you how. "And the teacher made a deep clay pot. The boy looked at the pots he had made, and thought they were better than the teacher's. But he crushed them in his hands and made one that looked like the teacher's, and the teacher praised him. Then the boy went to another school. "We are drawing today," announced a new teacher. She distributed papers and pencils, but the boy was waiting. The teacher asked him, "You will not draw?" And the boy said, "Show me what to draw." The teacher said: "You can draw anything you want. [...] The boy thought for a moment. Then he took the pigments and began to draw a red flower with a green stem."

(Bizjak 1997: 49)

hooks (2010: 60) states that "[w]e live in a world where small children are encouraged to imagine, to draw, paint pictures, create imaginary friends, new identities, go wherever the mind takes them". However, as children grow up, "imagination is seen as dangerous, a force that could possibly impede knowledge acquisition" (*ibid.*). Priestley (as cited in hooks 2010: 60) reports that "[b]ecause most children are highly imaginative, it is supposed by some that to reach maturity we ought to leave imagination behind, like the habit of smearing our faces with chocolate". It seems that, as hooks (2010: 60) argues, "[t]he higher one goes up the ladder of learning, the more one is asked to forget about imagination (unless a creative path has been chosen, the study of art, filmmaking, etc.)". She further argues that "the killing off of the imagination serves as a way to repress and contain everyone within the limits of the status quo (*ibid.*)," because as she often points out "without the ability to imagine, people remain stuck, unable to move into a place of power and possibility" (*ibid.*: 61). Thinking outside the box requires that we "engage our imaginations in new and different ways" (*ibid.*) and as Murphy and Fleming (2010) argue:

Learners become more effective when they realize that they are able to look at things in different ways and to imagine new possibilities. They are then more receptive to hunches and inklings that bubble up into their minds, and seek them out, making more use of imagination, visual imagery and pictures and diagrams in their learning. Novelty and uncertainty are more easily welcomed as invitations to imagine how things could be otherwise, giving up mental control, safety and familiarity in the quest to learn. Students who are not aware of this dimension are more likely to remain rule-bound, staying with the familiar patterns of thought and image, rather than actively trying new ways of arriving at an understanding or validation.

(Murphy and Fleming: 146-147)

As hooks (2010: 59) points out “[t]eachers rarely talk about the role imagination plays in helping to create and sustain the engaged classroom.” She argues that the role of imagination is often overlooked, because “much of the work in a given course [consists of] the sharing of facts and information” (*ibid.*). Horzelenberg (2014: 2) argues that schools can (and must) promote creativity and raise creative and open-minded people, who will be able to respond to today’s and tomorrow’s issues, because as hooks (2010: 59) points out “what we cannot imagine cannot come into being.” Schools should encourage creative thinking, as Horzelenberg (2014: 2) suggests, by “searching for strong areas in each student, building their self-esteem, protecting their integrity, entrusting them, and giving them a responsible (co)role in curious discovery of knowledge and skills, shaping the environment for their active inclusion, facing them with challenges, and by offering support in solving them”. He also argues that teachers need “to make a 'regular lesson' a bit different - more creative”, and need to take time to invest huge amounts of creative energy themselves as well (*ibid.*), because as hooks (2010: 59) states, imagination is needed to “illuminate those spaces not covered by data, facts, and proven information.”

There is a solution for nearly every problem or challenge one encounters in life. However, as Goreta (2014: 27) argues, we do not always figure out the solution by consciously thinking about a certain problem, but with the help of intuition and imagination, which he claims, are “only rarely used in school[s]” (*ibid.*). He does however point out that there are some exceptions, subjects like arts and music, but he points out that “in other school subjects preference is given to factual knowledge and analytical thinking” (*ibid.*). He concludes that “schooling is useful, because through it a person develops his or her own mental abilities and learns new things,” but is unfortunately “built in a way that often does not develop creative thinking,” which he portrays with the following example (*ibid.*):

Imagine being a fitness member. You practice your fitness routine five times a week, every day in the evening for about an hour. But your fitness routine is somewhat special - exercises and moves you perform on various devices and handles are done only with one half of the body (left arm, left foot, left side of the chest). You have been doing this routine for quite some time, and after a few years, the differences are quite obvious - one side is highly developed, the other is not. Because of the soft and saggy muscles on the other side, the whole body is completely asymmetrical. Perhaps, due to this asymmetry, you also experience muscle or back pain [...]. Why do I give this example? Because it reminds of the education in American and

European school systems, from the elementary school to the university, where the "leading role" is primarily given to factual knowledge and convergent thinking, data and information storage. And then a graduate comes into the world of entrepreneurship, where things change a lot. It is no longer just a matter of memorizing data. Years of this and that event are no longer important. What becomes important is how to creatively solve a particular business [or life] challenge. Here, the new entrepreneur comes to a problem, because up until now, he was not encouraged to think creatively and taught how to use his intuition [or imagination].

(Goreta 2014: 27)

Srića (1999: 51) points out that even though most people associate the word creativity and creative thinking with "unique talents that have enriched human history with their achievements, regardless of whether they were technological, artistic or innovations of a scientific nature," creativity is not only a characteristic of rare geniuses. Rather as Grigg and Lewis (2019: 24) argue "the most creative people are usually very motivated individuals," passionate people who "love what they do and are intrinsically driven by the subject rather than any promised reward or external goals". The two also point out that "[t]heir passion means that they follow their interests, which calls for resourcefulness, single-mindedness and perseverance" (*ibid.*). However, as Grigg and Lewis (2019: 50) warn, there are many "sharp, critical [and creative] thinkers," but "without moral purpose their thinking should not matter a jot". As they point out "the world's greatest scientists and architects could design and create the apparatus of concentration camps and conduct experimental 'research', before returning home to family meals, laughter and classical music. (*ibid.*)." Even though the two of them are strong supporters of fostering critical and creative thinking in schools, they argue that without "a focus on moral [and character] development" teaching students to become critical and creative thinkers is not enough (*ibid.*).

### 3 FOSTERING CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING IN THE (ELT) CLASSROOM

The third and the fourth chapter of this MA thesis were inspired according to answers of the respondents (secondary school pupils that saw the play *6* by Žiga Divjak) that were willing to fill in the questionnaire I designed for them, which can be found in the Appendices. The questions were mostly about the play itself, but there were also three questions:

**1. Would you like to see the continuation of the play *6* by Žiga Divjak, or see some other socially-engaged play that leads the audience to a deep reflection? Why yes or why not?**

11 out of 11 secondary school students replied “yes”, their reasons for it were: “Yes, because the play was very interesting”; “Yes, because I was touched by it”; “Yes, because such plays make me look at certain issues from different points of view”; “Definitely yes! I loved the play and would love to see a similar one”; “Yes, because watching such plays makes it easier for me to form an opinion”; “Yes, because I am interested in sociology and social themes”; “Yes, because I would like to know more about the personal stories of the refugees”; “Yes, because I would like to get to know the topic better”; “Yes, because such plays open your eyes and make you think”; Yes, because I would like to know more about this topic as well as inform others about the consequences of our actions”.

**2. Would you like to further discuss the topic of refugees and the issues connected to it or address other critically-charged and controversial topics in the (ELT) classroom?**

To this yes or no question 8 out of 11 secondary school students replied “yes,” one added that “it is important that such issues be discussed” and another wrote that “this and similar topics should be addressed especially during the sociology lessons. 2 out of 10 students answered “no”, one added that they “have already covered the topic of refugees”. One student was “undecided” because they wrote that they “would not like to talk about critically-charged topics in the classroom,” because the “classmates and teachers are not open-minded” and often “the discussion if it comes to it does not flow” but he or she added that they “would love to discuss this and similar topics in a ‘safer environment’”.

**3.** The stories of six young refugees are not included in the play. We see their faces only on a slide show in the back of the stage. If you had an option, **would you like to hear their stories** and find out how and why did the young boys find themselves in a new country?

To this yes or no question 11 out of 11 students answered “yes.”

In this chapter I therefore introduce three approaches (ELT) teachers could use to promote problem-posing education and foster critical and creative thinking in their classrooms. The selected approaches present some practical ideas available to teachers, but of course this is not a definite list, because as Orłowski (2012: 13) states “there are almost as many approaches to teaching for social justice as there are sources and practitioners”. The following approaches have been selected because I have seen them work in practice, and because they can be used to tackle a variety of fundamental questions and issues about society and life. The three approaches I promote in my thesis are:

### **3.1 Socially-engaged theatre**

### **3.2 Controversial issues classroom discussions**

### **3.3 Hearing and sharing stories**

At the core of these approaches is the idea that the study of a language should not be merely just operation with grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, and at least every once in a while English teachers should move away from course book material and strive towards a more topical, content-rich syllabus, and a more critically oriented classroom. As a future teacher of English, with an interest in critical phenomena in society, I have tried to come up with some of the ways to bring socially-engaged topics into the ELT classroom, which has long since become much more than just the learning of a language. Through this language we are almost obliged to inform pupils of some moral problems. Teachers should not just focus on grading, testing and national examinations, but should broaden the minds of students by addressing the questions about justice, truth and morals.

### 3.1 Learning from Live, Socially-Engaged Theatre

The theatre is everywhere, from entertainment districts to the fringes, from the rituals of government to the ceremony of the courtroom, from the spectacle of the sporting arena to the theatres of war. Across these many forms stretches a theatrical continuum through which cultures both assert and question themselves.

(Nicholson 2009: vii)

As Redington (2016: 1) argues “[p]laywrights from Sophocles to Brecht have used their plays to teach, to convey facts, political attitudes or moral instruction to their audiences”. Theatrical art is the most collective of all arts, because as Möderndorfer (2001: 97) points out “theatre has the strongest immediate influence on the audience” and society as well. The novel he claims acts on the reader individually, an intimate bond is built between the reader and the story, the reader is entrenched in his individual perception of the story, but “the theatre requires a collective reception” (*ibid.*). The reader is alone, among the novel, while the story in the theatre grows inside the whole auditorium (*ibid.*).

Möderndorfer (2001: 97) hastens to point out that when a play is well-written and performed the same emotions overwhelm the audience; the viewers “feel the same, they think the same, [and] are shaken over the same places” (*ibid.*). He argues that “the story of an unhappy commercial traveller, who is brutally fired because he is too slow and too old, becomes the story of all four hundred visitors sitting in the hall (*ibid.*.” He suggests that “a kind of unified consciousness,” and even more interestingly, “a collective emotion” is established (*ibid.*). He also argues that with a good performance, at the right social moment, “an explosive mixture is created” between the audience and the actors, “which happens only during great social events, where the crowd is flooded with the same interests” (*ibid.*). He points out that “something similar to this close connection between people” happens “only during the revolution” (*ibid.*). He argues that the spectators are never “so closely connected to each other as during a short hour or two, when the performance takes place” (*ibid.*).

Inherent to the theatre as Skušek-Močnik (1980: 9) states is therefore “a social if not even socialization function.” The theatre is “the gathering place of a particular audience, a gathering place that, at least for the time of the performance [...] constitutes or at least confirms it as a specific (social) group” (*ibid.*: 10). It is therefore no wonder “why the theatre can become an

important place for political struggle” (*ibid.*). The theatre can be as Möderndorfer (2001: 97) argues “one of the most powerful weapons in human hands,” and that is why power, “especially if it is totalitarian, is very much afraid of the theatre” (*ibid.*). Those in power especially fear the theatre, “which has a clear position on the society, the politics, and the world in which it lives, can convincingly express it, and transform it into a story that then emotionally convinces the auditorium” (*ibid.*). In chapter 4 I focus on socially-engaged theatre through the play *6* by Žiga Divjak, because as Divjak points out:

Theatre can go deep into the heart of the problem and bring more than news and facts. The theatre gives facts a personal story, emotions, and provides more time for reflection. Often reactions to the performances are “We already know this”, but we only know some Twitter news. It is only when you get a little deeper into the essence of things, you see how much detail you have missed. When you take a little time and dig deeper into the story, you see that this is actually around us, a part of our personal reality, even if it happens on the other side of the world.

Divjak (2018, as quoted in Uher 2018)

### **3.2 Controversial Issues Classroom Discussions**

When schools fail to teach young people how to engage with controversial political issues, or worse, suppress, ignore, or deny the important role of controversial issues in the curriculum, they send a host of dangerous and wrongheaded messages. One is that the political realm is not really important, especially in comparison to other content on which schools traditionally have focused. Another is that such issues are “taboo” and therefore dangerous for young people to encounter. Yet another is that people [...] fundamentally agree on the nature of the public good and how it can be fostered.

(Hess 2009: 5-6)

Because of the before mentioned reasons, Hess (2009: 6) argues that schools “have not just the right, but also the obligation, to create an atmosphere of intellectual and political freedom that uses genuine public controversies,” because this helps “students discuss and envision political possibilities”. They should be asked to discuss historical and moral issues, problems that the society needs to address such as immigration, poverty, global warming, discrimination, xenophobia, racism, and so on. Talking about controversial issues in the

classroom “enhances the quality of decision-making by ensuring that multiple and competing views about controversial political issues are aired, fairly considered, and critically evaluated” (*ibid.*). As Hess (2009: xii-xiii) argues schools are obliged to emphasize “the ongoing transformation of society”. With such an approach, in classrooms where “serious, critical, and respectful” debates happen, “the democratic ideal is simply stated: people can build a better society” (*ibid.*). As she reports:

Studies that ask young people whether they had opportunities to discuss current issues in a classroom setting have consistently found that those who did participate in such discussions have a greater interest in politics, improved critical thinking and communications skills, more civic knowledge, and more interest in discussing public affairs out of school. Compared to other students, they also are more likely to say that they will vote and volunteer as adults.

(Hess 2009: 28)

English is a subject that is perfectly suited for controversial issues discussions. Hess (2009: 13) argues that there are “numerous approaches for how to include controversial issues in the classrooms, such as simulations, role plays, and writing assignments”. At the core of all the approaches that promote debate is “the belief that the most powerful ideas can be produced when people are expressing their ideas on a topic and listening to others express theirs” (*ibid.*: 14). In chapter 4 I describe in more details “The 6 Thinking Hats” designed by Edward de Bono, a creative approach for group discussion and individual thinking which helps to confront different views with one another. It is important that students understand that “multiple perspectives exist for every issue” and they “must be able to engage in a discussion about these varying points of view” (*ibid.*: 56). Discussion-rich classes “help students understand multiple perspectives and communicate effectively with people who have opinions contrary to their own” (*ibid.*).

Through discussions students also learn to listen to different views shared by others. As hooks (2009: 2) argues “not to pay attention to what others say is [...] rude and it is not fair just to hear yourself speak,” because listening is also “part of the bargain” (*ibid.*). Teachers also need to prepare the students for the discussion, so that they have enough information about what to say, and they need to create “a learning environment in which students want to participate” (*ibid.*: 7). As she points out “a supportive classroom environment that encourages the analysis

and critique of multiple and competing viewpoints is positively correlated with important civic outcomes” (*ibid.*: 28) and argues that:

Democratic education without controversial issues discussions would be like a forest without trees, or an ocean without fish, or a symphony without sound. Why? Because controversies about the nature of the public good and how to achieve it, along with how to mediate among competing democratic values, are intrinsic parts of democracy. If there is no controversy, there is no democracy. It is as simple as that. If we want democratic education to be both democratic and educational, then we have to teach young people about controversial political issues. Again, I define controversial political issues as authentic questions about the kinds of public policies that should be adopted to address public problems.

(Hess 2009: 28)

### **3.3 Hearing and Sharing Stories**

Humans have always told stories. It is one of the things that makes us human and distinguishes us from other creatures. Round the campfire in the evenings, long before television was invented, people told stories to one another. Stories were used to pass on real events, history and family connections, and also to entertain. They were used to teach children and to hand down values and customs from generation to generation. Long before writing, the only culture was oral, spoken culture. To tell stories is to participate, and to help children to participate, in one of the most ancient human customs.

(Eades 2015: 11)

Storytelling is not only a vital part of primary socialization, but has also been, as Eades (2015: 11) argues, a “part of formal education for many years”. As Mourao (2009, in Dyson 1990: 101) points out it is also widely used in the English language classroom, because it “represents a holistic approach to language teaching and learning founded on the understanding that learners need to interact with rich, authentic examples of the foreign language”. Apart from their “obvious significance in the teaching of literacy,” stories are “an invaluable tool for developing speaking and listening skills and a stimulus for discussion or for philosophy and thinking skills” (Eades 2015: 11). As Mart (2019: 16) argues they have long been seen as “a natural stimulus for discussion, investigation and problem-solving”. Stories also “assist the development of social awareness and help [students] build up an emotional vocabulary”

(Eades 2015: 11). Storytelling is an active and creative process. Whenever a person tells their own personal story, students “are not passive recipients but active participants in the creative process” (*ibid.*: 15). Storytellers have to constantly respond to the listeners’ reactions and emotions and that is how Eades (2015: 15) argues students are “in fact helping [the storyteller] to create a story”. As Grigg and Lewis (2019: 54) point out the “imagination is continually at work when reading and listening to stories”. When students are invited “to respond to what they have read or heard through discussion, drawing, painting, modelling, composing a piece of music, dance, mini play or a PowerPoint presentation, [this] often provides deeper insight into their thinking” (*ibid.*).

Stories are powerful because as Rader (2010, in hooks 2010: 46) points out “[t]hey can turn us toward different definitions and different pathways” and “toward complicated matters from different perspectives”. As hooks (2010: 49) argues “[t]elling stories is one of the ways that we can begin the process of building community [...] inside the classroom”, by sharing “both true accounts and fictional stories [...] that help us understand one another”. However, she notes that many teachers hesitate in sharing their personal stories with their students, because to them “[t]elling a personal story to document or frame an argument [is] a sign that one [is] not dealing in hard facts”, and therefore “not scientific enough” (*ibid.*). In such an impersonal environment students too hesitate to share their stories. When I asked the class I had taught during my teaching practice why they do not want to play songs on You Tube and share the memories and associations connected to them, one of the students told me they were not used to that kind of personal approach and feel more comfortable sitting behind the desks, doing the assigned exercises in their textbook in silence. If I taught the same class again, I would probably wait with the activity “Melody on my Mind” (Moskowitz 1978: 171) until we get to know each other a little better.

hooks (2010: 51-52) suggests that students “listen to one another's stories with an intensity that is not always present during a lecture”. She points out that when “everyone in a classroom, including the teachers, shares personal experiences, the uniqueness of each voice is heard,” because even when just two people “speak about common experiences, there is always a unique aspect, some detail that separates one experience from the other” (*ibid.*: 57). What is more, as Greene (1988, in Fisher 1998: 2) argues, stories “have the potential for empowering unheard voices” and “of penetrating the so-called 'cultures of silence' in order to

discover what (ordinary but culturally diverse people) think and have thought through historical documents, literary texts, and artful objects of varied kinds". Fisher (1998) argues that

We all have a basic need for story, for organizing our experiences into tales of important happenings. Stories, these ubiquitous discourse forms, are of great interest in language and literacy education, particularly in light of the increasing sociocultural diversity of students in our classrooms. Through stories, teachers learn of their [students'] cultures, of their diverse experiences, and of their connections to family and friends. Moreover, through sharing stories both [students'] own stories and those of professional authors, teacher and [students] create the potential for new connections that link them together inside a new tale.

(Fisher 1998: 2)

For the last couple of years I have been working as a volunteer at the Slovenian Philanthropy, an association for the promotion of voluntary work, where I have been teaching English to refugees. As a future teacher of English I would love to bring the experience I gained and stories I heard meeting and working with the refugees to my future classroom. I have learnt so much about the cultures of the different places they come from, their religions and politics, and the horrifying tales about fleeing their war-torn countries. I have been thinking extensively about the ways of how to bring the problems that revolve around the topic of refugees into the ELT classroom. I think this would be done best if the refugees were given a space to tell their stories themselves, and they could do it through the creative approach called "The Living Library", a tool to designed to challenge stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, which I describe in the next chapter.

## 4 FIGHTING THE WAVES OF XENOPHOBIA AGAINST REFUGEES IN THE (ELT) CLASSROOM

In this chapter I describe how the three approaches I outlined in the previous chapter could serve to tackle the topic of refugees. First through students' own experience, when they go to see a play and reflect upon it (The play *6* by Žiga Divjak), then through critically engaging debates in the classroom that can be linked to cross-curricular collaboration ("The 6 Thinking Hats"), and last but not least through storytelling approaches (such as "The Living Library"), which allow students to have conversations with people from different cultures, backgrounds and disciplines. The good thing about the selected creative approaches is the fact that they all make space for dialogue and discussion, which are essential when learning a foreign language and what is more, they promote critical and creative thinking, or as Grigg and Lewis (2019) argue:

The use of role play, modelling and problem-based learning in which real-life scenarios are examined from different perspectives, can [...] build up [students'] capacity to think independently while well-planned and organized collaborative projects (especially those that involve members of the wider community) develop communication and problem solving skills. Fostering a strong supportive classroom spirit and school identity can go a long way in creating a climate conducive to thinking creatively and critically. [Students] need confidence and opportunity to talk regularly in different contexts and with different people about their ideas. [...] When social interaction involves pupils in describing, explaining and justifying their views, it becomes a powerful means of developing metacognition (Kuhn and Dean, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

(Grigg and Lewis 2019: 27-28)

As Balibar and Hozinc (2015, as cited in Mikulec 2017: 42) point out, the arrival of refugees in Europe as well as in Slovenia on the one hand triggered "predominantly waves of fear, racism, xenophobia, panic, populism, and renewal of extreme right populist parties", and, on the other hand, "the activation of civil society, in which many self-organized individuals and groups are trying to ease the situation of refugees." Balibar (2015, in Mikulec 2017: 42) reports that the refugee crisis is "multifaceted and does not provide simple solutions". He points out that it "raises fundamental issues related to fairer social order, the legal status of (European)

citizenship, [and] the equality of opportunity (the right to work, social and cultural rights)” (*ibid.*). Starting from this reflection, this chapter deals with the question of how to promote active citizenship in the (ELT) classroom for an increasingly plural and diverse European society, because as Grigg and Lewis (2019) argue:

Schools should prepare pupils now for living and working in a global society. This means engaging with issues such as climate change, poverty and social injustice. To do so well, pupils need to learn how to better express viewpoints, cooperate with others, share responsibility and actively engage in projects designed to improve the environment. As global citizens, pupils will need to respect diversity and be willing to take responsibility to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place to live.

(Grigg and Lewis 2019: 222)

The selected approaches I describe in this chapter (The play *6* by Žiga Divjak, “The Six Thinking Hats” and “The Living Library”) all value the kind of communication and discussion where different opinions, values or views are brought in direct opposition, “to ensure that each individual takes a stand by listening, deliberating, seeking arguments and[/or] evaluating, while at the same time there is a collective effort to find values and norms that everyone can agree upon” (Murphy and Fleming 2010: 24). The three approaches also promote tolerance and respect as students “learn to listen to other person’s argument[s]” (*ibid.*). But as Žižek (2015a) points out “[l]istening to [students’] worries, of course, in no way implies that one should accept the basic premise of their stance—the idea that threats to their way of life comes from outside, from foreigners, from ‘the other’”. What is more, as Murphy and Fleming (2010: 26) argue, by hearing individual views “[a]uthorities [and/or] traditional views (represented, for example, by parents and tradition) can [in this way] be questioned and there are opportunities to challenge one’s own tradition”. In this chapter I focus only on issues pertaining to refugees, however using the three approaches, similar analyses can be applied to, for example, issues of race and racism, gender and sexuality, global warming etc. These are also important controversial topics that could and should be discussed in the (ELT) classroom using these and other approaches.

#### 4.1 Learning from Live, Socially-Engaged Theatre: The Play 6 by Žiga Divjak

A play that in my opinion perfectly portrays the spreading of the ripples of violence, the ripple effect of fear and the anti-refugee climate we live in, is the play 6 by Žiga Divjak, first performed in 2018 and still often performed in The Slovenian Youth Theatre (Mladinsko Theatre) and at The New Post Office (Nova Pošta) in Ljubljana. The play documents and brings to light the events that happened in Kranj in 2016, when six refugee children were denied accommodation in one of the empty buildings of Kranj's secondary school student dormitory, which is also a temporary home of many young Slovenian ski-jumpers. Three years after the event the play describes happened, the issues it addresses are still very relevant, because the general climate in Slovenia was just as hostile towards the refugees in 2016 as it is now. The public felt (and still feels) threatened by the refugees despite the fact that most Slovenians never actually saw them in person and despite the fact that the migration wave merely sprinkled us:

When [three] years ago, at the height of the refugee "crisis" in Slovenia, the [...] ministries searched for suitable accommodation for twenty two minor asylum seekers, then settled in [different asylum centers], Judita Nahtigal, the principle of the secondary school student dormitory in Kranj, was one of the few administrators of student dormitories in Slovenia who was immediately and without reservations prepared to accommodate six refugee children who were sent to Europe by their parents in order to save them from the hell of civil wars, poverty and the lack of prospects. Nahtigal suggested that the children [...] be accommodated in one of the dormitory's empty buildings. Even before the decision was taken, she [wrote] to the parents of the children who lived at the dormitory [... and invited them] to a meeting.

(Horvat 2018)

Even before the meeting Judita's letter of invitation triggered an influx of hateful emails by the parents whose children (the ski-jumpers) lived in the dormitory. Horvat (2018) points out that "[s]ome of the parents who responded to her invitation a priori opposed the admission of refugee children to the dormitory, others expressed their sympathy with the immigrants, but at the same time said that they do not want them in their own environment". He also states that "twenty four professors from The France Prešeren Gymnasium Kranj, that is pedagogical workers, opposed [the] accommodation [of the six refugee children] in the dormitory" (*ibid*). What is more "[t]he situation in the late February days was also affected by

the neighboring Šenčur, as 3000 of their citizens protested against the construction of a migrant center in their municipality" (*ibid.*).

At the parent's meeting the headmaster wanted to tell the worried parents that there are so many different dangerous situations in the world their children are exposed to such as illness traffic, drugs, etc. After all, the very nature of ski jumping, which is the main occupation of their children who live in the Kranj dormitory, is very dangerous. In this way, she (unsuccessfully) wanted to normalize the situation. The parents however, did not let her finish her thought and started to yell at her questions such as:

"Who guarantees me safety? Who will be responsible for the safety of *my* daughter?"

"Do you realize they are all rapists and terrorists? Have you thought at all about *our* children? Take those 6 refugees to your home. Lock them in your room and keep them there."

"Do you even follow the media? Do you ever open a newspaper? Do you at least turn on the television? Radio? You do not know what is going on in the world, do you?"

"Do you ever think about our athletes [the ski-jumpers]? Next week they have a world youth championship in Romania!"

"I have here 24 signatures of the professors who are against it! The children are against it. The parents are against it. The professors are against it. The municipality is against it! Does not that mean anything to you?"

"What about our girls who will soon have to wear those sheets on their heads?"

"Do you realise that those people can make a bomb out of anything?" Instead of exhibiting students' art, would you prefer their dead bodies?"

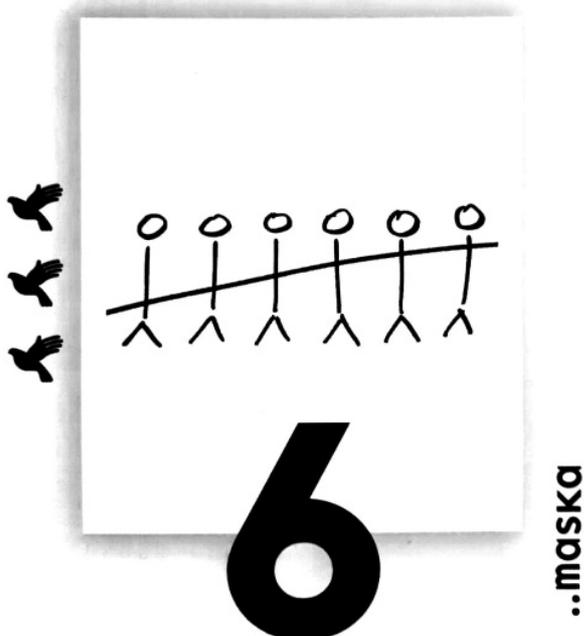
(Divjak 2018)

A problem bigger than impatient individuals is the silent majority who never actively took a side in the matter, but swept everything under the carpet. They did not say a word, or they did so under the quasi solidarity, "Oh, these boys are really poor, and we should help them, but is there maybe another vacant dormitory or house in Ljubljana where they could be placed" (Divjak 2018)? Despite the fact that the dormitory was half empty, and that they often rented rooms to other travellers, foreigners who needed a place to sleep, because one of the dorm's functions was that of a hostel, none of the parents problematized the fact that before

the arrival of the six boys, their children lived and slept in the same building as the visitors from different countries. No girl felt threatened, and no mother was afraid for the wellbeing of her child.

One of the questions that the journalist Maja Žiberna asked Judita Nahtigal at the conversation “To scream or to be quiet (Kricati ali biti tiho)?” that took place on February 5<sup>th</sup> 2019 was about the reaction of students who actually live in student dormitory in Kranj. The principle was saddened by the fact that two girls attended the parents' meeting, and claimed that the arrival of the six refugees worries them and that they feel threatened. Considering what and in what way the two communicated, the ministry came to the conclusion that it is not right the girls should live in fear. In a half-joke, she added that if anyone, the six refugee boys should be afraid of these girls. She also said that the community of the students was called and that there was no strong participation or interest in the issue. She was stunned to find out how uninterested and apathetic young people were when they told her they would prefer a visit by Peter Prevc over the arrival of the six boys, and added that pedagogues and teachers still have a lot of work to do in this field.

*Figure 2: A photograph of a part of the original leaflet for the play 6 by Žiga Divjak, distributed before the performance. Alina Morano, January 2019.*



Six children. Ten to fourteen years old. Six [refugee] children who have lost the whole world, they had until recently known. Six children, who could in the eyes of some parents threaten [their offspring, the ski-jumpers] the Slovenian top sport[smen]. Six children who could threaten the education of hundreds of other [Slovenian] children. Six children who needed only a roof over their head. The door was locked in front of them. It was winter 2016 February. But the story started at least a few months earlier.

(Božič 2018)

Is not the elementary incentive of every person, when witnessing a traffic accident, to go check on the victims and try to help them to the fullest extent, regardless of who they are or where they are from? In the questionnaire I designed for this MA thesis I asked the students whether they think that the play *6* suggests that in the near future we might regret our actions, just as for example some Germans are ashamed of the actions of their ancestors in the Second World War. 9 out of 11 students replied “yes,” with explanations such as: “the situation can quickly change. Today it is them, tomorrow it could be us”; “if we knew the consequences of our decisions now, we would give our actions a second thought”; “no one deserves to be treated in this way”; “I am already ashamed of our actions”; “I hope we will soon follow the example of countries such as Germany, who welcomed them, but I do think we will be ashamed of not having it done sooner” “I hope we come to our senses soon.” 2 out of 11 students answered “no”, one of them added “I think we will forget about it. Given the fact that I forgot about it, I assume others will forget about it as well. We never or rarely discuss such issues in school. That is why I think this play is important”.

The personal stories of the six minors are not included in the play. The audience can only observe their faces on a slide show that is played in the back of the stage. At the end of the play we only get to hear footage where the six adolescent refugees read statements and conclusions of various municipal councils that are directed against them and their accommodation in Slovenia. This was probably a conscious decision by the director, since the boys did not really have a voice in reality as well. In the previously mentioned questionnaire I decided to ask a group of secondary school students that had seen the play *6*, whether or not they would like to hear their stories, and since all of their answers were affirmative, I have thought of a way they could hear theirs, or stories of other refugees, in a form of “The Living Library”. I also wanted to know whether they would like to have a discussion after the play in the class on the topic of refugees or discuss similar controversial issues and since most of them answered “yes” I thought the method of “The Six Thinking Hats” could help the teacher facilitate and guide a discussion in the (ELT) classroom. I will describe both concepts in more detail in the following chapters.

## 4.2 Controversial Issues Classroom Discussions: The 6 Thinking Hats

The main difficulty of thinking is confusion. We try to do too much at once. Emotions, information, logic, hope and creativity all crowd in on us. It is like juggling with too many balls. [The Six Thinking Hats method] allows a thinker to do one thing at a time. He or she becomes able to separate emotion from logic, creativity from information, and so on. [...] Putting on any of these hats defines a certain type of thinking.

(De Bono 2000: xii)

The Six Thinking Hats concept was designed by Edward de Bono and is based on Parallel Thinking where “views, no matter how contradictory, are put down in parallel” (De Bono 2000: 4). De Bono (1994, in Grigg and Lewis 2019: 92) reports that “[p]arallel [t]hinking is much more effective than argument to explore subjects” because “in argument people withhold information that does not support their view.” De Bono (2000: 4) makes a distinction between argument and parallel thinking in the following example:

There is a large and beautiful country house. One person is standing in front of the house. One person is standing behind the house. Two other people are standing at each side of the house. All four have a different view of the house. All four are arguing (by intercom) that the view each is seeing is the correct view of the house.

Using parallel thinking they all walk around and look at the front. Then they all walk around to the side, then the back and finally the remaining side. So at each moment each person is looking in parallel from the same point of view. This is almost the exact opposite of argument, adversarial, confrontational thinking where each party deliberately takes an opposite view. Because each person eventually looks at all sides of the building, the subject is explored fully.

(De Bono 2000: 4)

As Grigg and Lewis (2019: 92) point out “[t]he goal of [p]arallel [t]hinking is to pool all ideas rather than a selected few” and “[i]f there is disagreement, [...] both positions are put down in parallel and examined before later deciding upon the best option”. De Bono (2000: 4) suggests that “[i]f a choice cannot be made, then the design has to cover both possibilities”, but “the emphasis [should be] on designing a way forward”:

If you have to drive to a certain destination and the people involved know the roads only vaguely, there will be a lot of argument about which road to take. If, however, there is a road

map lying out the roads, the traffic densities, and the nature of the road surface, then it is easy to choose the best road. The choice has become obvious to all. Exactly the same thing happens with the Six Hats method. If it is not possible to make a decision, then the final blue hat should lay out why it is not possible. There may be a need for more information at some point. There may be different values that cannot be reconciled. So the final blue hat can define a new thinking focus. That new focus can then become the task of a new thinking session.

(De Bono 2000: 173)

As Grigg and Lewis (2019: 92) point out the colours of the six hats stand for “different direction[s] of thinking” and were “carefully chosen because of their associations in everyday life”:

White - paper (information)

Black - judges’ apparel (critical judgement)

Green - growth (creativity)

Blue - sky (overview)

Red - warmth (feelings)

Yellow - sunshine (optimism).

(Grigg and Lewis 2019: 92)

#### **4.2.1 The WHITE Hat**

##### ***Facts and Figures***

*Can you role-play being a computer?*

*Just give the facts in a neutral and objective manner.*

*Never mind the interpretation: just the facts, please.*

*What are the facts in this matter?*

(De Bono 2000: 27)

The White Hat is all about looking at the chosen issue or situation as objectively as possible. It is important that students to learn how to separate facts from opinions. Grigg and Lewis (2019: 94) define facts as “things that are proven to be true, that exist or have happened”. De Bono (1999, in Grigg and Lewis 2019: 94) distinguishes between “*believed* (unchecked) and *checked* facts, both of which are included under the White Hat Thinking.” When the participant is not

sure “over the truthfulness of believed facts” he or she is “expected to say so with phrases like ‘I believe this is the case’, [...] ‘This often happens’ or ‘Sometimes this is true’” (*ibid.*).

#### 4.2.2 The RED Hat

##### ***Emotions and Feelings***

*The opposite of neutral, objective information.*

*Hunches, intuitions, impressions.*

*No need to justify.*

*No need to give reasons or the basis.*

(De Bono 2000: 51)

The Red Hat is about feelings and emotions. As Grigg and Lewis (2019: 10) point out, “[t]here is no expectation that the feelings are explained or justified,” because if students “think they must justify how they feel then they will only offer a limited range of feelings”. They argue that “[o]nly the feelings held at the time should be shared even though these may change in twenty minutes’ time or the following day”. De Bono (1992, in Grigg and Lewis 2019: 10) reports that “it can be useful to do a Red Hat at the beginning of a task [...] and again at the end, to see how feelings have changed”. He argues that even though “an individual has no hard or fast feelings about a matter, [...] these should still be expressed” (*ibid.*). Individuals can say they are “undecided, not particularly bothered or [have] mixed feelings” about the issue at hand (*ibid.*).

#### 4.2.3 The BLACK Hat

##### ***Cautious and Careful***

*How something does not fit our experience.*

*Why something may not work.*

*Pointing out difficulties and problems.*

*Staying within the law.*

*Keeping the values and ethics.*

(De Bono 2000: 75)

The Black Hat stands for **critical thinking** and judgement. De Bono (1992, in Kivunja 2015: 385) reports that when teaching critical thinking with the help of the black hat, students should be asked “to check for evidence that supports what they say”. The students should also “check

for truth or validity of logical arguments raised,” they should “think deeply about the possible consequences of their actions before making related decisions”, and most importantly, they should consider “the impact of an idea [and its effect on others’ values]” (*ibid.*).

#### **4.2.4 The GREEN Hat**

##### ***Creative Thinking***

*New ideas, new concepts and new perceptions.*

*The deliberate creation of new ideas.*

*Alternatives and more alternatives.*

*Change.*

*New approaches to problems.*

(De Bono 2000: 117)

The Green Hat is all about **creative thinking** and innovation. As Eberle (2008, in Grigg and Lewis 2019: 101) reports students may sometimes “find it difficult to come up with fresh ideas, perhaps because of fear of putting forward an idea that might be ridiculed, the timing may not be right, or they may hold back in a desire to offer the perfect solution”. The Green Hat with its message that “creativity is not confined to the few” offers a safe opportunity for all the students to “participate in suggesting ideas,” no matter how crazy they be (*ibid.*: 99). If many different ideas are suggested and there is not enough time to discuss all of them, “the Red Hat can be used to [pinpoint] those which ‘feel’ most appropriate” (*ibid.*: 100). At the core of the Green Hat is the idea “that the status quo is challenged and change embraced” (*ibid.*). As Grigg and Lewis (2019: 100) suggest, creative thinking “takes time and energy,” therefore it is important to give students “the regular space to play with ideas,” because as Sawyer (2013, in Grigg and Lewis 2019: 100) report “[c]reative ideas take time and often emerge from a zig-zag process of false starts, sketches, and drips and drabs, rather than Eureka! moments.”

#### **4.2.5 The YELLOW Hat**

##### ***Speculative-Positive***

*Positive thinking.*

*Yellow is for sunshine and brightness.*

*Optimism.*

*Focus on benefit.*

*Constructive thinking and making things happen.*

(De Bono 2000: 93)

The Yellow Hat is all about looking at the situation positively. As De Bono (2000: 93) argues “[n]egative thinking may protect us from mistakes, risk taking and danger” but it is the positive thinking “a mixture of curiosity, pleasure, greed and desire to ‘make things happen’” which is the wheel of progress. Grigg and Lewis (2019: 98) differentiate it from the Green Hat, “because it does not focus on creating ideas.” They point out that an individual “may be very good at identifying positive aspects of a situation but not so good at suggesting changes, innovation or ways forward” (*ibid.*). The gist of the Yellow Hat is the focus on “what has worked well, what is effective about existing arrangements or the potential value of something” (*ibid.*). It is different from the Red Hat, because “[u]nder the Red Hat, someone may express very positive feelings (joy or happiness) but it is the thinking associated with the Yellow Hat which articulates the benefits from such feelings” (*ibid.*). As De Bono (1992, in Grigg and Lewis 2019: 99) reports, the Yellow Hat “facilitates positive thinking by asking questions beyond our egocentric state, e.g. ‘Who (else) might this benefit?’”

#### **4.2.6 The BLUE Hat**

##### ***Control of Thinking***

*Thinking about thinking.*

*Instructions for thinking.*

*The organization of thinking.*

*Control of the other hats.*

(De Bono 2000: 149)

The Blue Hat manages the thinking process and provides its overview. De Bono (1992, in Kivunja 2015: 385) reports that “blue hat thinking, is most often used at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of a thinking session.” He also suggests that when students are taught to use The Blue Hat they “should be asked to restate their original thinking so that they keep focused, redefine the task if they see that changes need to be made, and set up a structure of thinking steps that they should follow as they try to solve a problem” (*ibid.*: 386). As Grigg and Lewis (2019: 102) argue, this hat “seeks to define the purpose of any discussion, to keep participants on track.”

As Grigg and Lewis (2019: 93) point out “[o]nly the chairperson (teacher or lead pupil) signals a switch of hats”. They argue that “[i]n any given session, the teacher and pupils may use one or more Thinking Hats” (*ibid.*). “There is no stipulation that all hats need to be used on every occasion, although clearly to get a balanced picture most teachers will use each of the hats through the course of a project or unit of work” (*ibid.*). They also argue that the greatest convenience of De Bono’s thinking hats is “their flexibility”, because “[t]hey [can] support any curriculum topic” plus “they enable users to see the big picture” because “[b]y considering all perspectives, pupils are more likely to reach a rounded and informed decision” (*ibid.*: 103-104). For example, a teacher could use the Six Thinking Hats to analyse issues raised by Žiga Divjak in the play *6* and further discuss the topic of refugees. Here are some suggestions of questions that could be raised and discussed under each hat:

### **White Hat**

What do we know about the occurrence that happened in February 2016 portrayed in the play *6*?

### **Red Hat**

How did the six refugees feel, leaving behind their war-torn countries and families?

### **Black Hat**

Why did the parents of ski-jumpers react the way they did? What is the impact of xenophobia on the (six) refugees?

### **Green Hat**

Could we get into contact with the six refugees and find out their stories?

### **Yellow Hat**

How would the six refugee children benefit from the accommodation in the dormitory? Could the young ski-jumpers benefit from it as well?

### **Blue Hat**

What have we learned so far and what else do we need to find out?

As De Bono (2000: 176) points out the Six Thinking Hats “simplify thinking by allowing a thinker to deal with one thing at a time,” because “[i]nstead of having to take care of emotions, logic, information, hope and creativity all at the same time, the thinker is able to deal with them separately”. He argues that the Six Hats “allow us to conduct our thinking as a conductor might lead an orchestra”, because “[w]e can call on what we will” (*ibid.*: xii). In this way, he reports, the hats can help “to switch people out of their usual track in order to get them to think differently about the matter in hand” (*ibid.*).

### 4.3 Sharing and Hearing Refugee Experience: The Living Library

Stories are “more true” than facts because stories are multidimensional. Truth with a capital “T” has many layers. Truths like justice or integrity are too complex to be expressed in a law, a statistic, or a fact. Facts need the context of when, who and where to become Truths. A story incorporates when and who – lasting minutes or generations and narrating an event or series of events with characters, action and consequences. It occurs in a place or places that gives us a where.

Simmons (2006, in hooks 2010: 50)

Driving to the primary school in Preddvor where I had my teaching practice, I passed by a huge and horrifying billboard every morning. Displayed on it was a big stop sign in front of a crowd of refugees followed by the anti-refugee rhetoric: “1963 euros for a migrant? We will protect Slovenia. SDS”. The billboard was situated only less than a mile away from the primary school. Seeing this billboard so close to the school I thought of it as an opportunity to start a debate on refugees in the classroom I taught the next day. To my shock I soon realized, that not a lot of primary school learners knew who refugees are, not even when I translated the word “refugee” in Slovene. Not surprisingly, none of the students ever had a chance to meet or talk to one of them.

During my teaching practice, I have learnt that students like it when you share your experience with them and they get to know more about you. I will never forget the bond we created with the learners after we shared some personal stories connected to our favourite songs. Even though at first the students were reluctant to share their memories and emotions that changed after I played them the song “I Ain’t Got No, I Got Life” by Nina Simone and told them that this song reminds me of my former student Ali Reza, whom I taught last year. Ali Reza is

a refugee from Iran, who came to Slovenia to seek help and a place where he could live for a while, until he could go back to his home. When he came to Slovenia, he had zero knowledge of English and Slovene as well. So we communicated using our hands and body language. I would play him this song so he could more easily remember different body parts (“I got my hair, got my head, got my brains, got my ears [...]”), but also because he could easily identify with it. The song starts with “I ain’t got no home, I ain’t got no shoes, I ain’t got no money [...]” and he did not have a home or money back then. He was forced to leave his country, and he was then forced to leave Slovenia as well. I did not even have the chance to say a proper goodbye. So whenever I hear or think of this song, I think of him and hope he is fine.

But this is my story and my experience. I also want my future students to hear the stories about the lives and journeys of the refugees. I want them to hear Ali Reza’s story, and stories of other refugees I meet at the Slovenian Philanthropy, because as Žižek (2015b) argues “the way to defuse the racist fear of refugees is to include refugees in the public debate,” meaning that “[o]ne should give them the space to speak in public, not just speak on their behalf” (*ibid.*). One way to do that would be to invite some of them to the (ELT) classroom, where they could share their stories with the students themselves. Or even better, a teacher could organize a visit to the Slovenian Philanthropy. One way the refugees could share their stories would be in the form of a Living Library:

The Living Library is a tool that seeks to challenge prejudice and discrimination. It works just like a normal library: visitors can browse the catalogue for the available titles, choose the book they want to read, and borrow it for a limited period of time. After reading, they return the book to the library and, if they want, borrow another. The only difference is that in the Living Library, books are people, and reading consists of a conversation.

(Little *et al.*, 2011: 11)

I first came across the Living Library when I attended an international exchange in Norway. There I could listen to the stories of volunteers working in different parts of the world. They behaved as “books in the library”. I could “open” and “read” all of them if I chose to. Or listen to just a few. What is great about “human books” is that you can ask questions. And they will be more than willing to answer them. I think it would be a great experience for the students, to hear the stories of the refugees, the ones they tell themselves, and I strongly believe the

stories would not only deepen the students' empathy and solidarity, but also encourage them to act, or as Little *et al.* (2011) argue:

The Living Library attempts to challenge prejudice by facilitating a conversation between [...] Books and Readers. Books are volunteers who have either been subjected to discrimination themselves or represent groups or individuals within society that are at risk of suffering from stereotype, stigma, prejudice or discrimination. Living Books often have personal experiences of discrimination or social exclusion that they are willing to share with Readers. Most importantly, Books give Readers permission to enter into dialogue with them, in the hope that their perspectives and experiences will challenge commonly held perceptions and stereotypes and therefore affect the attitudes and behaviours of wider society.

(Little *et al.*, 2011: 11)

As Freire (1971: 34) points out solidarity is "a radical posture" which requires that one "enter into the situation of those with whom one is [in solidarity]". He points out that "[t]rue solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these "beings for another." This can only happen when one "sees [and treats] them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived off their voice, cheated in the sale of their labour; when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love" (Freire 1971: 34). Maybe this could be started with the help of the Living Library, which, as Little *et al.* (2011: 10) argue presents "a safe environment for Readers and Books to engage in open dialogue whose explicit aim is to discuss topics that in almost any other setting would be considered too delicate". They argue that [b]ecoming one half of that exchange is a rare privilege and one that leaves no one who experiences it unaffected" (*ibid.*). They also claim that "[w]herever it is employed, as long as the decision to organise an event is motivated by the desire to challenge prejudice, the Living Library has the potential to change the feelings, perceptions and opinions we all hold about each other" (*ibid.*: 11).

"As one of the great strengths of the Living Library is that it is flexible enough to work almost anywhere, provided there are people (10)," Little *et al.* (2011: 30) point out that classrooms "are a fantastic venue for a Living Library" because they offer "a fun and innovative learning experience to a captive audience of young people". They argue that:

There are many advantages for a school in hosting a Living Library:

- Students will learn social skills and increase their understanding of minority groups.
- Students will become familiar with local issues and might even become inspired to become active within their communities.
- Students will get first-hand experience of learning from real life stories.

(Little *et al.*, 2011: 31)

I realize the organization of The Living Library would take quite some effort on the part of the teacher. But it does not have to be that complicated. To share refugee stories in the English classroom a teacher could also read to students a book like *Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey* by Margriet Ruurs and Syrian stone work artist Nizam Ali Badr, or play them a short film like *Ali's Story*, a real-life account of a boy who flees from Afghanistan, by Salvador Maldonado and Andy Glynne. In that way, the students could also hear an individual's personal account. My student and a friend, who wanted to stay anonymous, was also kind enough to allow me to write down his experience as a refugee, a story which goes like this:

I like Syria. I did not want to leave it. But I didn't really have a choice. I worked as a teacher. I didn't like war. I didn't want to work for a government that supports war, so I decided to flee. In front of my house in Syria, there were always two groups of people bombarding each other. Their fighting often broke the windows of my house. I saw the war right in front of me, with my own eyes, and did not like the view. Every day I thought I would die.

I was not allowed to move out of the house, except for the two hours in the afternoon. If I did I would die, so I was mostly hiding in the house. One time in the middle of the night while I was asleep, I heard a very loud sound in the bedroom of my parents. I looked and saw their room was on fire. I tried to put out the fire, but we did not have any water or electricity, and I could not breathe because of the smoke, so I decided to get my neighbours to help me. We finished the fire. I was scared every night before going to sleep. After that event I decided to stay in the room far away from the street. Soon I decided I don't want to be a part of this war, I don't want to kill people. I want to help them. That's why I'm a teacher.

I got in contact with my friend, who lived in Turkey as a refugee. I then moved to Turkey with him. Situation was bad there as well, so we - my friend, his wife and his daughter - decided to go to Greece. I helped my friend and his family on the way. The journey was very dangerous, because we travelled on a very small boat (4x1m, that's how small it was), crowded with about

forty to forty-three people. Fortunately, nobody died on this boat. But they did on other boats. The boat trip was very expensive. I paid about 2000 dollars...maybe more...maybe less...I cannot remember. Still it was cheap compared to how expensive it is in the summer. We travelled in the winter. I borrowed the money from my brother who doesn't live in Syria. If you don't have the money, you cannot go.

From Greece I fled to Macedonia, from there to Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, and back to Slovenia. My desired destination was Austria, because I speak their language and have a lot of friends there. I did not enter Austria. I stayed in Slovenia, because they made some interviews and only some could cross the Austrian border.

First I stayed in Postojna at the Immigration detention centre. We were not allowed to go out at all. I decided I want to register and get a residence in Slovenia. After two weeks they moved me to the asylum centre on Kotnikova Street in Ljubljana. I stayed there for three months. You can eat there, sleep as well, but you cannot go to the doctor. You cannot buy medicine. You cannot buy anything you need, because you only receive 18 euros a month and you cannot work.

At that time I could not communicate with others, only a little and only one-word conversations. I felt like a child. I wanted to speak to others, but I couldn't tell them what was on my mind or what exactly I needed. So I decided to learn Slovenian and English. I focused on language learning, because it is important for communication. English is easier. After 6 months of learning it, I could speak with people. Slovenian language, on the other hand, is harder to learn. When I travelled with the city bus, I often heard people use the word "mislim... jaz mislim," and I was confused. Is everyone in Slovenia Muslim, or are they judging me for being a Muslim? I later asked about the meaning of the word "mislim" and I laughed so hard when I learned of the meaning.

I noticed that there are many polite people in Slovenia, a lot of them tried to help me. However, I also met a lot of people with a closed mind. My Slovenian teacher, for example, would only focus on three or four students and did not care for others. He thought we (people from Yugoslavia, Syria, Iraq, and Iran) don't learn quickly because we are stupid. But language and communication are difficult. You cannot learn so quickly. A lot of students feel Slovenian language is very hard, and teachers speak way too fast.

I also noticed that a lot of people here study for one thing, and when they get a job they do something completely different. I for example decided to attend a cooking course. After a few months of learning, they told me I will have training. At this hotel where I had my training I did

not cook at all. I was only washing dishes and sometimes peeled the potatoes. They kept telling me that after a month I will be allowed to cook. That did not happen. It has been like that for three months now.

My faith is what kept and what still keeps me going. The trust in Allah was what saved me while I was on that small boat in the middle of the ocean. Thinking about him, I was not afraid of the sea, or the fact that I cannot swim well. But with him, I can swim through the waves, and through life.

#### 4.4 Some Concluding Thoughts: The Ripple Effect of Violence

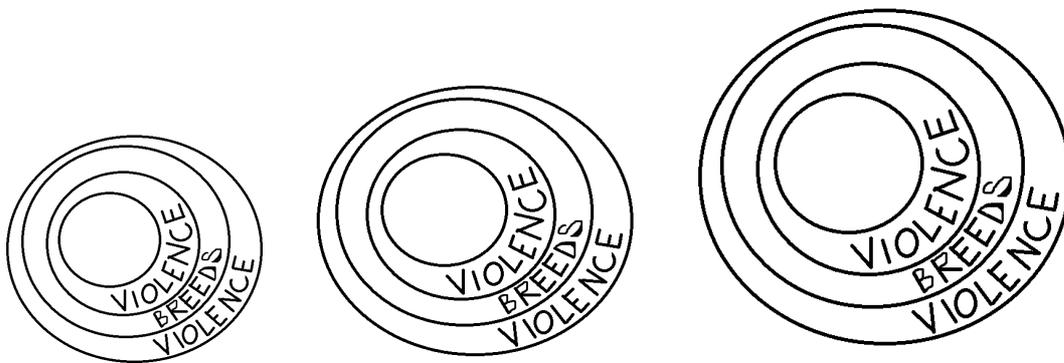


Figure 3: The Ripple Effect of Violence. Alina Morano, March 2016.

If a stone is thrown into the water, it makes ripples. The same might be said for violence. The “throwing of the stone” is often the creation of irrational fear and deception by the sensationalist media, which often has far-reaching effects. In case of the recent refugee crisis, with the constant repetition of the anti-refugee propaganda full of racial stereotypes and hate speech charged with Islamophobia, xenophobia and nationalism, a conviction that the world is a dangerous place in which you can protect yourself only with either physical or verbal violence, was born into the sub-consciousness of many. It is much easier to hate and fear refugees that are portrayed as and compared to vermin than to realize that they are in fact human beings in search of help and protection. Terrorization through media was often used throughout history to turn public opinion against a specific group of people “(the Jew for the Nazis, the immigrant, today in Europe the refugee)” (Žižek 2015b). By making them scapegoats attention can be easily diverted from the benefiter of the specific state of affairs (Orlowski 2012: 29). As Freire (1971) argues:

Since it is necessary to divide the people in order to preserve the status quo and (thereby) the power of the dominators, it is essential for the oppressors to keep the oppressed from perceiving their strategy. So the former must convince the latter that they are being "defended" against the demonic action of "marginals, rowdies, and enemies of God" [...].

(Freire 1971: 143)

I will never forget the hate speech of a man who picked me up as I was hitchhiking home. He tried to convince me that all refugees were a ruthless and animalistic enemy that needs to be defeated. Newcomers, he claimed, would take away jobs from the native population and cause poverty. He compared the refugees to rats, as if they were interchangeable, had no identity or human face. He said that they were rapists and murderers and we should await them with guns in our hands to show they were everything but welcome. Then he said that the Hungarians were right to put up fences on their borders, and that we should do the same here in Slovenia (which latter happened, I will never forget the row of military trucks loaded with barbed wire intended to control the flow of the refugees). I asked him to stop the car and let me out, as his words were just too much for me to take. To my regret, I later came across many people, with the anger and violent tendencies already sprouting in their hearts and minds, who shared his opinion.

The ripple effect of evil acts and practices spreads right around the world, but it also gets passed on from generation to generation. To set an example for younger generations Europe needs to stop the ripples of violence with solidarity, peace and equal rights for everyone. Now is the time to act and take a stand against the endless waves of racism, xenophobia, walls and wars, because war is ruthless, cruel and dehumanizing and always breeds more violence, prejudice and hatred. I gave it a lot of thought to where these ripples of understanding and compassion could be started and I think they could and should be started in schools. From there these ripples could spread to the students' homes, and hopefully to the world as well. I realise this is an idealistic scenario, but with the prospect of hope we could at least curb the ripples of violence to some extent. If teachers together with students were to learn about and act against the omnipresent physical and psychological violence, a new ripple effect of peace and compassion could be started and, hopefully, bring an end to the endless ripples of violence, connect us and enable us to work for the greater good of everyone.

## 5 CONCLUSION

As Chomsky (1999: 15) argues, “[t]he notion that there can be no superior alternative to the status quo is more farfetched today than ever” but as he points out “every advance in history, from ending slavery and establishing democracy to ending formal colonialism, has had to conquer the notion at some point that it was impossible to do because it had never been done before”. He hastens to point out that “[e]ven if the notion of a post-capitalist society seems unattainable, we do know that human political activity can make the world we live in vastly more humane” (*ibid.*: 16). As Gatto (2010: 107) suggests “[p]eople become dangerous when [they] see through the illusions which hold society together” and when they are encouraged and taught to “accept no pre-packaged marching orders without passing them through the test of critical review” (*ibid.*:149). As Freire (1971: 13) points out “every human being [...] is capable of looking critically [...] at his personal and social reality as well as [at] the contradictions in it”. As he argues “the more the people unveil this challenging reality [...] the more critically they [can] enter [it]” (*ibid.*: 38). However “they must perceive their state not as [...] unalterable, but merely as limiting-and therefore challenging” (*ibid.*: 73). “Whereas the banking [education] directly or indirectly reinforces men’s fatalistic perception of their situation, the problem-posing method presents this very situation to them as a problem” (*ibid.*).

As a future teacher of English, I want to teach my students more than just grammar. Many teachers do that, but some have an affinity for something, others for something else. We stick to the basic prescribed skeleton by the school curriculum, but if teachers wish and are willing to, they will make sure to bring something else to the students as well. Some will discuss literature in more detail, others will spend a few hours talking about and sharing music etc. Not all teachers rely on textbooks to serve them everything on a plate, because they know that it is the things that a teacher does with her or his heart the students remember and are most grateful for. Language, particularly English, spoken by approximately 1.5 billion people (that is 20% of the population), is a special and a valuable tool through which we can do a lot and make the world just a little bit better (Lyons 2017). And this is probably its greatest value. It allows communication of different people and different cultures, and if English teachers rely too much on grammar and banal themes, which often appear in the English course books, this can quickly dissuade students from experimenting with the language. And that is a shame.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Students

Pozdravljen/-a! Sem Alina Morano, študentka magistrskega študija anglistike (pedagoška smer) na Filozofski fakulteti v Ljubljani. V sklopu magistrske naloge delam manjšo raziskavo, zato te lepo prosim, da izpolniš vprašalnik, ki je sestavljen iz 12. vprašanj. Vprašalnik je anonimen. Njegovo izpolnjevanje ti bo vzelo le sedem minut. Najlepša hvala za pomoč!

**1. V kolikšni meri si bil/-a pred ogledom predstave seznanjen/-a z begunsko tematiko?**

a) skoraj nič    b) srednje    c) zelo

**2. Ste pri katerem izmed šolskih predmetov vsaj posredno omenili tematiko beguncev? Če da, pri katerem?**

---

**3. Ste kdaj spregovorili o beguncih pri pouku angleščine?**

---

**4. Ste pri pouku angleščine obravnavali (še) katere druge družbenokritične teme (npr. rasizem, vpliv medijev...)? Če da, katere?**

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**5. Ti je bila predstava 6 režiserja Žige Divjaka všeč? Zakaj da oziroma zakaj ne?**

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**6. Te je problematika predstave spomnila na kateri drug oziroma podoben družbenokritičen problem (v tvoji okolici)? Če da, kateri?**

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**7. Zgodbe šestih mladoletnih beguncev v predstavo niso vključene. Njihove obraze vidimo le na diaprojekciji v odzadju odra. Če bi imel/-a to možnost, bi rad/-a slišal/-a njihove zgodbe in izvedel/-a, kako in zakaj so se mladoletni fantje znašli v novi državi?**

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**8. Meniš, da izjave predstavnikov občin in ministrstev, ki jih fantje preberejo na koncu predstave in so naperjene proti njim, vplivajo na ustvarjanje negativnega javnega mnenja do beguncev?**

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**9. Meniš, da predstava 6 opozarja na to, da se bomo že v bližnji prihodnosti sramovali svojih postopanj, tako kot se na primer nekateri Nemci sramujejo postopkov svojih prednikov v drugi svetovni vojni? Zakaj da oziroma zakaj ne?**

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**10. Bi želel/-a videti nadaljevanje predstave 6 oziroma si ogledati še kakšno drugo predstavo, ki gledalce vodi h globokemu razmisleku? Zakaj da oziroma zakaj ne?**

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**11. Se ti zdi, da imaš po ogledu predstave 6 boljši vpogled v družbeno resničnost?**

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**12. Bi se po ogledu predstave rad/-a pri pouku še dodatno pogovoril/-a in poglobil/-a v begunsko ali katero drugo družbenokritično tematiko?**

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Prostor za dodatne komentarje in pripombe:

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