News and Fake News

Enhancing Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills in the EFL Classroom

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The banking system of education (based on the assumption that memorizing information and regurgitating it represented gaining knowledge that could be deposited, stored and used at a later date) did not interest me. I wanted to become a critical thinker.

(Bell Hooks, *Teaching To Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*)

I read the news today, oh boy…

(The Beatles, «A day in the life»)

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Abstract

The aim of this work is to present a didactic innovation project for the EFL classroom, the learning scenario titled «News and fake news: enhancing your critical thinking skills», from its inception and design to its implementation with a group of fourth-year ESO students. First, a theoretical foundation is laid through a review of published research on the key concepts of news, misinformation, critical thinking and media literacy, with a particular focus on their impact on adolescents (the target demographic of this learning scenario). Second, the methodological approach is expounded, starting with its underlying pedagogical principles and ending with assessment. Next, the learning scenario itself is thoroughly dissected, including its contextualisation, adjustment to the curriculum, and detailed lesson plans. Qualitative results of the teaching intervention are provided through accounts of each of the sessions as well as feedback from students. These results are then critically discussed and evaluated. Finally, I acknowledge the limitations of the intervention, and outline the conclusions of this work.

Keywords: news, fake news, misinformation, media literacy, critical thinking

Resum

L'objectiu d'aquest treball és presentar un projecte d'innovació didàctica a l'aula d'anglès com a llengua estrangera, la situació d'aprenentatge (SA) titulada «News and fake news: enhancing your critical thinking skills», des de la seva concepció i disseny fins a la seva posada en pràctica amb un grup d'alumnes de 4t d'ESO. En primer lloc, s'estableixen els fonaments teòrics del treball, examinant la recerca publicada sobre conceptes clau (notícies, informació falsa, pensament crític i alfabetització mediàtica), amb especial atenció a com afecten als adolescents (als quals es dirigeix aquesta SA). En segon lloc, exposem l'enfocament metodològic de la SA, partint dels principis pedagògics en què es basa i acabant amb la seva avaluació. Tot seguit procedim a diseccionar la SA, incloent-hi la seva contextualització, el seu encaix curricular i la planificació de cada sessió. Els resultats qualitatius de la intervenció didàctica es mostren mitjançant la relació de cadascuna de les sessions, així com les valoracions dels alumnes. Aquests resultats són objecte d'una discussió i evaluació crítica. Finalment, considerem les limitacions d'aquesta intervenció i delineem les conclusions del present treball.

Paraules clau: notícies, notícies falses, informació falsa, alfabetització mediàtica, pensament crític

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1. Introduction

Talk about fake news became widespread in the mid-2010s, in the context of the 2016 US presidential election, but neither the term itself nor the concept were really new. The earliest use of *fake news* recorded by the Oxford English Dictionary dates back to 1890, and while its early use «may not represent a fixed collocation, […] the practice of "faking" news stories was much discussed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries» (Oxford English Dictionary, 2025).

Indeed, misinformation and false news have always existed. What is undoubtedly new, however, is the sheer scale of the phenomenon in our current societies, due to radical changes in the way news is created and shared, the climate of political polarisation, and the impact of technological developments such as social media and, more recently, AI.

The boundaries between information and misinformation are blurrier than they have ever been, as independent journalism seems to be on the wane, while sensational, unsourced stories go viral on a daily basis, sometimes aided by AI-generated images, audio or video. These fake news influence political opinions by creating strong emotional responses, which results in further polarisation.

Studies have shown there is a general concern about misinformation —including among teenagers—, often coupled with overconfidence in one's own ability to tell facts from lies. Of course, the issue cannot be reduced to just the true-false binary, as accounts of true stories can be highly biased or put a certain spin on facts, which we should all be able to identify if we want to avoid being manipulated. Making things even more difficult, there are inherent psychological blindspots (such as confirmation bias) that predispose us to believe, or disbelieve, any piece of information we come across.

The question of how to deal with news and misinformation poses urgent, complex challenges, which will only become more pressing in the foreseeable future, given the context of fast technological advancement, growing social inequality and global rise of far-right ideologies. As we will see in section 2 of this work, the best tools to tackle these challenges are media literacy and critical thinking.

Critical thinking, despite being widely considered an essential life skill and a necessity for democratic citizenship, is often left underdeveloped, as its enhancement requires ongoing commitment and deliberate practice. As a result, most of us tend to overestimate our critical thinking skills.

Today, many educational curricula (including the current Catalan curriculum) emphasize critical thinking as a fundamental interdisciplinary competency that should be explicitly addressed with learners of all ages, and particularly in secondary education. However, actual educational practices sometimes fail to fully incorporate it, favouring more traditional approaches. More explicit attention to critical thinking (and its practical application) is therefore needed in education, not only to fulfill curricular requirements, but to ensure our students become fully responsible citizens, able to navigate the complexities and challenges of an everchanging world.

Based on the analysis of these needs and the observation of its target group, the present work details the design and implementation of a didactic innovation project, in the form of a learning scenario titled «News and fake news: enhancing your critical thinking skills» for the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. This was implemented with a group of fifteen 4th-year ESO students, in March-April 2025, at Institut Montserrat Roig in Barcelona.

In section 2 of this work I build the theoretical framework, where I justify the topic and discuss each of its major concepts (such as news, misinformation, critical thinking and media literacy) in the light of recent research. In this section I also focus on the relevance of these notions for teenagers, and why adolescence is a particularly opportune moment to deal with them in class. Next, I investigate the contributions of pragmatics and discourse analysis, two fields that provide us with valuable tools for a critical reading of media and news texts. Finally, I examine different views on how news (media literacy) and critical thinking can be introduced to the EFL classroom.

Section 3 is devoted to methodological considerations, describing what is mostly a post-method approach based on several underlying principles, i.e. form-focused instruction, task-supported language teaching, learner-centredness, and thoughtful feedback. Other aspects pertaining to methodology of this learning scenario are also discussed, including materials, the design process itself, and assessment.

Section 4 concerns the actual learning scenario. I start by contextualising it through a characterisation of the school and target group for which it was created. Then I use the official learning scenario template (issued by the Catalan Department of Education) to formulate how my learning scenario conforms to every curricular requirement in terms of structure, competencies, and vectors, among others. Of course, this section also contains the detailed lesson plans for each of the six planned sessions.

Section 5 discusses the results of my teaching intervention implementing the present learning scenario. It consists of a qualitative evaluation based on my own notes for each session as well as feedback from my students, which leads to a critical reflection on the outcome of the intervention.

In section 6, I briefly take up the limitations of my learning scenario and teaching intervention. The body of this work ends with section 7, its conclusion. Additionally, classroom materials used in the learning scenario can be found in the annexes.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Why the news?

> *But the perishability of the news as information about the "real world" is itself a most important item of information: the news broadcasts are the constant, daily repeated celebration of the breathtaking speed of change, accelerated ageing, and perpetuality of new beginnings.*
>
> (Zigmunt Bauman, *Liquid modernity*)

We all consume news. As social animals, we are wired to interact with the world around us and to care about what happens in our environment, in our societies. Accordingly, human beings have developed a number of ways to communicate information to the public. Before the 21st century, though, available sources of news and information were much more limited. Newspapers, then radio, then TV were the main and almost only sources of news, and they were all mediated by the journalistic profession. To be sure, these news sources were not free from error or bias, but they were more uniform in their presentation of information, and more predictable in terms of bias, because, critically, people knew where or whom the news was coming from. In traditional newsmaking, every step in the process could be traced and scrutinised, and every consumer got the same news content (Valtonen et al., 2019).

In recent decades, however, things have changed rapidly and drastically. The generalised use of the internet, smartphones, social media, and—more recently—AI assistants and chatbots have transformed the landscape. Gone are the days of journalistic rigour and clear sources. Particularly in social media, the origin of news stories is often unknown, and content is tailored to each user «through automated content curation, content recommendation, and filtering» (Valtonen et al., 2019, p. 24) by proprietary algorithms. Moreover, anything that happens today is captured in pictures and videos and shared on social media almost instantly, long before any news outlet has a chance to report on it. The speed at which information spreads through social media and online platforms has skyrocketed, leaving little or no time for analysis and fact-checking.

As an example of this global transformation, according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024, the consumption of print media in Spain plummeted from 61% in 2013 to 23% in 2024, while social media as a source of news increased from 28% to 48% over the same period. Put together, online sources and social media are the most popular source of information (72%). It is worth noting that there has been a slight decline in the use of all news sources after the Covid-19 pandemic, which the authors of the report interpret as «perhaps a reflection of increasing news avoidance overall» (Newman et al., 2024, p. 105). This news avoidance could be explained, at least partially, by the fact that only 33% of people in Spain «usually trust» the news, while 39% generally distrust it, as found by the same study.

In addition to these general trends in media use, the way the news is written or presented also seems to be changing. Today's news, especially on social media, is often sensationalised, it attempts to generate an emotional response in order to attract attention. The reason for this is

that «social media providers attempt to maximize the time their users spend on their platforms, and machine learning algorithms often learn that provoking and polarizing news guarantee the highest time spent on media» (Valtonen et al., 2019, p. 23). This preference for partisan or polarising news stories (which are tantamount to political propaganda) can have profound consequences, as «propaganda is so common and so effective that, in many senses, it is displacing and replacing traditional journalism, with its longstanding and careful attention to fairness, accuracy and balance» (Hobbs, 2013, p. 627).

We have seen how the attempt to elicit emotional responses is transforming the news and the way we access it. Emotional aspects are also involved in the increased frequency of news consumption:

> There also seem to be ever more reasons to engage with news. For a number of reasons, whether political, social or due to ease of access and the constant conversation online, [...] there is greater pressure for everyone to be informed and to have a point of view on everything. (Galan et al., 2019, p. 16)

This pressure to be constantly up-to-date on current events can lead to anxiety, a phenomenon commonly referred to as FoMO (Fear of missing out), which has been shown to be greater among younger people (Rozgonjuk et al., 2021).

Indeed, almost every aspect of the paradigm shift in the way news is created, shared and consumed seems to be most noticeable among adolescents and young people, because they are digital natives (Prensky, 2001) and spend a significant portion of their time on social media. A study focusing specifically on the younger generations showed that, to them, social media has an «unrivalled relevance as it allows a less mediated experience. It also offers opportunities to control and curate your own unique news experiences» (Galan et al., 2019, p. 23). Another recent study conducted on Spanish secondary school students found that their preferred platform for information is social media (55.5%), followed by television (29.1%) and digital newspapers (6.5%). Another 7.9% declared they only got information from family or friends (Herrero-Curiel & La-Rosa, 2022).

Lastly, the rise of social media as a source of news poses other specific challenges, such as the creation of so-called *echo chambers* and *filter bubbles*:

> Echo chambers [are] groups of like-minded users who are not subject to outside views, which can lead to greater polarization (difference in attitudes). Related to this is the phenomenon of "filter bubbles": algorithms used by social media companies select new content for users based on their previous engagement with content, thus reinforcing information consumption patterns and making it less likely that users are exposed to new information. (Greifeneder et al., 2016, p. 29)

Before moving on, I want to explicitly define my use of the word *news*. In this work, I am employing a broad definition of the word *news*, which includes any socially-relevant information that is spread or shared between people, although I often focus on the more traditional idea of news, as created by journalists and distributed by media outlets.

As a conclusion, news is an important part of our lives that has undergone major transformations in recent decades —and is still changing today—, in terms of the ways it is created, distributed and consumed. These changes pose many challenges, not least because of the increase

in misinformation and fake news, which we will examine in section 2.2. This is especially relevant for adolescents, due to the way they engage with information on social media, and so I believe learning and reflecting about news should prove to be not only useful, but also interesting for my students.

2.2. News in the post-truth era

> *The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist.*
>
> (Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism)*

2.2.1. Fake news and beyond

The term *fake news* has become extremely popular in the last decade. It was chosen as the "word of the year" by the Macquarie Dictionary in 2016 (Elle Hunt, 2017) and the Collins English Dictionary in 2017 (Associated Press, 2017), and has been used countless times by all sorts of news media:

> Fake news rose to buzzword status during the 2016 presidential elections in the United States. It was initially used to refer to falsehoods that went viral as thousands of individuals mistook them as real news such as the fabricated news story that Roman Catholic leader Pope Francis had endorsed the candidacy of Donald Trump» (Tandoc, 2019, p. 3).

However, the main factor in the popularisation of the term is probably its frequent use by Donald Trump himself. In 2020, Senior reporter Alex Woodward, writing for *The Independent*, counted that Trump had called journalists and news outlets «fake news» almost 2,000 times since becoming president. He also warned that Trump «had transformed "fake news" from a catch-all phrase to define a growing, dangerous problem on social media to a weaponised term to undermine the same organisations trying to combat it» (Woodward, 2020).

Since 2020, the term has continued to be widely used, particularly on social media. Trump, who was inaugurated as the 47th president of the USA in January 2025, has not stopped using it, and it «has also been exploited by political actors, who use the term to tag real news organizations whose coverage they disagree with» (Tandoc, 2019, p. 3). The obvious danger is that the banalisation of the term *fake news* can lead to an increase in distrust of all or most news sources. This is «troubling as any healthy democracy relies on accurate and independent news media as a source for information» (van der Linden et al., 2020, p. 461). Several countries have proposed or passed "anti-fake news" legislation, as concern about what is real and what is fake when it comes to news online has risen worldwide to 59%, with a particularly noticeable increase of 8 points in the USA, up to 72% in 2024 (Newman et al., 2024).

In the context of what has been called the post-truth era (Greifeneder et al., 2016; Valtonen et al., 2019), «objective facts are less influential in shaping political debate or public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief» (Oxford English Dictionary, 2025) and «the difference between fact

and fantasy has been blurred by technologies that make media consumers into producers and distributors, that aggressively filter and curate content, and that enable anonymity and undermine accountability» (Valtonen et al., 2019, p. 23). This seems to suggest that technology, social media and fake news are intertwined in a complex relationship.

Given that the concept of **fake news** is so extensively used, and a central part of my learning scenario, we need to consider its definition, which is not easy given how it has been banalised and used to mean different things by different people. Indeed, Tandoc et al. (2018, p. 4) note that «news is supposedly—and normatively—based on truth, which makes the term "fake news" an oxymoron», while Wardle (2017) calls the term «unhelpful». In spite of this, researchers have defined it as «false information that mimics news media» (van der Linden et al., 2020, p. 461), «entirely fabricated and often partisan content that is presented as factual» (Pennycook et al., 2018, p. 1), and «a form of falsehood intended to primarily deceive people by mimicking the look and feel of real news» (Tandoc, 2019, p. 6). All definitions seem to agree on two essential semantic components: falsehood and intent to deceive. In other words, fake news is false and deliberately created to look like real news, in order to mislead and influence the public's (often political) beliefs.

Fake news can be considered a kind of **misinformation**, defined as «false information that has the capacity to spread through society and influence public opinion» (Greifeneder et al., 2016, p. 28). Some authors, however, differentiate between disinformation («the deliberate creation and sharing of information known to be false») and misinformation («the inadvertent sharing of false information») (Wardle, 2017). In our use, the term *misinformation* is to be understood in the wider sense, in which disinformation is but one type of misinformation.

Several researchers and organizations have proposed different typologies of misinformation (EAVI, 2017; Greifeneder et al., 2016; Wardle, 2017). Categories that are frequently mentioned, each with its own characteristics and motivations, include:

- clickbait
- conspiracy theories
- fake news
- impostor content
- journalistic error
- misleading content
- parody and satire news
- propaganda and partisan content
- pseudoscience

Since my main goal is to encourage critical thinking and analysis of news in a broad sense, I consider all types of misinformation (not just fake news) relevant to this work.

Finally, adding to the difficulty of discerning truth from falsehood, there are several «cognitive processes that make individuals more prone to the influence of fake news» (Tandoc, 2019, p. 6). One of these so-called «cognitive biases and blindspots» (van Gelder, 2005, p. 45) is **confirmation bias**, i.e. the fact that individuals tend to consider information more persuasive if it reinforces their preexisting beliefs, and less persuasive if it contradicts those beliefs; other examples include selective exposure and lack of analytical thinking (Tandoc, 2019). These cognitive processes are «universal and ineradicable features of our cognitive machinery, usually operating

quite invisibly to corrupt our thinking and contaminate our beliefs» (van Gelder, 2005, p. 45). Therefore, if they cannot be altogether avoided, we should at least be aware of these blindspots and try to compensate for them.

2.2.2. Countering misinformation with critical thinking and media literacy

In today's world, creating and circulating fake news is easier and cheaper than countering them (Bulger & Davison, 2018). «What is more, in platforms where media followers and producers can be bots, everything else can be fake, too» (Valtonen et al., 2019, p. 23). The growth of misinformation and fake news has been exponential in recent years, leaving scholars «overwhelmed by the size of the phenomenon and baffled by the difficulty of finding ways to tell reliable and false information apart in the digital era» (Kanashina et al., 2023, p. 535).

When it comes to distinguishing reliable content from misinformation, users point to certain platforms as particularly problematic: Worries in this regard are «highest for TikTok and X when compared with other online networks. Both platforms have hosted misinformation or conspiracies [...], as well as so-called 'deep fake' pictures and videos» (Newman et al., 2024, p. 10).

In a current global context characterised by political polarisation and the rise of far-right movements and political parties, and despite the aforementioned banalisation of the term *fake news*—or perhaps because of it—, taking a critical approach to the news seems more important than ever in order to develop awareness of biases and misinformation.

Before we continue, we should explicitly define what we mean by *media literacy* and *critical thinking*, since both concepts are used extensively throughout this work. Firstly, **media literacy** is sometimes left undefined by scholars and researchers who use it, possibly under the assumption that the term is quite semantically transparent. However, Bulger & Davison (2018, p. 3) define it as «a skill set that promotes critical engagement with messages produced by the media», before observing that recent definitions «have begun a shift away from protection or inoculation and toward empowerment». Hobbs (2010, p. vii) refers to «digital and media literacy», which he defines as «a constellation of life skills that are necessary for full participation in our media-saturated, information-rich society». These include five essential competences (Hobbs, 2010):

- ACCESS: Making responsible choices when accessing information; comprehending information and ideas
- ANALYZE & EVALUATE: Analysing messages by identifying the author, purpose and point of view; evaluating the quality and credibility of the content
- CREATE: Creating (digital, multimodal) content
- REFLECT: Reflecting on one's own conduct and communication behavior by applying social responsibility and ethical principles
- ACT: Taking social action by working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, workplace and community, and by participating as a member of a community

The emphasis on the social implications of media literacy is shared by Bulger & Davison (2018), while a more or less explicit connection to critical thinking is a recurrent theme in almost every definition of media literacy. The definition provided by the OED is also worth mentioning: it states that media literacy is «proficiency in the evaluation, analysis, and understanding of mass media; [especially] the ability to analyse critically any story or event presented in the media and to determine its accuracy or credibility» (Oxford English Dictionary, 2025). This definition suits our purposes well, as it includes the concept of critical analysis to determine the reliability of news stories.

Secondly, many definitions of **critical thinking** (CT) have been proposed (see Zhao et al., 2016), but we will focus on the one provided by Peter A. Facione, who defined it as «purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based» (Facione, 1990, p. 6). Additionally, Facione's definition includes a list of the traits of an ideal critical thinker, including being «habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation, honest in facing personal biases, prudent in making judgments, willing to reconsider [...]» (Facione, 1990, p. 6). Other authors consider this definition not only thorough, but also particularly useful in education:

> This definition reflects a comprehensive understanding of critical thinking by bringing together both the cognitive and dispositional dimensions. For educational purposes, this broader view of CT is deemed to be appropriate, as it indicates that developing students' CT means not only improving their cognitive CT skills, but also nurturing the dispositions to think critically (Zhao et al., 2016, p. 15).

Indeed, both aspects of critical thinking (cognitive skills and disposition/willingness) are essential to the concept, and both should be kept in mind when trying to develop CT in an educational context.

Let us now focus specifically on young people. Not only are they the age group with the highest prevalence of social media use, as we have seen, but they are also (contrary to certain stereotypes) very much aware of the dangers of misinformation. Among the younger generations, «concern about misinformation remains extremely high around the world, partly driven by very low trust in the news found in social media» (Galan et al., 2019, p. 7). In other words, they know social media is often untrustworthy as a source of information, and they are worried about the risks posed by this fact. The question we need to ask, then, is this: are they able to tell true information from misinformation?

Several researchers suggest a negative answer here, as in this example: «There is growing concern about the possible effects [fake news] could have on young people, who are assiduous users of social networks and lack the life experience to tell true news from fake news» (Kanashina et al., 2023, p. 535-536). Some research also points to a lack of media literacy. For instance, in a study of Spanish secondary school students, 92.1% of respondents said they were able to differentiate information from opinion. When put to the test, however, that confidence did not correspond in many cases to a real ability, as 64.4% of those students mistook an opinion piece for information. In the same study, more than half of the students considered a headline containing false information about immigration to be true, while about 60% judged true headlines to be false

(Herrero-Curiel & La-Rosa, 2022). In other words, adolescents seem to have low levels of media literacy, together with a misaligned self-perception of their abilities in that area. This overconfidence might put them at risk when confronted with misinformation and fake news.

For these reasons, it would seem that an increased emphasis on media literacy and critical thinking is entirely justified, especially for young people. To put it another way, «given the permeability of barriers to fake news and the influence of misinformation on young people with difficulties in distinguishing truth and falsehoods, only media literacy stands a chance of preventing users from being misled» (Kanashina et al., 2023, p. 536).

If we, as a society, recognize the importance of enhancing young people's critical thinking and media literacy skills, it seems education must play a key role in achieving this goal. Certainly, «it is important to develop educational policies to reduce over-dependence on social media and to increase the training of students to be able to distinguish between fake and authentic news» (Kanashina et al., 2023, p. 546). It must be noted that this overdependence on social media use (or Problematic Social Media Use, as it is more commonly called) is another interesting aspect of the social media phenomenon, although it falls beyond the scope of this work (for recent research on Problematic Social Media Use, see e.g. Gómez-Baya et al., 2022; Arrivillaga et al., 2024).

On a more local scale, a recent study of Spanish public schools found that «secondary school teachers report a lack of critical thinking when dealing with media content» (Herrero-Curiel & La-Rosa, 2022). The researchers suggested the possible explanations and implications of these findings:

> This could be due to compulsive consumption, generated by the widespread use of mobile devices that contribute to distraction and difficulty in concentrating, or lack of interest in information. In view of this, students should be provided with certain defence mechanisms against the media so that they do not uncritically take messages on board» (Herrero-Curiel & La-Rosa, 2022, p. 95).

Based on everything we have seen so far, it would seem reasonable to conclude that these defence mechanisms revolve around critical thinking and media literacy, and that they are sorely needed.

As a final consideration, the current Catalan educational curriculum incorporates Digital Competence as one of its four Transversal Competences (those that should be part of every school subject). This cornerstone of the curriculum encompasses aspects such as «using digital technology in a way that is safe, healthy, sustainable, critical, and responsible», «information literacy», «media education» and «computational and critical thinking» (*Competència Digital*, 2024). Furhtermore, the current competency-based curriculum includes specific competences in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) subject, one of which (CE6) concerns «searching, selecting and verifying information from different sources with an increasing degree of autonomy, assessing its reliability and pertinence [...] and avoiding the risks of manipulation and disinformation [...]» (*Competències Específiques*, 2025). It is quite clear, then, that critical thinking and media literacy are important components of the current Catalan curriculum as a whole, and of EFL in particular. What is not so clear is to what extent these are being introduced in actual classroom practice. Considering the research findings discussed above (and notwithstanding the valid point that could be made regarding the lack of institutional support), I would venture to say that we, as teachers, could do better in that regard.

In summary, we have seen that misinformation (which includes but is not limited to fake news) has increased exponentially in recent years, in the context of the rise of social media. Distinguishing between true and false information is often difficult, and research has found that adolescents in particular, while concerned about misinformation, lack critical thinking and media literacy skills. Many researchers, as well as the current Catalan curriculum, emphasise the importance of these skills, as they are essential to navigate today's complex and shifting news and information landscape.

2.3. Developmental psychology

In the context of developmental psychology, and particularly according to Jean Piaget's four stages of development, it is considered that, between the ages of 11 and 15, adolescents reach the formal operational stage, which includes the capacity for abstract thinking and «the ability to use hypothetical reasoning based on a logic of all possible combinations» (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). As part of this complex hypothetical thinking, «formal reasoning connects assumptions—propositions, that is, in which one does not necessarily believe, but which one admits in order to see what consequences they will lead to» (Piaget, 1928, p. 250-251). We can reasonably establish a connection between the emergence of abstract and hypothetical thinking and the ability to effectively develop one's critical thinking.

Together with the cognitive changes that make formal operations possible, moral development is also taking place around the same age. Ideas, values and rules which in childhood were taken for granted are now reexamined, as an autonomous morality and value system develops. Thus, as the child transitions into adolescence, «truthfulness gradually ceases to be a duty imposed by heteronomy and becomes an object envisaged as good by an autonomous personal conscience» (Piaget, 1932, p. 170). Indeed, truthfulness is one of the moral concepts that are reconceptualized in adolescence, and it is also one of the central notions underpinning my learning scenario.

These perspectives suggest that, given the degree of cognitive maturity required to fully engage in critical thinking and news analysis, these abilities cannot be expected to develop before secondary school. However, a certain familiarity with media texts and their genre conventions can certainly be introduced sooner (in primary education); for recommendations and examples of how to introduce media literacy in primary schools, see Hobbs (2010) and Quinlisk (2003). Furthermore, it has also been proposed that it is never too early to introduce critical thinking (van Gelder, 2005), and that there are effective ways to lay the groundwork for critical thinking in primary schools. As an example, Peter Facione's (1990) report considered critical thinking an essential set of skills for everyone's personal and civic life, and since not every member of society will reach higher education or even graduate high school, it recommended that «explicit attention to the fostering of CT skills and dispositions should be made an instructional goal at all levels of the K-12 curriculum» and that elementary schools could start that process through «the cultivation of CT dispositions and an insistence on giving and evaluating reasons» (Facione, 1990, p. 29).

In light of all these considerations, and notwithstanding the possibility of earlier interventions, it seems reasonable to conclude that 14-15 (the age of my students for this learning

scenario) is an opportune point in a person's cognitive maturation to encourage the development of high-order thinking skills such as analysing media information and critical thinking.

2.4. Pragmatics

One of the main factors involved in processing and understanding news stories—and indeed in applying critical thinking to the news—is considering not only the words we read or hear, but also how they relate to their context.

This is the domain of pragmatics, the branch of linguistics that deals with «the interpretation of linguistic meaning in context» (Fromkin et al., 2003, p. 207). Although pragmatics has been defined in different ways, «the most promising are the definitions that equate pragmatics with "meaning minus semantics" or with a theory of language understanding that takes context into account, in order to complement the contribution that semantics makes to meaning» (Levinson, 1983, p. 32). Therefore, we could say that pragmatics «is concerned with the meanings of linguistic signals that are not simply part of their semantic meaning» (Cummins, 2019, p. 5).

Some concepts in pragmatics are particularly relevant when interpreting and analysing the news (since this is essentially an analysis of meaning, both semantic and pragmatic aspects need to be considered). While it would be impossible to provide an in-depth examination of these concepts within the scope of this work, I will now endeavour to give at least a brief definition and overview of each.

We should start with J. L. Austin's **speech act theory**, a «reaction against the view that language is used only to communicate about the truth of propositions» (Attardo & Pickering, 2021, p. 24). In a series of lectures, published under the title *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin, 1975), Austin proposes a distinction between two kinds of utterances, which he calls *constatives* (i.e. statements of fact, assertions) and *performatives* (which do something—they perform an act by the mere fact of being uttered). While constatives can be said to be either true or false, performatives are either happy (felicitous) or unhappy (infelicitous), depending on whether the act is actually accomplished (Austin, 1975). There is more to the argument, though, because «what starts as a theory about some special and peculiar utterances —performatives— ends up as a general theory that pertains to all kinds of utterances» (Levinson, 1983, p. 231). Austin notes that performatives can be explicit, using *performative verbs* ("I order you to go", "I apologize"), but also implicit ("Go", "Sorry") (Austin, 1975). In the end, he rejects the dichotomy constatitve-performative and claims «that all utterances, in addition to meaning whatever they mean, perform specific actions (or do things) through having specific forces» (Levinson, 1983, p. 236) such as the illocutionary force, i.e. «the interactional purpose of the utterance» (Attardo & Pickering, 2021, p. 27). Indeed, through language we can perform a wide range of communicative and social functions, «from greeting, questioning, thanking and apologising, through to complex and culturally specific actions such as naming, marrying, sentencing, and so on» (Cummins, 2019, p. 208).

Austin established a distinction between three kinds of speech acts (Austin, 1975):

- locutionary act: the act of saying something, the utterance itself
- illocutionary act: what someone is trying to accomplish by saying something

- perlocutionary act: what someone brings about or achieves by saying something

Comprehending this essential difference between what is said, what is meant (i.e. what the speaker is trying to do), and the actual effect or consequence of an utterance will be crucial for our discussion of further concepts within the field of pragmatics, and, later, for introducing discourse analysis, in which understanding what a text is *doing* (rather than simply what it is saying) will become a central concern. Being able to move beyond the locutionary meaning of utterances to also consider the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts involved constitutes a qualitative leap that will prove immensely helpful in analysing news and media discourse.

Another relevant concept is Paul Grice's **cooperative principle**, which is the idea that people engaged in conversation are generally expected to cooperate to achieve effective communication. However, this influential concept should not be interpreted as prescriptive, that is, as a moralistic mandate for cooperation (Attardo & Pickering, 2021). As we will see, violations of the cooperative principle are extremely common, fully expected, and a significant component of Grice's work.

The cooperative principle is based on Grice's (1975) four **maxims of conversation**, which can be paraphrased as such:

1) QUANTITY: Give as much information as required (not more and not less).
2) QUALITY: Give true information (don't give information which you know to be false or for which you lack sufficient evidence).
3) RELATIONSHIP / RELEVANCE: Give relevant information.
4) MANNER: Be clear (i.e. avoid obscurity and ambiguity, be brief and orderly).

Of course, Grice knew that these maxims are not always followed. On the contrary, they are often violated or blatantly *flouted*, to use the Gricean term. These communicative situations are, however, of particular pragmatic interest. An example would be the following conversation (Grice, 1975):

A: Where's Bill?
B: There's a yellow VW outside Sue's house.

At first glance, this exchange seems to violate the maxim of relationship, as the literal semantic meaning of B's answer bears no relation to A's question. Unless, of course, B knows that Bill uses a yellow VW and A is expected to infer that Bill is probably in Sue's house. Grice called this a **conversational implicature**:

> In cases of this sort, inferences arise to preserve the assumption of co-operation; it is only by making the assumption contrary to superficial indications that the inferences arise in the first place. It is this kind of inference that Grice dubs an implicature, or more properly a conversational implicature. So Grice's point is not that we always adhere to these maxims on a superficial level but rather that, wherever possible, people will interpret what we say as conforming to the maxims on at least some level. (Levinson, 1983, p. 102-103)

A different kind of pragmatic inference is **pressuposition**, any implicit assumption or precondition of a given utterance about the things or people to which it refers. It would not be possible here to explore the enormous compexity underlying the concept of pressuposition.

Instead, in the interest of brevity, I will give an example of its relevance to taking a critical approach to the news. Let us consider the following FOX News headline (February 7, 2025):

President Trump gets big boost in effort to remove criminal illegal immigrants

Despite being only twelve words in length, this simple headline already contains several pressupositions, such as:

A) Trump is the current president.
B) There is an ongoing effort (by Trump) "to remove criminal illegal immigrants".
C) There are criminal illegal immigrants.

Being aware of the pressupositions in the news we read or hear is important, even more so when we realise that those implicit pressupositions have the potential to convey politically-biased, questionable, or outright false notions.

Notice also the **ambiguity** (another important concept in pragmatics —as in semantics— related to Grice's fourth maxim, "manner") in the expression "criminal illegal immigrants". Is the adjective "illegal" being used restrictively or non-restrictively? Are the people being "removed" only those "illegal immigrants" who have been convicted of a crime? Only from context can we know that this is not the case, and in fact all undocumented migrants are being targeted for deportation. Thus, resolving the ambiguity with pragmatic (contextual) knowledge reveals that "criminal" is being used here in a non-restrictive sense, that is, the adjective "criminal" is being applied to all "illegal immigrants", a very politically-charged idea indeed.

Finally, another concept of interest in pragmatics, which is relevant to my learning scenario due to its frequent use in the news, is **figurative or nonliteral language**. This refers to «utterances that convey a pragmatic meaning which doesn't build upon the semantic "literal" meaning, but instead contradicts it» (Cummins, 2019, p. 129). This includes the use of ironic, hyperbolic, metonymic and metaphorical language. Metaphors are particularly ubiquitous in news headlines and so the ability to interpret them correctly is essential to understanding what is being said. Let us consider a few examples of figurative language used in news headlines:

Baltic states to pull the plug on Russian grid
[CNN, February 7, 2025]

Donald Trump is already in reverse
[Newsweek, February 7, 2025]

Frequent flyers have spent years staying loyal to airlines. Now airlines are giving them 'the middle finger'
[CNN, February 22, 2025]

In conclusion, pragmatics examines a variety of concepts related to contextual and nonliteral meanings (as opposed to semantic ones), such as Grice's cooperative principle, implicature, pressuposition, ambiguity and the interpretation of figurative language. Keeping these concepts in mind is immensely useful when reading and analysing news, as they have the potential to reveal subtle layers of pragmatic meaning that might otherwise have remained beyond our conscious reach. In this section we have barely touched on some of the many interesting aspects of pragmatics. For an in-depth discussion and practical examples of how to bring pragmatics into the EFL classroom, see Attardo & Pickering (2021).

2.5. Discourse and discourse analysis

> There was a tradition in the temple of Dodona that oaks first gave prophetic utterances. The men of old, unlike in their simplicity to young philosophy, deemed that if they heard the truth even from "oak or rock," it was enough for them; whereas you seem to consider not whether a thing is or is not true, but who the speaker is and from what country the tale comes.
>
> (Plato, *Phaedrus*)

If among our goals as teachers we want to depelop our students' ability to critically analyse information, another field of study we need to turn to is **discourse analysis**, an area of linguistics that «takes a pragmatic approach to the study of language in use» (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 27).

Let us begin by acknowledging the difficulty in defining the terms "**discourse**" and "**discourse analysis**", as they have been used with different meanings in different fields: from a linguistic perspective, "discourse" can refer to any linguistic unit longer than a sentence, but it can also mean "language use" (Schiffrin et al., 2001). Furthermore, a distinction can be made between "discourse" in this sense (as a stretch of language or as language in use) and "Discourses" (with a capital "D"), which are «socially accepted associations among ways of using language, thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting in the "right" places and at the "right" times with the "right" objects» (Gee, 2005, p. 26). This kind of Discourse, to put it another way, is about performing social actions and identities, that is, who we are and what culture or social group we are affiliated with. Certainly, many definitions of discourse include not only language in use, but also «a broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language» (Schiffrin et al., 2001, p. 1). Norman Fairclough also points to various meanings of "discourse", focusing in each case on the social use of language:

> *Discourse* is commonly used in various senses, including (a) meaning-making as an element of the social process; (b) the language associated with a particular social field or practice (e.g. 'political discourse'); (c) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective (e.g. a 'neo-liberal discourse of globalization') (Fairclough, 2023, p. 13).

It should become clear from these definitions that there is a strong connection between discourse analysis and pragmatics. As Brown & Yule (1983, p. 26) point out, «any analytic approach in linguistics which involves contextual considerations, necessarily belongs to that area of language study called pragmatics. "Doing discourse analysis" certainly involves "doing syntax and semantics", but it primarily consists of "doing pragmatics"». That is because «in discourse analysis, as in pragmatics, we are concerned with what people using language are doing, and accounting for the linguistic features in the discourse as the means employed in what they are doing» (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 26).

After these preliminary considerations, I want to briefly introduce the kinds of questions used in discourse analysis to uncover "what people using language are doing", as posited by Gee (2005):

> Significance: How is this piece of language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways?

Activities: What activity or activities is this piece of language being used to enact (i.e., get others to recognize as going on)?

Identities: What identity or identities is this piece of language being used to enact (i.e., get others to recognize as operative?

Relationships: What sort of relationship or relationships is this piece of language seeking to enact with others (present or not)?

Politics (the distribution of social goods): What perspective on social goods is this piece of language communicating (i.e., what is being communicated as to what is taken to be "normal", "right", "good", "correct", "proper", "appropriate", "valuable", "the way things are", "the way things ought to be", "high status or low status", "like me or not like me", and so forth)?

Connections: How does this piece of language connect or disconnect things; how does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another?

Sign systems and knowledge: How does this piece of language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems (e.g. Spanish vs. English, technical language vs. everyday language, words vs. images, words vs. equations) or different ways of knowing and believing or claims to knowledge and belief?

By investigating these sorts of questions, as well as analysing relevant textual elements such as intertextuality, discourse analysis is able to reveal how discourse works and provide us with a deeper understanding:

> We discourse analysts want to expose the often taken-for-granted workings of discourse to light, because like the study of atoms, cells, and stars, there is a great wealth of scientific knowledge to be gained. But there is also insight into how to make the world a better and more humane place to be gained as well. (Handford & Gee, 2023, p. 6)

After this brief introduction to the field, we will dive deeper into one particular area of discourse analysis that is especially interesting and relevant to this work: critical discourse analysis.

2.5.1. Introducing critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis is a transdisciplinary approach that integrates elements of discourse analysis and critical social analysis, with a particular emphasis on «relations between discourse and other social elements (including power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities)» (Fairclough, 2023, p. 11). More explicitly, «CDA integrates linguistic analysis with social and cultural theories in order to expose the ideological assumptions and relations at play in language, which are essentially to do with power» (Clark, 2013, p. 11). Its main goal can be stated as «to develop ways of analysing language which address its involvement in the workings of contemporary capitalist societies» (Fairclough, 2010, p. 1). Finally, let us consider an alternative formulation of the objective of CDA, which explicitly mentions its relevance to language users:

> Linguists interested in CDA consider language an important tool in the production, maintenance and change of social relations of power. Their aim is to increase language users' consciousness of how language contributes to the domination and control of some people by others (Clark, 2013, p. 11).

Historically, CDA was influenced by figures such as Michel Foucault, and «has its roots in the work of critical linguistics, especially the work of Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew (1979) and Fowler (1986), developed from the early 1990s onwards by Fairclough (1989), Wodak (2011), van Dijk (1991) and others» (Clark, 2013, p. 11).

Today, CDA includes an array of different approaches and methodologies (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In this section, I will focus primarily on the views of the field's most prominent scholar, Norman Fairclough.

Fairclough describes three main characteristics of CDA: it is **relational** (its focus is not on individuals or entities, but on social relations), it is **dialectical** (because the objects of these relations—e.g. power and discourse—are not discrete but interrelated in such a way that one can only be interpreted in terms of its dialectical relations with the others), and it is **transdisciplinary** (it transcends the conventional boundaries between disciplines such as linguistics, sociology and politics) (Fairclough, 2010).

On the basis of these definitions and characteristics, we can assert that CDA differs from discourse analysis, firstly, in that it is not an analysis of discourse "in itself", but of dialectical relations between discourse and other (social, cultural, political) objects; and, secondly, in its critique, i.e. its focus on social wrongs and how they can be corrected or mitigated. Such a critique is founded, admittedly, on certain values (e.g. human well-being, justice, freedom, and so on), which may not be universal (Fairclough, 2010).

In terms of methodology, Fairclough (1989) established three dimensions, or stages, of CDA, which can be briefly summarised as follows.

The first stage, **description**, is concerned with formal properties of the text. This analysis is based on a list of ten questions regarding: (A) vocabulary (e.g. use of ideologically contested expressions, eufemistic expressions, metaphors, and so on), (B) grammar (e.g. whether agency is clear or not, whether sentences are active or passive, how pronouns such as *we* and *you* are used, the use of connectors), and (C) textual structures (interactional conventions, such as the ways in which one participant controls the turns of others, and any larger-scale structures that exist in the text).

The second stage, **interpretation**, is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction. In other words, interpretations[1] result from the interaction of what is in the text and everything the interpreter brings to the interpretation, which Fairclough calls "members' resources" (MR). These are resources «which people have in their heads and draw upon when they produce or interpret texts—including their knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, assumptions, and so on» (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24). MR are used as interpretative procedures. This is a complex process based on six domains of interpretation, of which the first two are contextual and the last four are textual. Below is the

[1] Fairclough (1989) deliberately uses "interpretation" with two different meanings: «as the name of a stage in the procedure, and for the interpretation of texts by discourse participants». He does this in order «to stress the essential similarity between what the analyst does and what participants do».

simplified list of these domains of interpretation, with their associated interpretative procedures (MR) in parentheses:

1) Situational context (social orders)
2) Intertextual context (interactional history)
3) Surface of utterance (phonology, grammar, vocabulary)
4) Meaning of utterance (semantics, pragmatics)
5) Local coherence (cohesion, pragmatics)
6) Text structure and "point" (schemata)

This complex process of interpretation can be summarised in three questions that could be asked about any discourse (Fairclough, 1989, p. 162):

> 1) Context: what interpretation(s) are participants giving to the situational and intertextual contexts?
>
> 2) Discourse type(s): what discourse type(s) are being drawn upon (hence what rules, systems or principles of phonology, grammar, sentence cohesion, vocabulary, semantics and pragmatics; and what schemata, frames and scripts)?
>
> 3) Difference and change: are answers to questions 1 and 2 different for different participants? And do they change during the course of the interaction?

The third and final stage, **explanation,** is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context, and it is a key element of CDA. The objective of this stage is «to portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them» (Fairclough, 1989, p. 163). As before, this stage can be summarised in three questions (Fairclough, 1989, p. 166):

> 1) Social determinants: what power relations at situational, institutional and societal levels help shape this discourse?
>
> 2) Ideologies: what elements of MR which are drawn upon have an ideological character?
>
> 3) Effects: how is this discourse positioned in relation to struggles at the situational, institutional and societal levels? Are these struggles overt or covert? Is the discourse normative with respect to MR or creative? Does it contribute to sustaining existing power relations, or transforming them?

The questions associated to these three stages afford an extraordinary depth of analysis. At the same time, they are probably too complex to use, as formulated, in the context of an EFL classroom at secondary school levels. However, teachers willing to include critical news reading in their lessons should bear them in mind, as they provide invaluable insight into how to critically approach texts which are often ideologically biased or misleading. To assist in this regard, let us now consider how CDA can be applied to media discourse in particular.

2.5.2. Critical discourse analysis and the media

Norman Fairclough specifically addressed media discourse and its analysis in his 1995 work *Media Discourse*, where he presented a list of eight desiderata «for an adequate critical analysis of media discourse» (Fairclough, 1995, p. 32-34):

1. One focus of analysis should be on how wider changes in society and culture are manifest in changing media discourse practices.

2. The analysis of media text should include detailed attention to their language and "texture". It should also include detailed analysis of visual images and sound effects.

3. Text analysis should be complemented by analysis of practices of text production and text consumption, including attention to transformations which texts regularly undergo across networks of discourse practices.

4. Analysis of texts and practices should be mapped on to analysis of the institutional and wider social and cultural context of media practices, including relations of power and ideologies.

5. Text analysis should include both linguistic analysis and intertextual analysis in terms of genres and discourses. It should be recognized that texts are commonly hybrid intertextually with mixtures of genres and discourses, and that such hibridity is manifest in heterogeneous linguistic features.

6. Linguistic analysis of text should be conceived multifunctionally, and be oriented towards representation and the constitution of relations and identities as simultaneous processes in texts, and the important relationships between them.

7. Linguistic analysis of texts involves analysis at a number of levels, including phonic, lexical, grammatical, and macrostructural/schematic.

8. The relationship between texts and society/culture is to be seen dialectically. Texts are socioculturally shaped but they also constitute society and culture, in ways which may be transformative as well as reproductive.

In this summary of what media discourse analysis shoud be, Fairclough's main focus is on the dialectical relationship between text and sociocultural context and the importance of mapping one onto the other. CDA specifically emphasizes social power dynamics and ideology, which leads us to politics. As we have seen, politics is possibly the area where the largest amount of misinformation and fake news are generated, and that which causes more concern regarding misinformation (Newman et al., 2024). Discerning truth from falsehood in political information is often hard, because falsities are presented in relation to real events and people, in such a way that context may lend credibility to the false information.

The language of media discourse is intricately intertwined with that of political discourse, on account of the «almost symbiotic relationship between the worlds of politics and media» (Wodak, 2011, p. 3). Therefore, when analising media texts, one should be aware of this and pay attention to any linguistic cues that might have ideological implications. For example:

> From a syntactic point of view, transformations such as nominalization and shifting into passive may be ideologically motivated, as far as these transformations entail that the agent is backgrounded or even suppressed [...]. This resource is very frequent in media discourse, for instance, when the agents of power (policemen, for example) are involved in negative events» (Bernardo Paniagua et al., 2007, p. 6-7).

These kinds of linguistic cues also include vocabulary choices in processes of categorization, e.g. how the same group of people could be referred to as "freedom fighters" or "terrorists" depending on who is doing the writing (Bernardo Paniagua et al., 2007) and, particularly, depending on their political stance.

According to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, both politics and journalism attempt to impose a certain discourse as the legitimate vision of society: «they have in common the fact that they are the site of internal struggles for the imposition of the dominant principle of vision and division» (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 36). Their connection, however, is even deeper:

> It seems quite obvious that the complex interdependence between the fields of media and politics can only be understood by juxtaposing our analysis of the two: politicians and politics depend on their activities and decisions being reported in the media; and the media depend on being able to access relevant political information (Wodak, 2011, p. XV).

This interdependence, of course, only reinforces the need for careful and critical analysis of the news that we, as citizens, read or hear on a daily basis.

As a conclusion to this section, the field of CDA provides us with tools of analysis, often presented in the form of questions, allowing us to uncover «the ideological loading of particular ways of using language and the relations of power which underlie them» (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). It is worth noting that both discourse analysis and CDA specifically have served as an effective framework to address aspects of social inequality such as sexism (see e.g. Mills, 2004) and racism (see e.g. van Dijk, 1991). However, CDA is most relevant to our work as an instrument for the analysis of media discourse (as well as news in the broader sense of the term) with the potential to reveal ideology, biases, and—critically—all sorts of misinformation.

2.6. The news in the EFL classroom

So far we have seen how the news is changing and why it is a relevant topic, specifically for adolescents and in the context of their use of social media (2.1). We have also discussed fake news and misinformation, including how young people are concerned about it and how, at the same time, they are largely unprepared to deal with it, due to a lack of media literacy and critical thinking skills, which puts them at risk of being deceived and manipulated (2.2). In section 2.3 we have briefly discussed the developmental aspects that make adolescence an optimal moment to teach critical thinking (2.3). Finally, we have examined two areas of linguistics, Pragmatics (2.4) and Discourse Analysis (2.5), that provide us with useful tools we can employ and questions we can ask when analysing news and other potential sources of misinformation.

In this last section of my theoretical framework, I am going to consider how news can be used in the EFL classroom to develop media literacy and critical thinking skills. These skills are not only an integral component of the Catalan educational curriculum, as we have seen; they have also been highlighted as essential to any EFL curriculum, since learners need critical thinking «to read beyond the literal, to write convincing essays, to express their ideas with adequate supporting evidence, and to challenge the others' position» (Zhao et al., 2016, p. 14).

Using news articles in EFL teaching is widely considered a beneficial practice, as it involves exposing learners to authentic materials (Harmer, 2015; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Nunan, 2004; Tomlinson, 2011) which are not only useful for language learning, but simultaneously provide valuable sociocultural context. Learning about sociocultural aspects should be an integral part of EFL curricula, as they connect to central 21st-century objectives such as intercultural communication (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) which are also part of the current Catalan EFL curriculum (*Competències Específiques*, 2025). To put it another way, news can be very effective as a source of language, but teachers should also take advantage of the opportunity to make students examine cultural representations of people and communities through critical analysis (Quinlisk, 2003). This idea, of course, connects to the goal of teaching media literacy and critical thinking skills in addition to language and culture.

Empirical research has shown that, with proper training and guidance, EFL learners can enhance their ability to think critically (Zhao et al., 2016). Similarly, studies on media literacy initiatives have demonstrated positive outcomes in several areas (Afrilyasanti et al., 2023; Bulger & Davison, 2018).

Let us first examine how **media literacy** can be taught in an EFL classroom setting. Arikan (2002, p. 118) believes that the best way to incorporate news and other media products in a class is to ask students about «the meanings they gather from that specific product or message to elicit the effect of the media product on the receiver». This could lead to a reflection on some of the basic premises of media literacy (which are also related to our discussion of CDA), e.g. «that media messages are constructed representations of reality; that individual experiences filter media messages; that media messages carry social, political, economic, and aesthetic power» (Quinlisk, 2003, p. 36) and so on. Students can also develop awareness of how news media and social media influence their lives in subtle ways, not by explicitly telling them what to think, «but from tacitly, consistently, and repeatedly presenting stories that indirectly cultivate or formulate beliefs about the real world» (Quinlisk, 2003, p. 36).

The introduction of media literacy in education has been advocated for a long time, and since the late 1970s there have been «systematic efforts toward curricular development and research» (Bulger & Davison, 2018, p. 4). However, the degree to which media literacy is actually taught (not to mention the methods used to do so) are far from uniform. Some European governments have developed specific educational programmes (which can be cross-curricular or subject-specific) related to critical media literacy; while in other countries it is sometimes taught with no collaboration with governments (Afrilyasanti et al., 2023).

Media literacy initiatives may encompass not only understanding and analysing information, but also engaging young people in the production of media, «as a means of empowering them to feel ownership as creators» (Bulger & Davison, 2018, p. 5). Through these

initiatives, students «not only develop skills of inquiry and communication but develop an understanding of some of the social and cultural practices that affect their access to the target language community as well» (Quinlisk, 2003, p. 39).

When considering its limitations and challenges beyond matters of institutional support, some interesting critiques have been formulated. For example, we know that media literacy has an important social aspect, as «full participation in contemporary culture requires not just consuming messages, but also creating and sharing them» (Hobbs, 2010, p. vii), which means media-literate citizens can have positive impacts on their communities. However, media literacy teaching can sometimes focus too much on individual responsibility, and «put the onus of monitoring media effects on the audience, rather than media creators, social media platforms, or regulators» (Bulger & Davison, 2018, p. 9). This could be countered, however, with a view of media literacy that is «multi-faceted, flexible, and empowering» (Bulger & Davison, 2018, p. 4).

A further challenge lies in the teachers' own lack of media literacy skills and, in some cases, their lack of motivation to improve (Afrilyasanti et al., 2022). To overcome this lack of media competence, «teachers need to enhance their critical media literacy awareness, in addition to media comprehension and knowledge» (Afrilyasanti et al., 2023, p. 12).

While the language factor could be considered an additional difficulty to introducing media literacy in EFL classes, there are good reasons to do so. If we want our teaching to provide authentic language use, a real-word context for language learning, and knowledge about cultural aspects, using news is a very effective way to accomplish all three goals. However, the mere presence of news and other media artifacts is not enough: «To introduce critical media literacy in the ESL/EFL classrooms, teachers [...] must endeavor to teach *about* the media as well as *with* them» (Arikan, 2002, p. 117).

As we have seen, the way the news is created and consumed is changing quickly, so «coping with the world of algorithmically created and distributed news is a challenge to existing media literacy education» (Valtonen et al., 2019, p. 23). Furthermore, and in spite of the benefits it can provide, «from an evidence perspective, there remains uncertainty around whether media literacy can be successful in preparing citizens to resist fake news and disinformation» (Bulger & Davison, 2018, p. 11-12).

Concerning **critical thinking** specifically, there has been some debate on its teachability in the EFL context, although objections may be understood as a caution about the difficulties involved or as a call for exploring new methodologies (Zhao et al., 2016). Recent trends emphasise the need to develop critical thinking as an integral part of the EFL curriculum (Zhao et al., 2016).

As regards how to teach critical thinking, and whether to opt for an implicit or explicit approach, it is often argued that explicit teaching is more effective (van Gelder, 2005; Zhao et al., 2016). For example, van Gelder (2005) argues that critical thinking skills are not naturally acquired, but instead they need to be explicitly taught and developed through practice. This, of course, has important implications for the design of educational curricula:

> Critical thinking cannot be treated as just a kind of gloss on educational content made up of other "real" subjects. Students will not become excellent critical thinkers merely by studying history, marketing, or nursing, even if their instruction is given a "critical" emphasis (as it should be). Critical

> thinking must be studied and practiced in its own right; it must be an explicit part of the curriculum. (van Gelder, 2005, p. 43)

Besides the need for explicit teaching, another crucial idea is that merely learning about critical thinking on a theoretical level is not enough; students need to engage in actual critical thinking if we want their CT skills to improve (van Gelder, 2005). Practice, in other words, is essential. Students have to read, understand and analyze texts, by asking the kind of questions we have seen in previous sections (adapted, of course, to the level of the students). Learning to identify who wrote a news story, who published it, what kind of language it uses, and what purpose and biases it might have are skills that need to be taught and practised if we want our students to effectively use them. Other suggested instructional strategies for critical thinking include questioning by the teacher (who should provide adequate time for reflection), as well as active and cooperative activities such as group discussion, debates and reciprocal peer questioning (Zhao et al., 2016).

Among the challenges and limitations to teaching critical thinking in EFL classes is the fact that, simply put, critical thinking is difficult, and therefore takes a long time to master, so «we should not look for magic bullets» (van Gelder, 2005, p. 42). For this reason, the best approach might be to introduce CT cross-curricularly, in different subjects and contexts, during an extented period.

Another significant challenge in teaching critical thinking is the problem of transfer, namely, the fact that an ability learned in one context is not automatically used in a different context. Teachers need to be aware of this, and «teach for transfer. We cannot simply hope and expect that critical thinking skills, once learned in a particular situation, will be applied spontaneously in others» (van Gelder, 2005, p. 43). Instead, learners need to actively practise using those skills in different situations. It stands to reason that doing so in different languages should also be beneficial, especially within a cross-curricular approach that presents a range of contexts of use.

Finally, we need to consider how all of this applies to the learning scenario presented here. Of course, given the scope of my didactic intervention, my expectation was not to see a dramatic increase in the media literacy or critical thinking skills of my students. It was, rather, to expand their awareness of these skills and their willingness to develop them, and to provide them with some tools and practical examples which they can use as a starting point for enhancing these increasingly relevant 21st-century skills (Valtonen et al., 2019). Accordingly, I established that this learning scenario would be a success if it allowed my students to look at the news in a new light, and maybe think twice before sharing the next outrageous piece of "information" they read on social media.

After all, as van Gelder (2005, p. 42) explains, «critical thinking is more of a lifelong journey than something picked up in a two-week module». But as the saying goes, «a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step»,[2] and this learning scenario aims to be that first step.

[2] The saying is almost certainly of Chinese origin, and usually attributed to Laotzi.

3. Methodology

3.1. Historical overview: from method to postmethod

Several different and contrasting ESL/EFL methods were developed and used in teaching starting in the 19th century and throughout most of the 20th century (Harmer, 2015). From grammar-translation and the direct method to the audio-lingual method (inspired by behaviourism) and the so-called "silent way" (Richards & Rodgers, 2010), each of these methods was generally abandoned as the basis on which to design language courses, as more evidence became available and new theories were proposed. I will not dwell on these approaches, as they have no bearing on my learning scenario, except as predecessors to later, more relevant ideas.

In the second half of the 20th century, two major developments transformed the study of language acquisition. The first was Noam Chomsky's linguistic theory, including the concept of an innate universal grammar (Chomsky, 1965), and his critique of behaviourism. The second was Stephen Krashen's five hypotheses on second-language acquisition (Krashen, 1982), which were hugely influential in the transition from structure-based approaches to **Communicative Language Teaching** (CLT).

CLT, also known as the Communicative Approach, is not a methodology per se, but rather a general approach to second and foreign language teaching. Nunan (2004) defines it as «a philosophical approach to language teaching covering a range of methodological approaches which share a focus on helping learners communicate meaningfully in the target language». In other words, CLT is based on the general principle that communication should be the main goal of language instruction. In accordance with this goal, one of the main characteristics of CLT is a focus on meaning, i.e. effective communication of ideas, and the belief that «it is more effective to encourage learners to use the language as much as possible, even if this means that some of the language they produce is inaccurate» (Willis & Willis, 2007, p. 7). A second defining characteristic of CLT is emphasis on interaction, both among learners and between them and the teacher, as a means to promote communication.

From 1975 onwards, several other methodologies emerged, such as the Natural Way (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) and Task-Based Language Teaching (Ellis, 2024; Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007). These are based on CLT, and have a clear focus on communication and interaction. Notably, in **Task-Based Language Teaching** (TBLT) the syllabus is organised around tasks, that is, activities with a clearly defined, non-linguistic outcome based on a real-life need or situation. Notice how several of these features are also characteristics of learning scenarios as defined in the Catalan educational curriculum.

In the last few decades, the notion of following a single method has fallen out of favour, giving way to «a valuable new direction of thought in language pedagogy: to overcome the narrowness, rigidities, and imbalances which have resulted from conceptualizing language teaching purely or mainly thorough the concept of method» (Stern, 1983, p. 477). In our current «**postmethod era**» of language teaching, it is highly unlikely that any truly innovative method can be invented (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), among other reasons because, in many cases, single-method

teaching practices have been abandoned in favour of more holistic approaches. Indeed, in the 21st century, «most teachers and educational institutions [...] tend to examine a range of different methods to see what they have to offer» (Harmer, 2015, p. 68) and then adopt those ideas that work best in their context, i.e. what is useful for them and for their students. In other words, it is now generally accepted that «good teachers examine methods (and the history of methods) to see how far these agree with their own beliefs» (Harmer, 2015, p. 70) and organise their teaching eclectically based on that analysis. From this point of view, using a single method would be «actually limiting since it gets in the way of teachers and students learning how to learn together» (Harmer, 2015, p. 69).

In the next section, I will detail the pedagogical principles I have incorporated into the design and implementation of the present learning scenario, which derive from a variety of methods, approaches and authors.

3.2. Methodological principles

As explained in the previous section, my methodological approach in designing and teaching this learning scenario is not founded on a single method, but instead follows pedagogical principles developed by various authors and associated with different teaching practices. I will now examine each of these ideas in turn.

3.2.1. Form-focused instruction

Arguably one of the main methodological dilemmas in TEFL in recent decades is the amount of attention that teachers should devote to, on the one hand, communicative, meaning-focused instruction, and on the other hand, focus on linguistic forms (e.g. grammar). These concepts are connected —respectively— to implicit and explicit language learning, and while it is possible (and indeed desirable) to include both in a syllabus or lesson plan, «it is very difficult for learners to think about both form and meaning at the same time» (Willis & Willis, 2007, p. 16; see also Swain, 1985, p. 248). Consequently, classroom activities usually focus, at any given point, on one or the other.

Pure **focus on forms** (in the plural, as opposed to "focus on form") is very rare these days, as communication is understood to be a necessary and important part of language learning. Historically, this was the focus of methods which centred around developing accuracy, but disregarded aspects such as communication and fluency.

On the other end of the spectrum, a total **focus on meaning** is also rare, although some versions of CLT and TBLT advocate for an almost-entirely communicative, meaning-focused approach. In this kind of instruction, fluency and meaningful language production are prioritized over accuracy in language use. That being said, most implementations of TBLT do not actually preclude deliberate attention to linguistic forms. «There is certainly a place for a focus on specified forms in a task-based approach. But form should be subordinate to meaning and, for this reason, should come after rather than before a task» (Willis & Willis, 2007, p. 18). This prioritising can also mean bringing attention to certain language forms reactively, i.e. if and when they are needed, which can be done, for instance, through corrective feedback.

Many teaching approaches nowadays opt for a balance, a so-called **focus on form** (which is —perhaps confusingly— distinct from focus on forms). These approaches recognise that learners should focus predominantly on meaning (both semantic and pragmatic), while accepting that they also need to pay deliberate attention to forms in order to acquire language (Ellis, 2005).

On a theoretical level, focus on form is grounded on four important hypotheses:

- **Input hypothesis**. Formulated by Stephen Krashen as one of his five hypotheses about language acquisition, it states that language acquisition requires large amounts of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982). Clearly, this underlines the importance of meaning-focused input (listening and reading) in Second Language Acquisition (SLA).
- **Output hypothesis**. Developed by Merrill Swain in response to the input hypothesis, it introduces the idea of comprehensible output. Output is considered essential in language acquisition as it, unlike input, facilitates identifying gaps in one's linguistic knowledge (noticing/triggering function); trying things which can then be rejected or accepted based on success or feedback (hypothesis testing function), and using output to collaboratively solve language problems (metalinguistic reflective function) (Swain, 1985; Nation, 2007).
- **Interaction hypothesis**. First introduced by Michael Long, this hypothesis highlights the central role of communicative interaction in language learning through a process of negotiation for meaning, which is described as follows:

  > The process in which, in an effort to communicate, learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutor's perceived comprehension, thus provoking adjustments to linguistic form, conversational structure, message content, or all three, until an acceptable level of understanding is achieved (Long, 1996, p. 418).

- **Noticing hypothesis**. Proposed by Richard Schmidt, this is the idea that «intake is that part of the input that the learner notices» (Schmidt, 1990, p. 139), and therefore «one must pay attention to something before they can learn about it» (Attardo & Pickering, 2021). In other words, the conversion of input to intake requires deliberate, explicit attention.

An example of such a form-focused approach is Paul Nation's "Four Strands" model (Nation, 2007), in which it is proposed that meaning-focused activities (with equal weight being given to input and output) should take up about 75% of a course, while the remaining 25% should be dedicated to explicit instruction of language forms. Interestingly, this approach also places an unusual emphasis on fluency development, something that is not often addressed as a separate, specific part of syllabuses.

The present learning scenario is also designed with a focus on form. Accordingly, most of the time the students' attention is directed to meaning in communication, be it input (through listening and reading), output (through speaking and writing), or as a mix of both, i.e. communicative interaction.

3.2.2. Task-supported language teaching

This learning scenario is not meant to strictly meet the criteria that would make it TBLT, as it is not entirely designed around the use of tasks. Instead, tasks are introduced at certain points to support an otherwise non-task-centric design, a type of approach which has been called Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) (Ellis, 2024). This is useful as a middle ground for teachers who are unable to implement a fully task-based syllabus (e.g. due to established institutional practices), but who find merit in the idea that «the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom» (Willis & Willis, 2007, p. 1).

In my brief historical overview, I have described tasks as activities with a clearly defined, non-linguistic outcome based on a real-life need or situation. Alternatively, we can characterise tasks as «discussions, problems, games, and so on—which require learners to use the language for themselves» (Willis & Willis, 2007, p. 1). In fact, tasks have been defined by different authors in many (sometimes conflicting) ways. For example, views differ on whether a classroom task needs to correspond to a real-life target task, or whether a linguistic outcome means that an activity can no longer be classified as a task. Given this complexity, I have based my own understanding of what a task is on Rod Ellis' (2024) four criteria for determining whether a workplan is a task:

- The primary focus must be on meaning.
- There is some kind of gap (which requires conveying information, reasoning, or expressing an opinion).
- Learners rely mainly on their own linguistic and non-linguistic resources.
- There is a clearly defined communicative outcome.

Using these criteria, I have created some of the main activities in my lesson plan as communicative tasks, starting with "two truths, one lie" on the first session, and finishing with the final game-like task, where students use everything they have learnt to tackle the main challenge in the unit, i.e. critically analysing information in order to tell apart true facts from fake news.

3.2.3. Learner-centred teaching

Recent decades have seen a gradual shift from a teacher-centred classroom to an increasingly learner-centred model, where teaching practice is built around «learner needs, wants, and situations» (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 91).

Arguably, this shift has taken place in two stages, as «learner-centredness has always been at the heart of communicative language teaching, but instead of placing learners at the centre of our teaching, we now propose to place them at the centre of their own learning processes» (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. vi). This new approach to learner-centred instruction actually aligns with several ideas which long preceded it, such as Jean Piaget's constructivist views, in which every student is the protagonist of their own learning, and Lev Vygotsky's «sociocultural perspective, which emphasises the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning» (Liu et al., 2025, p. 10).

A more detailed definition of learner-centred teaching should include, as in the following example, an explicit recognition that all learners need to benefit from such an approach (regardless

of level of competence or personal circumstances, thereby establishing a link between learner-centredness and inclusivity):

> "Learner-centred" is the perspective that combines a focus on individual learners —their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs— with a focus on the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that promote the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners (McCombs and Whisler, 1997, as cited by Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 55-56).

Another important consideration in learner-centred approaches is the role of the teacher, who no longer acts as a knowledge-giver, but rather as a facilitator. The teacher is meant to provide the support and conditions needed for students to learn, i.e. to build their own knowledge and understanding.

In learner-centred teaching, lessons should at the very least be dynamic and participative. Once an activity or task has been introduced, learners ought to take centre stage. This includes being aware of how much the teacher talks compared to the students: «Teacher talk is the most commonly used teaching method, on average occupying at least 60% of most lessons [...]. Devoting 60% of a lesson to teacher talk is clearly far too much. Good teachers know when to shut up!» (Petty, 2009, p. 162).

CLT emphasizes **interaction** in order to facilitate communication, both among learners and between them and the teacher. William Littlewood argues that, among other benefits, this «emphasis on communicative interaction provides more opportunities for cooperative relationships to emerge», it «gives learners more opportunities to express their individuality in the classroom», and it «helps them to integrate the foreign language with their own personality and thus to feel more emotionally secure with it» (Littlewood, 1981, p. 94). Additionally, when teachers are placed in the role of "co-communicators", they are acting on an equal basis with the learners, which helps to break down tension or barriers between them (Littlewood, 1981).

When designing my learning scenario, I have endeavoured to make my lessons learner-centred by providing ample opportunities for students to engage with the English language directly (be it in the form of linguistic input or output) and to construct their own knowledge; by supporting student autonomy, and by encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning process. At the same time, I aspire to create a highly collaborative classroom environment while mostly staying within the three teacher roles mentioned by Nunan (2004, p. 67): «The first is to act as a facilitator of the communicative process, the second is to act as a participant, and the third is to act as an observer and learner».

That being said, a word of caution is in order. The literature contains frequent warnings about the risk of learners suffering a «teaching-style culture-shock» (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 146) when a new way of doing things clashes with their expectations in such a way that they end up feeling confused and frustrated:

> If the learners see the teacher as someone who should be providing explicit instruction and modelling of the target language, and the teacher sees him or herself as a facilitator and guide, then conflict may arise. In such a situation the teacher may need to strike a balance between the roles that she feels appropriate and those demanded by the students (Nunan, 2004, p. 67-68).

3.2.4. Feedback and corrective feedback

An essential classroom role that a good teacher needs to fulfil is that of providing feedback, including corrective feedback. In this section I will outline how I intended to approach these functions in my teaching while implementing the present learning scenario.

Despite the traditional and persistent emphasis on numeric marks, most of the feedback we teachers give our students takes places through spoken interaction during lessons. This feedback is extremely important, as it can build student-teacher rapport and influence the motivation, self-concept and self-esteem of learners. Knowing this, I deliberately try to make my feedback as positive and encouraging as I can, by explicitly recognising effort and progress even when a student's contribution or answer is not yet quite correct. Focusing on progress can be effective in helping learners of all levels to improve, which makes this approach a keystone of inclusivity:

> Care needs to be taken not to reward test scores or outcomes; it is the process and not the product of learning which needs to be at the centre, ensuring that every learner has the chance of a reward and not only the more able ones. (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 149)

Simply praising a student's participation or effort can make them feel valued, with unequivocally favourable results: «There is no harm in rewarding students in the form of encouragement: everyone benefits from praise, and sometimes during a task, learners need some positive encouragement to keep their engagement up and help them stay on task» (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 149).

Regarding **corrective feedback**, research has shown that explicit feedback is usually more effective than subtle techniques such as recasts, and should be employed especially when the initial use of those techniques results, as can often be the case, in a lack of uptake on the part of the student (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Significant errors (depending on the learner's level) should generally be corrected in such a way that the learner is able to, first, notice the problem, and second, repair the incorrect utterance, ideally by themselves (through elicitation or clarification requests), but if that is not possible, through other means such as explicit correction (either by the teacher or peers) or metalinguistic feedback. For more on types of corrective feedback and their effectiveness, see Lyster & Ranta (1997).

Ron Berger's views on feedback resonate with me because they are learner-centred and also take into account emotional aspects such as kindness and empathy:

> An essential starting point for critique and descriptive feedback in any classroom is ensuring that the guidelines *be kind, be specific, and be helpful* are the backbone of every class. Formal and informal feedback and critique flow from these. Safety and encouragement, as well as structure and clear learning targets, will set students up for success.
>
> Just about everyone has a feedback nightmare, a time when they felt hurt or judged by someone's feedback or criticism. Some students are particularly vulnerable, especially if they have not experienced much school success and have received many messages of negative criticism (both implicit and explicit). (Berger et al., 2014, p. 138).

Additionally, I find there is value in considering CLT's approach to feedback and error correction. As Littlewood (1981, p. 90) explains, «feedback provides learners with knowledge of

how successful their performance has been. The concept of success is, however, not absolute: it is determined by the focus of the activity». That is to say, success in a meaning-focused activity should be «judged on whether or not learners communicate successfully» (Willis & Willis, 2007, p. 5). For this reason, grammatical errors are usually corrected if the focus of the activity is on grammar, but not in meaning-focused communicative activities, because interrupting learners during such activities is considered disruptive to their "flow" (i.e. their focus on meaning) and because «the act of communicating in itself helps the language learning process» (Harmer, 2015, p. 157). Indeed, not all errors should be corrected, and sometimes interrupting fluent, effective communication to correct one mistake can be counterproductive. Unless an activity focuses on language forms or pronunciation, teachers need to exercise their judgement to determine which errors should be corrected and when.

3.3. Materials

When designing this learning scenario, I selected materials (news articles, texts, short videos) which I could use to create the different activities I had in mind. The choice of these materials was done on the basis of five criteria: relevance, authenticity, difficulty, quality, and accessibility.

Firstly, by **relevance** I mean not only that any material had to fit the activity and purpose for which I intented to use it (which was obviously the case), but also the fact that it needed to be current. As I have explained in my theoretical framework, this learning scenario deals with the rapidly changing ways in which news is produced and consumed, and so any material that was older than five or six years was bound to be rejected as too outdated. As a result of this priority, most news stories and headlines I used are from news stories published in the last few months. With videos about particular topics, where choices were more limited, date of publication was definitely a factor in my choice, but videos that are a few years old were still accepted if their content was deemed to be interesting and relevant enough to justify their use.

In the context of input for ESL learners, **authenticity** refers to the fact that the chosen (written or spoken) materials have been created for a real-life communicative purpose, as opposed to those specifically created for language teaching (Nunan, 2004). Authentic materials (sometimes also called *unmodified input* or *realia*) are a staple of CLT and TBLT, as they are the best possible reflection of real-life language use, and so they are used, whenever possible, in the design of communicative tasks (Richards & Rodgers, 2010). But even in more traditional, coursebook-based syllabi, the use of authentic materials is often recommended:

> It is essential that the data forming your learners' pedagogic corpus constitutes a representative sample of the language they will be using in their target discourse communities, in 'real life' situations. If the language of some of the texts and recordings from the class coursebook is over-simplified or unnatural (e.g. written to illustrate the use of one particular grammar structure), you should consider omitting these and supplementing your coursebook with reading texts and listening materials of a more authentic nature from other sources. (Tomlinson, 2011)

It needs to be acknowledged that incorporating authentic materials in TEFL may be challenging, especially with lower-level learners, as they are not tailored to the student's current level of proficiency. However, if we carefully consider our selection and use of these materials, there is good reason to think their benefits generally outweigh any potential challenges. For one, they help «connect language learning in class to life beyond the classroom» (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 14) by providing examples of real language use in meaningful contexts. Research has also shown (Sample, 2015) that authentic materials can increase motivation for students, because «they are real and provide the students interesting encounters with the target language; and secondly, they provide diversity to the classroom which the students desire as an escape from repetition» (Sample, 2015, p. 117). The main caveat here is that the choice of materials should not prove to be too difficult for a particular group of learners: when students in the same study were demotivated, **difficulty** was identified as the main cause (Sample, 2015). This means that difficulty also has to be considered when choosing and prioritising materials for classroom use. As a consequence, I decided not to use certain materials on account of their excessive difficulty; others were edited to make them shorter or simpler by cutting out some parts, while the rest of the text was left unchanged. Finding the right balance of difficulty while maintaining authenticity is key. Even authors who are critical of Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis often believe, like Krashen, «in the value of texts being slightly above the level of the students and in the possibility of acquisition of language whilst focusing on content» (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 145).

Authentic materials have never been so readily available, because «nowadays the internet offers virtually inexhaustible language» (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020, p. 14). Given this availability and their numerous advantages, «it is not a matter of whether or not authentic materials should be used, but what combination of authentic, simulated and specially written materials provide learners with optimal learning opportunities» (Nunan, 2004, p. 49).

For all of these reasons, when designing the present learning scenario, I endeavoured to include authentic materials that were not too difficult, but provided the right level of challenge for my B1-B2 students. Additionally, scaffolding was used to address potentially-problematic vocabulary before activities.

The **quality** of materials was also judged during their selection. This meant prioritising content from reputable sources, such as BBC News, CNN or the New York Times for articles, or the BBC and TED-Ed for videos.

Finally, **accessibility** was also considered. This was not a limiting factor for texts, because they were reformatted to make them easier to read (especially considering I had a student with dyslexia), but it was important when choosing audio. For listening activities, whenever possible, I opted for videos (multimodal materials), because in real-life situations, the spoken word is rarely separated from visual context, plus pragmatic elements such as body language are naturally a significant aspect of oral communication. Clear, adequately-paced narration was preferred, because even if it is usually possible to modify the playback speed, quality is best at the original recorded speed. Similarly, videos with captions were preferred to those that had no (or had only auto-generated) subtitles. These not only make the material accessible to students with hearing impairments, but the aural-visual association may enhance comprehension for all students, and facilitate the implicit learning of pronunciation.

To recapitulate, I used these five criteria to select materials that would best enhance my students' learning experience, after carefully considering different options, while keeping in mind Brian Tomlinson's advice:

> Ideally materials at all levels should provide frequent exposure to authentic input which is rich and varied. In other words the input should vary in style, mode, medium and purpose and should be rich in features which are characteristic of authentic discourse in the target language (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 14).

The types of materials selected for classroom use include:

- Written texts, mainly news stories and articles from different outlets.
- Worksheets with exercices or texts. These were custom-made for the present learning scenario, sometimes using texts and definitions whose sources are clearly indicated in each case.
- Short videos about the topics discussed (useful as listening practice and also to present visual examples of relevant concepts, e.g. deepfakes).
- Two surveys, at the beginning and the end of the unit. These included elements of self-assessment and reflection for students, as well as feedback for me to better gauge their motivation and engagement with the unit.
- Games, designed to foster active participation and spoken interaction. Examples include "two truths, one lie" in session 1 and "spot the fake news" on session 6. Even activities such as the one conducted in session 4, where students moved to different parts of the classroom to show and discuss their opinions, had several game-like features.
- A slideshow (PowerPoint presentation) was used in every session to highlight and better convey essential information, such as the topic, structure and goals of each lesson, keywords, or instructions for activities. Additionally, the slides provided visual support and included links to videos and websites for quicker access.
- Two rubrics I created for the purpose of assessing activities learning scenario (see Annex 2).

For the computer-based materials, the classroom's desktop computer is used, as well as a projector connected to it. Other, simple material resources are also needed, including blank paper (or pieces of paper) for several activities, and two signs with the words "AGREE" and "DISAGREE" which need to be put up on the walls in session 4. The students already have, and are responsible for bringing, some materials, such as pens and their personal laptop computer, which is briefly needed in session 5.

Finally, the last session requires a system for teams to vote on the veracity of news articles ("true" or "false"). Since using computers would have been more distracting and time-consuming, I opted to give each team a small whiteboard and a marker, which makes the voting process both quick and fun.

3.4. Design process

The present learning scenario was built from the initial intention of doing something that was out of the ordinary for a group of students who are mostly used to working with the coursebook. I wanted to build a learning scenario around an idea that was fresh, current, relevant, and interesting for most teenagers. I also wanted it to be competency-based, so that it would respond to current educational needs as reflected in the Catalan curriculum.

The topic of news (information) and fake news (misinformation) appeared to be more relevant than ever, especially for teenagers, because of their use of social media. Current public debate on AI and its (mis)use in journalism and politics could be woven into the discussion, as it is probably the latest major development when it comes to misinformation.

At the same time, critical thinking is a significant competency in the Catalan educational curriculum, mentioned as essential for transversal competencies[3] and as an important component of the specific competencies (particularly CE4 and CE6) of foreign language subjects (*Competències Específiques*, 2025). Moreover, my literature review confirmed that adolescents have been found by research to be both concerned about misinformation and generally overconfident in their critical thinking skills.

At a later stage, the different topics that would be addressed in each session were defined and sequenced to follow a logical progression. The different activities and tasks were developed with the goal of achieving a balance of the four main language skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) with occasional focus on formal aspects such as vocabulary or grammar. Most of the time was devoted to improving my students' English through communicative, meaning-focused activities, using both comprehensible input through authentic materials, and meaningful output. The reasons behind these choices have been justified in the previous section, so I will not insist on them here.

Despite completing the initial design of the learning scenario before starting its implementation, I tried to identify the successful and unsuccessful aspects of each lesson (through both self-assessment and mentor feedback) and made adjustments as needed. This allowed me to learn from mistakes and improve on my lesson plans (e.g. by making some activities more collaborative or learner-focused). I believe these changes resulted in a much better learning experience for my students.

3.5. Assessment

Students are continually assessed during the six sessions in different ways.

First of all, self-assessment and reflection on one's own learning (known as "assessment *as* learning") is introduced explicitly using the initial and final surveys, and encouraged throughout

[3] «Aquestes competències capaciten l'alumnat a desenvolupar-se en el món actual, volàtil, incert, complex i ambigu, globalitzat i digitalitzat. En aquest context són imprescindibles les habilitats vinculades al pensament crític, a la creativitat, a la col·laboració i a la comunicació» (*Competència Digital*, 2024).

the unit. Developing the capacity for honest self-assessment is crucial if we want students to take control and responsibility for their own learning and improvement, which they will never do «until they learn to be constructively critical of their own work» (Petty, 2009, p. 18). This is why «helping students understand where they currently are in the learning process and where they are going is what enables them to grow and is more important than getting it "right"» (Berger et al., 2014, p. 57).

Another non-traditional approach that I have employed is assessment *for* learning, where the teacher or students use assessment «as a tool to support improvement and further learning, rather than just a way to measure learning at a fixed point in time» (Berger et al., 2014, p. 10). In other words, the teacher's goal in this sort of evaluation is not to give a mark, but to make adjustments and adapt instruction to the real needs and progress of students, as I did on several occasions during the implementation of this learning scenario, in order to facilitate further learning. From the point of view of the teacher, assessment for learning requires an element of self-assessment, reflection and flexibility. For students, the key is having clear learning objectives and receiving feedback that is precise and encouraging, so they can adjust their learning strategies as needed to continue improving and progressing toward those objectives.

Both of these kinds of non-traditional assessment (sometimes called formative assessment) are necessary, because they help promote students' responsibility, self-reliance and motivation, while traditional assessment (grades and marks) «are not good positive reinforcers and can have the opposite effect» (Petty, 2009, p. 70). Examples of formative assessment given by Li et al. (2022) include «providing feedback that moves learners forward, activating students as instructional resources for each other, and activating students as owners of their own learning».

A more traditional kind of assessment (referred to as summative assessment or assessment *of* learning) also needs to be conducted, as it is required by educational institutions and legislation. During the teaching of the present learning scenario I took notes about each learner's effort, attitude, and participation during and after each session. At the same time, their language performance was assessed (and graded) in some activities, and a writing task was collected and marked. For both pronunciation and writing, bespoke rubrics were created and employed.

4. Learning Scenario

4.1. Contextualisation

4.1.1. Institut Montserrat Roig

The present learning scenario was implemented during my Practicum II at Institut Montserrat Roig (c/ Pau Alsina, 25, Barcelona). This is a public high school, offering secondary education (ESO and Batxillerat) to residents in the Camp d'en Grassot i Gràcia Nova neighbourhood. The area's socioeconomic profile consists of mostly working-class and middle-class families, with above-average levels of income and average immigration percentages (about 1 in 4 students come from immigrant families). In terms of their first language, most of the students are Catalan speakers or Catalan-Spanish bilinguals. Recent changes, however, point to an increasing number of students who have Spanish as their first language, as well as to a slight and gradual decrease in socioeconomic and income levels, which might be a reflection of more general social trends.

There are close to 85 students per level, divided into four groups for the two first years of ESO, and three groups after that (which allows the first two years to have a lower ratio of students per teacher). The total number of students is around 500, making it one of the largest high schools in the Gràcia district of Barcelona. On the flip side, the ratio of students with special needs is also comparatively high, and new (often newly-immigrated) students arrive frequently during the school year, which means that the available resources for helping them adapt to the new environment and teaching them basic Catalan (*aula d'acollida*) are usually at capacity. Notwithstanding the challenges facing the school, most of the students are motivated and willing to learn, and their relationship with teachers is generally rather good and productive.

The Foreign Languages department comprises six English teachers (one of whom doubles as the sole German teacher in the school). The department's planning generally follows the chosen coursebook for each group, and is primarily language-focused, mostly following a PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) approach in which individual lessons, as well as the whole syllabus, are structured around certain grammar points. The teachers nevertheless strive to introduce different activities to their lessons, and regularly encourage interaction and participation in an effort to motivate students.

Another significant aspect of the school's organisation is that English students, from 3rd ESO onwards, are split into Standard and High levels. The analysis of the implications of this grouping system (in terms of inclusivity, motivation, or results) is beyond the scope of the present work. In practical terms, however, this meant that I could only implement this learning scenario with either the Standard or High students, but not with both, since each is taught by different teachers at the same time. Actually, I was limited to choosing among the high-level groups, as my mentor does not teach any Standard groups in the 4th year of ESO.

All six sessions were conducted in classroom 27, which is more than spacious enough for 15 students. In this room a horseshoe (or U-shape) seating arrangement is generally used,

although the desks can be moved as needed (e.g. for exams). There is also room for students to stand up and walk around if an activity requires it. A teacher's desktop computer is also available, as well as a whiteboard which is also used as a screen for the projector. This facilitates the use of digital materials, such as videos or websites, in lessons.

4.1.2. Target group

The present learning scenario was put into practice in March and April of 2025 with a group of 4th-year ESO students (15-16 years of age).

The aforementioned division of English groups into Standard and High levels meant that I would have fifteen students in my classroom, all of them with an above-average level of proficiency. This explains why no one in the group had any substantial learning difficulties. One of the students did have dyslexia, although his level and grades in English were generally on a par with the rest of the group. The only adaptation that was usually necessary, therefore, was making sure he was given more time to finish exams or similar tasks. From my own observations of the group, there were at least a few students with an outstanding command of the English language, including in terms of fluency and pronunciation, while others were closer to the average for 4th-year ESO students. Overall, the level was between B1 and B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Motivation and general attitude were relatively good, albeit with differences among students. Four or five people were more easily distracted, often talking or otherwise not paying attention, so engaging them (or at the very least making sure they would not distract others) was a challenge. They all seemed to have friendly relationships with each other, and most of them were eager to participate, so I anticipated that any kind of group work would probably result in a productive learning experience.

4.2. Curricular aspects

This section is structured using the official template for a learning scenario, which can be found here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/14_y5layzEOVdVt3a2V0dExXOgnbYDsU2G0wjyJosOdg/. The text that is part of the template has been left in the original Catalan, although some elements that were not relevant to the present learning scenario have been removed (e.g. concepts that only apply to primary education). Direct quotations from the current Catalan curriculum are also in Catalan.

Learning Scenario

Títol	News and fake news: enhancing your critical thinking skills
Curs (nivell educatiu)	4th year of ESO
Matèria	Foreign Language (English)

DESCRIPCIÓ (context + repte)
Per què aquesta situació d'aprenentatge? Quin és el context?[4] Quin repte planteja?[5]

"News and fake news: enhancing your critical thinking skills" is a learning scenario to be implemented with 4th-year ESO students, in the English (Foreign Language) subject.

As I have amply shown in my theoretical framework, news and information are now more relevant than ever before, especially for adolescents in the context of their social media use. Recent research has found that young people are aware of (and concerned about) the dangers of misinformation, but at the same time they often tend to overestimate their own critical thinking skills, and have difficulty telling real news stories from false information.

In this context, the challenge at the heart of the present learning scenario is to develop the learners' ability to identify falsehoods and biases in the news they read. This challenge involves several aspects related to media literacy and critical thinking, such as increasing the learners' awareness of how news is created and distributed, and adopting a critical attitude to information (i.e. analysing what they read by asking questions about authorship, purpose, language, and so on).

[4] Context: conjunt de circumstàncies que expliquen un esdeveniment o una situació i que envolten un individu, un col·lectiu o una comunitat, etc.

[5] Un repte és un desafiament que sorgeix d'una pregunta, un problema, un cas, una polèmica, una recerca, un encàrrec, un projecte, un servei..., situat en un context. Resoldre'l implica mobilitzar sabers i connectar accions a partir dels quals es desenvolupen capacitats personals.

COMPETÈNCIES ESPECÍFIQUES DE LA MATÈRIA

Amb la realització d'aquesta situació d'aprenentatge s'afavoreix l'assoliment de les competències específiques de les àrees o matèries següents:

Matèria	Competències específiques
English (foreign language)	Competència específica 2: Comprendre i interpretar textos orals i multimodals, en la llengua estàndard, recollint el sentit general i la informació més rellevant, la seva forma i el seu contingut, per construir coneixement, formar-se opinió i eixamplar les possibilitats de gaudi i lleure.
English (foreign language)	Competència específica 3: Produir textos orals i multimodals amb coherència, claredat i registre adequats, atenent les convencions pròpies dels diferents gèneres discursius, i participar en interaccions orals variades, amb autonomia, per expressar idees, sentiments i conceptes, construir coneixement i establir vincles personals.
English (foreign language)	Competència Específica 4: Comprendre, interpretar i analitzar, amb sentit crític i diferents propòsits de lectura, textos escrits i multimodals, reconeixent el sentit global, les idees principals i secundàries, identificant la intenció de l'emissor, reflexionant sobre el contingut i la forma i avaluant-ne la qualitat i fiabilitat, per tal de construir coneixement i donar resposta a necessitats i interessos comunicatius diversos.
English (foreign language)	Competència específica 5: Produir textos escrits i multimodals amb adequació, coherència i cohesió, aplicant estratègies elementals de planificació, redacció, revisió, correcció i edició, amb regulació dels iguals i autoregulació progressivament autònoma, i atenent les convencions pròpies del gènere discursiu triat, per construir coneixement i donar resposta de manera informada, eficaç i creativa a demandes comunicatives concretes.
English (foreign language)	Competència específica 6: Cercar, seleccionar i contrastar informació procedent de diferents fonts de manera progressivament autònoma, avaluant-ne la fiabilitat i pertinència en funció dels objectius de lectura i evitant els riscos de manipulació i desinformació, i integrar-la i transformar-la en coneixement, per comunicar-la, adoptant un punt de vista crític, personal i respectuós amb la propietat intel·lectual.

COMPETÈNCIES ESPECÍFIQUES DE LES COMPETÈNCIES TRANSVERSALS

Amb la realització d'aquesta situació d'aprenentatge s'afavoreix l'assoliment de les competències específiques transversals següents:

Competència transversal	Competències específiques
Competència Ciutadana (CC)	CC3. Analitzar i comprendre problemes ètics fonamentals i d'actualitat, considerant críticament els valors propis i aliens, i desenvolupant els seus propis judicis per afrontar la controvèrsia moral amb actitud dialogant, argumentativa, respectuosa i oposada a qualsevol tipus de discriminació o violència —incloent-hi la violència masclista, LGTBI-fòbica, racista o capacitista— o fonamentalisme ideològic.
Competència digital (CD)	CD1. Fer cerques avançades a Internet atenent a criteris de validesa, qualitat, actualitat i fiabilitat, seleccionant-les de manera crítica i arxivant-les per recuperar, referenciar i reutilitzar aquestes recerques respecte a la propietat intel·lectual.
Competència personal, social i d'aprendre a aprendre (CPSAA)	CPSAA 4. Fer autoavaluacions sobre el propi procés d'aprenentatge, buscant fonts fiables per validar, sustentar i contrastar la informació i per obtenir conclusions rellevants.

OBJECTIUS D'APRENENTATGE I CRITERIS D'AVALUACIÓ

Objectius d'aprenentatge Què volem que aprengui l'alumnat i per a què? CAPACITAT + SABER + FINALITAT	**Criteris d'avaluació** Com sabem que ho ha après? ACCIÓ + SABER + CONTEXT
1. Understand oral and multimodal texts about news, misinformation and critical thinking to gain new insight and be able to reflect about these topics (CE2)	1. Extract and analyse the global meaning and main ideas of oral multimodal texts about news, misinformation and critical thinking. (CA 2.1) 2. Interpret and evaluate the content and discoursive traits of texts in such areas as interpersonal relationships and social communication media. (CA 2.2)
2. Understand, interpret and analyse written and multimodal texts about news and media, comprehending their global meaning, identifying the author's intention, reflecting on their form and content, and judging its quality and reliability (CE4)	1. Understand and interpret the global meaning, structure, most relevant information and author's intention in written and multimodal texts about news and media. (CA 4.1)
3. Produce adequate written and multimodal texts with coherence and cohesion, using the conventions of the relevant discursive genre to respond to particular communicative needs. (Llengua estrangera, CE5)	1. Write short texts with acceptable clarity, coherence, cohesion, correctness, adapting to the proposed communicative situation and textual typology, i.e. news headlines and stories (CA 5.1)

SABERS

Amb la realització d'aquesta situació d'aprenentatge es tractaran els sabers següents:

	Saber	Matèria
Les llengües i els seus parlants		
1	Anàlisi i valoració d'aspectes socioculturals i sociolingüístics d'ús comú relatius a la vida quotidiana, les condicions de vida i les relacions interpersonals; convencions socials d'ús comú; llenguatge no verbal, cortesia lingüística i etiqueta digital; cultura, normes, actituds, costums i valors propis de països on es parla la llengua estrangera.	English (Foreign Language)
Comunicació		
2	Context — Anàlisi dels components de fet comunicatiu: grau de formalitat de la situació i caràcter públic o privat; distància social entre els interlocutors; propòsits comunicatius i interpretació d'intencions; canal de comunicació i elements no verbals de la comunicació, en situacions d'aula, de la vida quotidiana i dels mitjans de comunicació.	English (Foreign Language)
3	Gèneres discursius — Anàlisi, argumentació i ús de models contextuals i gèneres discursius d'ús comú en la comprensió, producció i coproducció de textos orals, escrits i multimodals, breus i senzills, literaris i no literaris: característiques i reconeixement del context (participants i situació), expectatives generades pel context; organització i estructuració segons el gènere, la funció textual i l'estructura.	English (Foreign Language)
4	Processos — Aplicació d'estratègies d'ús comú per a la planificació, execució, control i reparació de la comprensió, la producció i la coproducció de textos orals, escrits i multimodals, com ara reformular, comparar i contrastar, resumir, col·laborar, debatre, resoldre problemes i gestionar situacions compromeses, identificar informació rellevant, realitzar inferències, determinar l'actitud i el propòsit del parlant, en situacions comunicatives informals, semiformals, no formals i formals.	English (Foreign Language)
5	Reconeixement, anàlisi i ús discursiu dels elements lingüístics — Anàlisi i aplicació de convencions i estratègies conversacionals d'ús comú, en format síncron o asíncron, per iniciar, mantenir i acabar la comunicació, prendre i cedir la paraula, demanar i donar aclariments i explicacions, reformular, comparar i contrastar, resumir, col·laborar, debatre, etc.	English (Foreign Language)
Reflexió sobre la llengua		
6	Aplicació d'estratègies i tècniques per respondre eficaçment i amb nivells creixents de fluïdesa, adequació i correcció a una necessitat comunicativa concreta tot i les limitacions derivades del nivell de competència en la llengua estrangera i en les llengües familiars, en comunicacions orals, escrites i multimodals.	English (Foreign Language)
7	Ús d'estructures morfosintàctiques i de lèxic adequat, tot reflexionant sobre els processos comunicatius implicats, amb la utilització del metallenguatge específic.	English (Foreign Language)

DESENVOLUPAMENT DE LA SITUACIÓ D'APRENENTATGE

Quines són les principals estratègies metodològiques que es preveuen utilitzar? Quins tipus d'agrupament realitzarem? Quins són els principals materials que necessitarem? Etc.

This learning scenario is designed to be implemented with a group of about 15 students (the group is split in two, with these being the higher-level students). The classroom is large enough, and each student has a chair and an individual desk. These desks are arranged in a horseshoe shape around the whiteboard (where the teacher usually is) so that everybody can see everyone else easily, without having to turn or move.

All four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are approximately balanced. There is a mainly meaning-focused communicative approach for most activities, but explicit focus on language forms is also planned at different points (and it can additionally be introduced reactively through corrective feedback or in response to students' questions).

Collaborative learning: students frequently work in pairs or small groups. Many activities are then shared with the whole class, and participation and exchange of ideas is encouraged.

Simple materials will be needed (paper, worksheet copies for all students). For the last activity five small whiteboards (each with a marker) will also be used.

The teacher's computer is used to project the presentations. The students may use their computers when allowed by the teacher if an activity requires it.

Two short surveys are conducted (at the beginning and at the end of the learning scenario) to gauge the students' motivation and attitudes towards the topic. This is not intended as any sort of quantitative research, but as a resource to guide and adjust the teacher's practice.

Learning goals and a lesson outline are shared with the students at the beginning of each session, in order to give them a clear sense of purpose. The topics and contents of different sessions are also explicitly connected.

ACTIVITATS D'APRENENTATGE I D'AVALUACIÓ

Activitat	Descripció de l'activitat d'aprenentatge i d'avaluació	Tempo-rització
Activitats inicials *Què en sé?*	**Session 1. What do you know about fake news?** The topic is introduced and students fill in a survey. After some pre-listening vocabulary work, students watch a short video on the topic, then answer comprehension questions in writing. A game of "2 truths, 1 lie" is played, with students moving around the classroom to talk to classmates.	1 hour
Activitats de desenvolupament *Què estic aprenent?*	**Session 2. Where do you get your news?** The topic is introduced using the results of the initial survey. Then students complete a table in pairs identifying sources of information/news they use, and issues of accessibility and reliability are discussed. Students watch the TED-Ed video "How to choose your news" and the concept of media bias is discussed. Extra time is dedicated to news-related idioms. **Session 3. How to write a news story** The topic is introduced. A text about how news articles are written is read aloud (one paragraph per student). Using the given guidelines, each student writes a made-up headline (a few are shared with the class) and then a brief news story. Students share their stories in groups of 3-4 and help each other to finish or improve them. They can finish writing at home if needed. **Session 4. How AI changes things** The topic of AI and the concept of "deepfake" are introduced. A short video is watched, explaining deepfakes and providing examples. Students read a text about AI beauty filters in social media, then answer questions in writing. Next, students reflect on the teacher's questions by moving to different sides of the classroom depending on their answers to given questions and discuss the topic with their classmates.	3 hours
Activitats de síntesi i estructuració *Què he après de nou?*	**Session 5. Critical thinking** Students create a word wall ("What words or ideas would you use to explain what critical thinking is?"). They watch a short video on the topic, then reflect on how to critically analyse information using a social media post/photo as an example. The second half of the class is devoted to identifying different kinds of misinformation. Students watch a video and then match concepts to their definitions.	1 hour
Activitats d'aplicació i transferència *Com sé que ho he après?*	**Session 6. Can you spot the fake news?** As a conclusion to the learning scenario, students play a game in teams of three people where they face the challenge of being able to identify fake news. The teacher presents a series of news stories and every team has to decide whether each story is true or false. A point is awarded for every right answer. At the end, the team with the most points is the winner. After the game, students complete a final survey (including self-assessment). Brief wrap-up, including reflection on unit contents and goals. Any questions or comments are answered.	1 hour

BREU DESCRIPCIÓ DE COM S'ABORDEN ELS VECTORS[6]

The present learning scenario mainly involves the following vectors (based on Els Sis Vectors, 2025):

Vector d'aprenentatges competencials (competence-based learning):

The learning process follows a logical didactic sequence: exploration of previous ideas, introduction of new content, structuring of knowledge, and application to problem solving, based on the challenge and goals of the scenario. The lesson design permits a style of classroom management based on dialogue and interaction. The unit is meant to provide transferable competential learning, which can be used in different situations and contexts. The proposed activities are productive (not merely reproductive or repetitive), and foster analysis, debate, problem posing and problem solving, thus requiring the use of abilities of varying cognitive complexity. Through these, I am promoting deep, positive and meaningful learning experiences through which students can remember what they learn for a long time.

Vector de la qualitat de les llengües (quality of language learning):

This learning scenario uses an approach to language teaching that combines a mostly communicative approach with moments of explicit focus on language. The time and attention given to each communicative skill is balanced and the use of authentic, recent and often multimodal materials ensures high-quality language models and social and contextual relevance of texts. As a teacher, I am fully aware of the importance of my linguistic and communicative competence, as a model and an example for my students. For each activity, I identify the associated linguistic requirements in order to provide adequate scaffolding.

Vector de ciutadania democràtica i consciència global (democratic citizenship and global conscience):

Lesson design and classroom management are organised in such a way as to foster learner participation and decision-making, and to make sure students have a central role in their learning process. With this learning scenario I encourage students to reflect on social realities (both local and global) from a democratic perspective, including ethical considerations and such values as equality and justice. One of my goals is for students to adopt reasoned, personal opinions by helping them develop critical thinking skills which, with practice, can be transferred and applied to many different contexts and situations. The proposed activities involve posing questions to onself, questioning one's own beliefs, adopting a critical stance regarding decision-makers and those in power, and analysing how their interests and ideologies come into play in their decision-making. Another aspect within the framework of this vector is the introduction of current, controversial topics that can be interesting for students to reflect upon.

[6] 1. Aprenentatges competencials. 2. Perspectiva de gènere. 3. Universalitat del currículum. 4. Qualitat de l'educació de les llengües. 5. Benestar emocional. 6. Ciutadania democràtica i consciència global.

MESURES I SUPORTS UNIVERSALS[7]

Assessment for learning (formative assessment) will be used to better serve the needs of individual students. Assessment as learning (self-assessment) is encouraged throughout the learning scenario so that students become more aware of their learning process. In turn, this can help them take ownership of their learning. Individualized support can be provided by the teacher, taking advantage of the low number of students in the classroom.

Collaborative work (in pairs or small groups) will also help students with different levels of linguistic proficiency achieve the goals of the learning scenario, as this is a form of scaffolding that allows the students to work in the zone of proximal development (ZDP). The different activities are designed with personalization and flexibility in mind, so that a certain degree of adaptability can easily be implemented for different students.

All of these measures contribute to inclusivity, which is especially important considering one of my students has dyslexia. In his case, time flexibility (e.g. allowing extra time to finish exams or tasks that involve significant amounts of reading) has been identified by the teachers as the most effective measure. Knowing this, and in the spirit of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), I have endeavoured to integrate time flexibility as a universal measure, as I believe more students in the group could benefit from it, particularly for the most demanding writing task in my learning scenario. In practice, this is done, firstly, by letting students help each other to finish their writing in small groups; and secondly, by allowing them to hand in their writing tasks on the next Monday if they have not been able to finish them.

Font choices in written materials are also very relevant for dyslexic students, but as a clearer, larger font is beneficial to everyone in the classroom, this has also been incorporated as a universal measure: the use of a 12-point, sans serif font with 1.5 line spacing for classroom materials is one of the recommendations I followed (British Dyslexia Association, 2025).

[7] Les mesures i els suports universals són els que s'adrecen a tot l'alumnat. Han de permetre flexibilitzar el context d'aprenentatge, proporcionar als alumnes i als docents estratègies per minimitzar les barreres d'accés a l'aprenentatge i a la participació que es troben a l'entorn, i garantir la convivència i el compromís de tota la comunitat educativa.

MESURES I SUPORTS ADDICIONALS[8] O INTENSIUS[9]

Quines mesures o suports addicionals o intensius es proposen per a cadascun dels alumnes següents:

Alumne/a	Mesura i suport addicional o intensiu
Student with dyslexia	Reading on the subject of dyslexia led me to realise useful measures and adaptations could be made universal, as they have the potential to also benefit other students. For this reason —and adhering to the principles of UDL—, time flexibility, peer support and the adaptation of written materials have been applied to all students as described above.

In this group there are no other students that require additional or intensive measures. Instead, I will focus on giving each of them as much individual support as possible to make sure they succeed in achieving the learning goals.

[8] Les mesures i els suports addicionals s'adrecen a alguns alumnes. Permeten ajustar la resposta educativa de forma flexible, preventiva i temporal, focalitzant la intervenció educativa en aquells aspectes del procés d'aprenentatge que poden comprometre l'avenç personal i escolar.

[9] Les mesures i els suports intensius són específics per als i les alumnes amb necessitats educatives especials, estan adaptats a la seva singularitat i permeten ajustar la resposta educativa de forma extensa, amb una freqüència regular i, normalment, sense límit temporal.

4.3. Detailed lesson plans

This section presents a detailed plan of each of the six sessions in the present learning scenario. It is a faithful reflection of the actual work done in the classroom during its implementation. Learning objectives for each session are included, as well as descriptions of every activity and information about the time, groupings and resources needed.

The classroom materials (worksheets, rubrics and surveys) used can be found in the Annexes.

Session 1

Level	ESO 4 H (B1-B2)	**Topic**	What do you know about fake news?

Learning objectives

- Understand the topic, structure and goals of the learning scenario.
- Reflect on one's previous knowledge about the topic.
- Learn about key concepts, including "news", "fake news" and "misinformation".
- Understand the main points and key vocabulary (e.g. *to spot, to mislead*) using a short video about the topic.
- Start developing one's critical thinking, including an analytical attitude towards potentially misleading information.

Tasks and activities

Time	**Groups**	**Description**	**Resources**
5'	Whole class	INTRODUCTION. The teacher presents a news article, telling them it is from that morning, and asks the students what they think about it. After a short discussion, the article is revealed as fake. The teacher introduces the title and topic of the unit, and tells the learners that before continuing, they should answer a short survey.	PPT slideshow for session 1 (link)
5'	Indiv.	Each student answers the initial survey to examine their ideas and expectations about the unit.	Initial survey
5'	Whole class	Present the structure and goals of the unit. Explain it will last for 6 sessions and that the last day there will be a game where, in teams, they will have to tell apart fake news from true news stories.	PPT slideshow for session 1 (see link above)
5'	Whole class	Discussion of initial ideas. The teacher asks the class: ▪ What is "news"? How do we use the word? (explain our definition and grammatical use) ▪ Do you get false information on social media? ▪ Do you stop to think if what you read is true/false? ▪ What is misinformation? What is fake news?	PPT slideshow for session 1 (see link above)

13’	Whole class	VIDEO. We are going to watch a video, but first we will look at words and expressions that may be difficult. Using the worksheet and ppt, ask about the words, make sure the students understand them (scaffolding). Video introducing the concept of fake news (2:59): https://www.bbc.com/news/av/stories-51974040 Watch it twice.	Worksheet 1 PPT slideshow for session 1 (see link above)
10’	Indiv. / Whole class	COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS. After the second time, students answer some comprehension questions from the provided worksheet. Correct them with the whole class.	Worksheet 1
12’	Groups of 3-4	PLAY 2 TRUTHS, 1 LIE. First, everyone writes 3 sentences about themselves: 2 are true, one is a lie. Then students stand up and move around the classroom presenting their sentences to others, to see whether they can tell which one is false. This introduces the central concept of critically evaluating information to spot falsehoods.	PPT slideshow for session 1 (see link above) 15 pieces of paper
Total 55’	-	-	-

Session 2

Level	ESO 4 H (B1-B2)	**Topic**	Where do you get your news?

Learning objectives

- Develop awareness of the different sources from which one receives news.
- Think about different sources of news/information and their differences in terms of accessibility and reliability (trustworthiness).
- Understand the main ideas in a short video on how best to choose one's news.
- Understand the concept of (media) bias and reflect upon its implications.
- Reflect on one's own news choices and attitudes.
- Learn (or review) the necessary language for the video and discussion, including key vocabulary and expressions (e.g. *media, mass media, news outlet, trust*).

Tasks and activities

Time	**Groups**	**Description**	**Resources**
8'	Whole group	Introduce the topic of choosing your news sources. Take a look at the graphs showing the results of the Initial Survey. Most of the class gets their news from: ▪ Whatsapp (family or friends) ▪ Online news sites ▪ Instagram ▪ TV Based on these results, ask the class: —Do you think you are well informed?	PPT slideshow for session 2 (link)
10'	Pairs	In pairs, complete the given table about different news sources and their accessibility / reliability (write ACCESSIBLE and RELIABLE on the board)	Worksheet 2
7'	Whole class	Students discuss their answers: ▪ Which is more accessible? ▪ Which is more reliable? ▪ How reliable are the news you read/watch? Ask "Why does this matter?" (Because awareness of risks means we can pay attention and ASK QUESTIONS—use critical thinking).	Worksheet 2
20'	Whole class	Ask the class: —What is the best way to choose your news? Watch the video "How to choose your news" (4:48): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-Y-z6HmRgI	PPT slideshow for session 2 (see link above)

		After watching this TED-Ed video twice, use the ppt presentation to summarize its main ideas with the class.	
7’	Whole class	What is media bias? Introduce the concept and use the ppt presentation to help students answer the questions.	PPT slideshow for session 2 (see link above)
3’	Indiv.	Hand out the worksheet about news-related idioms, which will be corrected in next Monday’s session.	Worksheet 2
Total 55’	-	-	-

Session 3

Level	ESO 4 H (B1-B2)	**Topic**	How to write a news story

Learning objectives

- Learn a selection of common idioms related to news and information.
- Briefly practice reading aloud and pronunciation.
- Learn about news articles as a discursive genre (structure, style, etc.).
- Learn specifically about the main conventions of news headline writing in English.
- Be able to write a news article (including a natural-sounding headline) in English.

Tasks and activities

Time	**Groups**	**Description**	**Resources**
8’	Whole class	Today’s topic, activities and goals are introduced. The Idioms worksheet (which we could not finish on session 2) is corrected. Any questions are answered.	PPT slideshow for session 3 (link) Worksheet 2
10’	Whole class	The teacher hands out Worksheet 3, “How to write a news story”. Each student reads one sentence aloud. A rubric is used to assess their interventions.	Worksheet 3
5’	Indiv.	After reading “How to write news headlines”, everyone writes a made-up headline (exercise 1). A few students read their headlines to the class.	Worksheet 3
25’	Indiv.	Now is the time when students will experience how to write a news story. They do Exercise 2. SCAFFOLDING: Dictionaries can be used and the teacher will be there to help (no AI use is allowed).	Worksheet 3
7’	Groups of 2-3	In small groups, each student reads their news story to the rest, who suggest improvements (ZPD + peer assessment). Students who have not finished their writing can do so at home. The writing must be handed in by next Monday, as it will be assessed by the teacher.	
Total 55’	-	-	-

Session 4

Level	ESO 4 H (B1-B2)	**Topic**	How AI changes things

Learning objectives

- Learn the basic language and concepts used in discussions of AI and its impact on news production and dissemination.
- Reflect on the nuances (advantages and disadvantages) of the debate surrounding AI use, especially in the context of news and social media.
- Understand two articles about AI use in social media (particularly "beauty filters").
- Reflect on the topic by answering questions, giving one's opinions first in writing, then orally.

Tasks and activities

Time	**Groups**	**Description**	**Resources**
8'	Pairs	Introduce the topic. Ask: What is a deepfake? In pairs, students discuss these questions: ▪ Do you think it's a good use of technology? ▪ What is a positive example of an AI deepfake? ▪ What is a negative one?	PPT slideshow for session 4 (link)
12'	Whole group	Watch a video about deep fakes, which further explains the how they are created and used, and provides several examples: *How to spot deepfakes and AI-generated images* (3:17) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7akzhpx0EIU	PPT slideshow for session 4 (see link above)
20'	Indiv.	Reading comprehension about the use of "beauty" filters in social media (particularly TikTok) which use AI to change a user's appearance. After reading, students answer the questions in writing.	Worksheet 4
15'	Whole group	The whole group shares their answers by moving around the classroom. The teacher has them stand up and walk to opposite labelled ends of the classroom ("Agree" and "Disagree") or somewhere in between, depending on their position regarding each of these statements: 1. I have used these filters. 2. There are advantages to using these filters. / Using these filters can be a good thing. 3. These filters can be harmful to people's mental health and damage their self-esteem. 4. When we use these filters, we become fake. 5. I believe I can use these filters and still maintain a healthy body image. 6. I can tell if an image or video is a deepfake.	PPT slideshow for session 4 (see link above) Two signs ("Agree" and "Disagree")

		After each question, the teacher asks someone in each group to briefly elaborate.	
Total 55’			

Session 5

Level	ESO 4 H (B1-B2)	**Topic**	Critical thinking

Learning objectives

- Reflect explicitly about the concept of critical thinking: what it means, how it can be put into practice and how we have already been using it in past sessions.
- Reflect explicitly on the use of English-language entertainment media as a useful tool to improve one's English.
- Understand the main ideas in two short videos, the first about critical thinking and the second about different kinds of misinformation.
- Apply critical thinking (by asking questions) to analyse a social media post which presents a fake image as true information for political gain.
- Learn about and distinguish between different types of misinformation.

Tasks and activities

Time	**Groups**	**Description**	**Resources**
12'	Whole class	The topic and goals of the lesson are introduced. Students use their computers to create a Mentimeter word wall entitled "What words or ideas would you use to explain what critical thinking is?"	PPT slideshow for session 5 (link) Laptops (for students)
12'	Whole class	Introduce video and explain why watching videos is a great way to learn English: ▪ Do you watch videos on YouTube? Daily? ▪ Do you watch them in English? (you should!) ▪ Enjoy TV series, movies, games… in English! Students watch a video about critical thinking (2:34): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eEBuqwY-nE Watch it twice.	PPT slideshow for session 5 (see link above)
12'	Whole class	Students consider a social media post by Elon Musk, showing an AI-generated image of Kamala Harris (which he presented as a true photo), during the 2024 US presidential election: Speaking: What kind of questions should you ask? ▪ Language: objective or sensationalist? ▪ Is the aim to provoke an emotional response? ▪ Is the image/video suspicious of being fake? What are they trying to *do* or accomplish? Goal?	PPT slideshow for session 5 (see link above)
7'	Whole class	FAKE NEWS vs. MISINFORMATION - VIDEO	PPT slideshow for session 5 (see link above)

		Now we are going to watch another short video about what fake news is and what it isn't (other kinds of misinformation) (3:24): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JMyxROfkLM	
12'	Pairs, whole class	After watching the video, students complete the worksheet "Can you tell these apart?" to learn about different kinds of misinformation. The exercise is corrected and any questions are answered.	Worksheet 5
Total 55'			

Session 6

Level	ESO 4 H (B1-B2)	**Topic**	Putting it to the test: Spotting fake news

Learning objectives

- Put into practice everything that we have learnt by analysing news articles and deciding whether they are true or fake.
- Read and understand different news stories and headlines about a variety of topics. Use teamwork and peer support to better comprehend and analyse them.
- Realise that, even when using critical thinking, it is often hard to be sure whether information is true and reliable.
- Reflect on one's progress during the learning scenario (self-assessment).

Tasks and activities

Time	**Groups**	**Description**	**Resources**
5'	Whole class	The final activity is explained and prepared: We are going to play a game in teams of three people where students will face the challenge of being able to tell true news from fake news.	Small whiteboards and markers for teams to write "true" or "false" on
38'	Whole class (in groups of 3-4)	Play the game. Different news stories are shown one at a time using the projector (some true, some fake). Each story is read aloud by a student. Every group discusses whether the story is true or false and then all five groups show their answers at the same time. For every story they correctly identify as true or false, the team gets one point. (The teacher tallies the points on the board). At the end, the team with the most points is the winner.	PPT slideshow for session 6 (link)
10'	Indiv.	Students answer the final survey.	Final survey
2'	Whole class	Wrap-up: The contents and goals of the unit are briefly recapped. Students are encouraged to continue developing their critical thinking skills. Any comments or questions are answered.	
Total: 55'	-	-	-

5. Results and Discussion

In this section I will focus on the actual implementation of my learning scenario, of which I was able to teach all six sessions. The development of each session will be briefly described, with its strengths and weaknesses (e.g. time and classroom management, response from students). I will then present the student feedback from the final survey, and finally I will evaluate these results on the basis of a reflection about my own performance during my didactic intervention.

5.1. Sequential description of the intervention sessions

Session 1 (Tuesday, March 25, 8:15 am)

The initial response of the students was very positive. They knew me, and I knew each of them by name, as I had been carefully observing their English classes for a while. They had not been told that I would be teaching them, but of course, learning that a new teacher was introducing a learning scenario was quite out of the ordinary and exciting. They would not be using the coursebook for two weeks, and there would not be an exam (as they made sure to ask within the first five minutes). As this was right after the end-of-term examinations, there was an audible sigh of relief across the classroom. It needs to be said that I, this being my first day, was quite nervous.

I quickly realised that, at least for some of them, the topic would be right up their alley. When I showed them the first (fake) news story without any context, some of my students immediately started asking questions and doubting its veracity. The fact that they used the words "fake news" before I ever did proved that I had chosen the right topic, one that they already knew about and were interested in. When I introduced the unit, students said they found lots of false information on social media on a daily basis, and were very emphatic about it. The initial survey confirmed my impression that they had a genuine interest in the topic and wanted to know more.

Before watching the video, scaffolding was provided as planned, by reviewing key words and their meanings. After watching the video twice, I explicitly asked about its difficulty, and students answered it was right, neither too easy nor too hard. The comprehension exercise was corrected smoothly and I answered a couple of questions, judging by their attitudes and responses that things were going well. Student-teacher interactions seemed to be relaxed and productive.

I presented the final game ("two truths, one lie"), which most students had never played. A few of them took a minute to stand up (it was their first morning class and they were still sleepy), but everyone ended up actively participating and having fun. It was a very successful communicative task, as students were engaged in meaningful conversation in English (surprisingly, I heard none of them use other languages), and they seemed to really enjoy it. In the context of my learning scenario, it served to activate their critical thinking and start analysing potential misinformation. After about ten minutes of this dynamic, the bell rang and the session ended. I had been concerned about time management —as it is one of the aspects of teaching that can only be mastered through experience—, but for this first session it turned out to be perfect, as we were able to do exactly what I had planned.

Session 2 (Thursday, March 27, 12 pm)

In this session I was able to complete the lesson plan (except for the extra activity about idioms, which was explained for them to do at home), but it could have been better. Most of the students paid attention and some were very active and participative, but others were not engaged and talked during the class. I now realise that the topic (media choice and bias) was one of the most demanding of any session (in terms of both concepts and language), and I also found it was one of the hardest to present in a more dynamic, active way.

The planned approach relied on participation and interaction, but only some of the students were actively participating and showing interest. Since it was a rather difficult topic/approach for the average student, I ended up talking too much, and the class took a not-so-learner-centred turn, which was far from what I had intended.

Another factor that had a significant impact on student attention and attitude was fatigue. It was a Thursday afternoon, and most of the group was simply tired. Afternoon classes were consistently harder in terms of classroom management (not just for me, but for other teachers I observed as well), as the students' attention and attitudes became poorer with tiredness.

That is not to say that I was not responsible, at least in part, for a suboptimal class dynamic. Knowing what I now know, I would definitely have planned the class differently. A better, more active way to approach this topic might have been, for example, to have them work in pairs to compare two different articles about the same story, withholding their sources and making them identify each one's bias. One would be left-wing (e.g. CNN) and the other would be clearly right-wing (e.g. FOX NEWS). We could have pointed out each one's assumptions and ideological implicatures (using simpler words of course).

The lesson I learnt from this, to avoid talking so much or unwillingly becoming the centre of the class, is to make participation and interaction necessary by design: instead of depending on their willingness to participate, let them learn by *doing* things, i.e. use communicative activities or tasks (as I did in other sessions), which work much better. As Willis & Willis put it (the emphasis is mine):

> When we offer the learners formalized activities [...] to facilitate their participation [...] we are engaging in task-based learning. *Instead of relying on the learners' spontaneous interest and reaction*, we are designing activities which will help promote interest and interaction. (Willis & Willis, 2007)

Overall, in my view, this was my least successful session, but I can say I did learn much from it. Objectively, many aspects of it went quite well, as my mentor remarked. In particular, I had no problems with classroom management or time management. Almost everyone paid attention to the video activity and found it interesting, and more than a few students enjoyed the class and actively participated. But the fact that part of the group seemed distracted and passive left me worried, and led me to reflect on ways to improve my future sessions by making them more inherently active, learner-centred and participative.

Session 3 (Monday, March 31, 12 pm)

This was the first of three sessions that my mentor could not attend, as she was on sick leave for the whole week.

I greeted my students by name as they came into the classroom, as I did in every session. I think it is important to establish a connection with each of them as individuals, to make it clear that I see (and care about) each of them separately, and not just as a group. This is always a good way of creating teacher-student rapport, but it was even more so in this case, as we had so little time. I am glad to say we were able to generate a positive relationship built on mutual respect and trust.

In this session, I immediately noticed that they were quite excited and chatty. It was an afternoon session on a warm spring day, and I realised it would have been easy for things to go wrong, in particular regarding classroom management. I had learnt my lesson from session 2, so I immediately gave them active work.

To prepare the writing activity and learn how news stories are written, each of my students read a paragraph from the worksheet out loud. Even though these were short fragments of text, I wanted to measure everyone's pronunciation and fluency, two aspects of EFL that are often underrepresented in practice. To do that, I used a rubric I had prepared (see Annex 2), which made it very quick and easy to assess their performance. During this Master programme's courses, I have grown to appreciate the value of rubrics for both teacher assessment and student self-assessment, and I fully intend to continue using them in my teaching.

Writing a made-up headline (using given guidelines and models) took a few minutes, as some students found it hard to come up with ideas they liked, despite my encouragement and suggestions. Eventually, though, they were all able to do it, and they really enjoyed sharing their headline with the rest of the class. Many in this group displayed great creativity and had the most fun with creative activities, while a few others struggled more with these, so I was there to provide help when they needed it.

The remainder of the class was dedicated to the main writing activity (built on and scaffolded by the previous activities) in which everyone had to pen a made-up news article. I instructed them to use any tools needed (dictionaries, online resources on their laptops), but I explicitly said not to use ChatGPT (or any similar AI tool), as they would learn nothing from that. I told them that I trusted them, and that if anyone used those tools I would be able to tell anyway, so there was no point. I am glad to report that this approach worked, as none of them used it, and I am certain their work was their own. They were told they could finish the text at home if they did not have enough time, and that I would assess their texts and give them a mark.

They worked well, some talking to each other, others highly focused, but everyone stayed on task and my impression is that the session had worked much better than the previous one. I was able to communicate the goals and structure of the class well, so at any point everyone knew what they had to do. Of course, there were different paces, and some students required more help from me while others worked very autonomously, but I believe it was a positive learning experience for all. At the end, they asked for more time to finish writing at home, since German exchange students would be staying with them for a few days, and they would have little free time. I said they could hand it in until next Monday at the latest, and they were happy with that arrangement.

Session 4 (Tuesday, April 1, 8:15 am)

This early-morning session was marked by the absence of my mentor and the presence of another teacher (from a different department) supervising the class. Five German exchange students also attended and participated in the session. This was quite unexpected —to me, at least— and meant that I was a few worksheets short and I would need to make more copies.

I introduced the topic of AI use in news and social media, as well as the concept of a deepfake, which students did not know. They watched the short video with interest and attention, as it provided good examples and tips to identify AI-generated images and video. This was evidently a topic they found engaging, so motivation was high for the whole session. It is worth mentioning that my initial lesson plan included watching two different short videos, but previous experience with the group and a better understanding of their actual interests and competency level led me to believe those were not the ideal materials. That is why, before the class, I selected a different video, more current and illustrative, which I am convinced resulted in a better experience and higher-quality learning for my students.

Next, after explaining the reading activity, I left them for a minute with the supervising teacher while they were reading the text individually, and I was able to make five more copies for the exchange students. Within the allotted time, everyone finished reading the text and answering the questions.

The second part of that activity involved standing up and moving either side of the room (where I had put up the “agree” and “disagree” signs on the walls), depending on their opinion or answer to my questions. Students were mostly interested and collaborative, with only three exceptions (a couple were distracted talking, one said he was lazy and didn't want to stand up). On the flip side, most were very active and participative, with certain students answering many questions and sharing very interesting points and opinions. Even a student who so far had seemed rather passive and unenthusiastic articulated an interesting opinion when asked. Over the course of the activity, everyone’s attitude and participation improved, which I take as a sign that it was a huge success. Participative students became even more so, and those who were usually less engaged ended up speaking and contributing their ideas in a positive way.

The bell rang shortly after the last question, so there had been no problems with time management, despite this being one of the areas I was more worried about. Everything was well tied up, the response from students was very encouraging and I thought this had been my best class up to that point. Again, I reflected on the importance of keeping students active, doing things that are interesting to them, and not just listening to me for any longer than strictly necessary. Still, there were a few who, despite the topic and activities being interesting for most of the group, did not even want to engage with what we were doing. How to motivate them? How to reach them? That was the question I kept pondering, even though, rationally, I know that it is quite impossible to reach everyone all the time. At the very least, however, I need to know that I tried my best.

At the end of the session, the supervising teacher volunteered some useful feedback. She was impressed with the session and the group’s level of English, and provided a few classroom management tips, which I thanked her for.

Session 5 (Thursday, April 3, 12 pm)

Students were noticeably tired for this session, not only because of the afternoon time slot, but also because they had been hosting the German exchange students, sightseeing with them, and not sleeping much. Notwithstanding this obstacle, the session developed rather smoothly and I was satisfied with the results.

My lesson plan involved bringing together everything they had learnt so far to reflect more explicitly on what critical thinking entails, specifically regarding news and social media. I also wanted to help my students distinguish between different kinds of misinformation, which I knew could have been developed into a separate session, but I had to include here due to time limitations.

I started by introducing the session and its goals, and reminding them that next Monday would be our last session, where we would do a game-show-like activity to see how well they could tell true information from fake news. I also reminded them that Monday was the last day to hand in their news articles.

To activate prior knowledge, we started with an activity where students created a word wall using mentimeter.com on their laptops. I asked them to contribute words and expressions they associated with critical thinking, and these were projected onto the whiteboard for all to see in real time. They were all very participative (computer-based activities tend to be highly motivating). After a couple of minutes and some very good ideas, they started realising they could write anything they wanted —each other's names, inappropriate words, and so on. I laughed it off, told them that was enough, and concluded the activity. I had fully anticipated this, and I was ready for it: profanity filters were activated, although these cannot be edited and there was no filter for Catalan, so I expected they would try to have some fun with it. I was able to stop the activity and remove anything inappropriate. What was left were some good ideas and contributions, as well as concepts from previous sessions, which led to an interesting discussion.

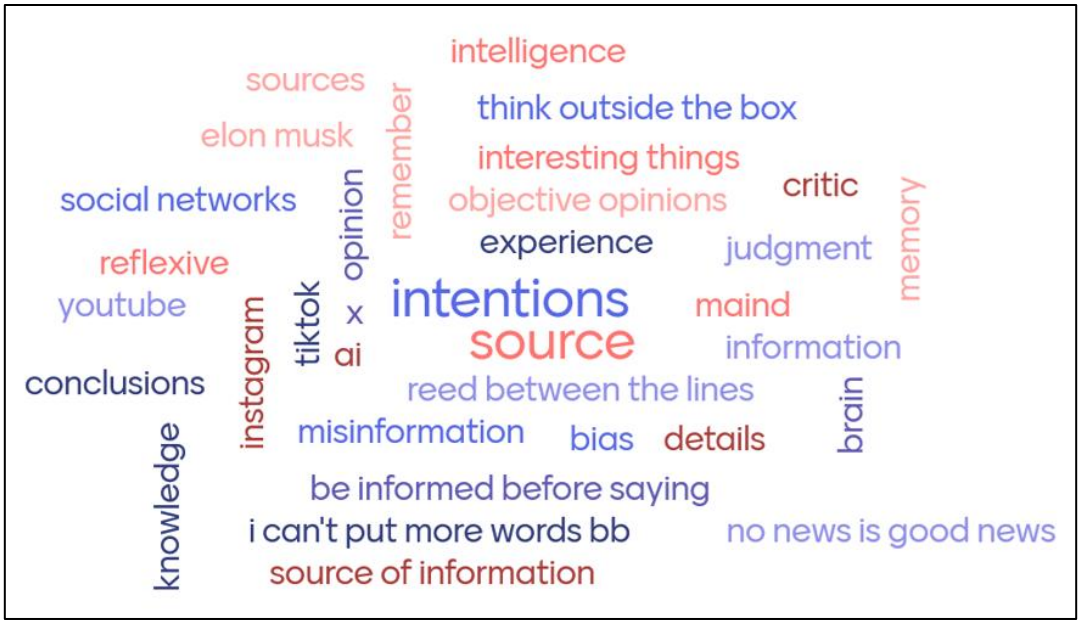

FIGURE 1. WORD WALL CREATED BY THE STUDENTS

This served as a link to our next activity, a video on the topic of critical thinking, what it is and how it can be used by asking questions, which was a central idea for the session and the whole learning scenario. They watched it with interest twice, and applied many of its ideas to the image I then showed them for discussion: a high-profile social media post in which an AI-generated image of a political rival was presented as true fact and used for fearmongering in the context of the 2024 US presidential election. With little input on my part, students were able to establish an interesting discussion among them, asking questions about the text, image, context and motivations of the post. I had intended this part of the session to be shorter than it ended up being, but since they were obviously interested, and producing meaningful language, I let them talk about it for a good ten minutes. It was a beautiful classroom dynamic, one which I was really proud of.

I took a minute to insist on the value of watching YouTube videos (which most of the class did daily) in English, and to also take advantage of films, TV series and videogames they like to improve their English. Then, as our last activity, students completed the worksheet on different kinds of misinformation. I was satisfied with this session, especially considering how tired my students were.

I also noticed that, with every class I taught, I was becoming more confident and relaxed. I was in my element, and, as a result, I was able to better connect to the group and to react to their learning needs, as well as to any unforeseen circumstances that came up in class. I was learning to adapt on the spot, which I am convinced is a necessary skill to have in order to become a good teacher.

Session 6 (Monday, April 7, 12 pm)

After a week of unfortunate absence, my mentor was able to return for the last session of my learning scenario. After greeting my students, they expressed their sadness at this being the last day that I would be teaching them. If nothing else, I am convinced that they truly enjoyed the topic and some of the activities of this learning scenario, as well as the change of pace it offered.

The class began with me collecting the news articles my students had written. Some I already had, and a few said they had forgotten to do it. In the end, eleven out of my fifteen students handed in their work. I would later give each of them a mark using an assessment rubric (see Annex 2). All eleven students had pass marks (the lowest being a single 6 and the highest being a single 10), with an average of 8.36. If we include in the calculation the four students who failed to submit their work, the average mark was 6.13. I attribute these nonsubmissions to the fact that maybe these four students did not take the assessment of the learning scenario seriously enough (due to working in a different way, with a different teacher, not having a traditional exam, and the end-of-term assessment period being months away). Be that as it may, the majority of the group who did submit their texts displayed significant effort, creativity, and—in some cases—an outstanding level of proficiency in English, which I found encouraging.

Then I explained the final game-like task, which they seemed very excited about, especially when I handed each of the five three-person teams a small whiteboard and marker to write their votes on. During my intervention, students were consistently motivated and excited by any change

from their usual routine in terms of method, activities or materials. This very noticeable "newness factor" makes me think they would generally benefit from more variation in their classes.

When everything was ready, I started showing the news stories one by one, and they considered each one, and discussed their ideas with their group. One student even asked if he could stand up to examine the image more closely for any signs of AI-generation. I was proud to see that they were observant, tried to analyse every story, and seemed to learn from their mistakes (many groups became more sceptical and thoughtful as the game progressed). For every story presented, each group wrote "true" or "false" on their board and they all showed it at the same time. I tallied the results on the board, with one point being awarded for every correct answer.

Finding it hard to gauge how much time the activity would take, I had prepared 17 news stories, of which we were able to do 10. In the end, the teams with the most correct answers were teams 2 and 4, tied to 8 points. This was indeed a good result, but the main point was not to win or be competitive at all (although most students enjoyed that aspect of it). Rather, it was to analyse news articles through the lens of critical thinking, and to realise how difficult this can be, so that they would be encouraged to keep practising and progressing in their critical thinking journey.

During the whole activity every one of my students was highly engaged and participative, and it was plain to see that they all had a great time. After congratulating them for the good work, I gave them the last ten minutes of class time to fill in the final survey, in which seven out of the fifteen students highlighted the final session as the high point of the unit, writing that the "Spot the fake news" game was what they enjoyed the most. Before the bell rang, I was also able to wrap up my intervention by properly saying goodbye.

They said they had learnt much from me, and I let them know I had learnt much from them as well. It was quite an emotional ending, and to me the whole session was an enormously successful conclusion to what, in general had been a positive and fruitful learning scenario.

5.2. Results of the final survey

To complement my own evaluation, I will now present the results of the final survey, conducted in session 6 of my teaching intervention and designed to obtain qualitative feedback from my students. Table 1 shows how many of the fifteen respondents gave each of the possible answers in the 4-point Likert scale.

These results show the group's general satisfaction with the learning scenario. Students overwhelmingly found it interesting and motivating, while being more critical of their own work during the sessions. Their perceptions of their own improvement are mostly positive, but show a certain ambivalence, reflecting the fact that noticeable progress in critical thinking is hard to achieve in such a short time.

TABLE 1. RESULTS OF THE FINAL SURVEY

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This unit was interesting			7	8
This unit was motivating	1		13	1
This unit made me think	1		8	6
I'm happy with my work in this unit	1	6	6	2
I'm happy with what I learnt in this unit		2	11	2
This unit has helped me to spot misinformation and fake news	1	3	9	2
This unit has helped me improve my critical thinking		4	9	2

In addition to this numerical data, some of my students included written comments on their final surveys, which reflect their kind and positive attitudes towards me and the learning scenario (all quoted *sic*):

> [I particularly liked] trying to spot the difference between the real images and those that have been AI created. It was very good, you did a great job!
>
> The videos were interesting and I learned a lot.
>
> [I particularly liked] all the activities and similarities there were between one class and another one. Everything was so well prepared and organised. Amazing job!
>
> I really liked the diferent dinamics we did this last classes. They were diferent that what we are used to do. So I enjoyed it.
>
> [I particularly liked] the way the teacher teaches.
>
> I think that this unit have been very interesting because fake news are an important thing in our society.
>
> You are a very good teacher.

Finally, seven out of the fifteen students mentioned the final session as the high point of the unit, writing that the "Spot the fake news" game was what they enjoyed the most. This reinforces the idea that game-like, active group activities are highly effective for motivation and participation.

5.3. Critical reflection and evaluation

Having described the strengths and weaknesses of each session during my teaching intervention, as well as the feedback from my students, I would like to present the conclusions I have drawn from the whole implementation of this learning scenario.

Considering all six sessions, there were highs and lows (as there are bound to be), but I noticed a clear upward trend in my performance. Session 1 was easy: because everything about it was new, students were naturally interested and attentive. Session 2 was the one I was least satisfied with, but the one from which I learnt the most. Session 3 was a sort of turning point: I used my previous mistakes to improve my teaching, and from that moment on I would make adjustments to my lesson plans based on my experience and learning from previous classes. This resulted in the rest of the sessions yielding steadily better results, as I gradually understood what worked and what did not. I am very happy with how much I was able to learn in just six sessions.

There were certain aspects that made things easier for me. Certainly, the group's relatively small size and its generally positive attitudes and motivation meant that it was easy to help my students in their learning process. The physical space (the classroom) and IT resources available were sufficient, so I was able to conduct every activity without any technological limitations. Thoughtful preparation and planning on my part also contributed to these classes being majorly successful.

Areas where I still have much room for improvement include classroom communication, classroom management, and fostering motivation and participation. These are aspects with which many experienced teachers struggle, and which can only be improved through a combination of practice (teaching experience), active self-assessment, and an open-minded willingness to modify one's approaches when they do not yield the expected results.

For **classroom communication**, the main challenge I face is to be able to adjust to the rhythm of my students. Unchecked, I have a tendency to speak too fast and repeat too little. I believe this was one of the problems in my first couple of sessions, but through practice and observation I quickly realised that I needed to slow down and frequently check for understanding by asking specific questions (wh-questions are usually much more effective than yes/no questions). I understand that learning something new requires a different, slower pace, and that awareness has resulted in a deliberate effort to adapt how I speak to the level and needs of my students. On a related note, I quickly learnt that any instructions given in class (for activities, tasks or homework) need to be crystal clear, and repeated several times—ideally, they should also be given in writing. As teachers in 2025, we have to deal with very short attention spans, so no matter how many times we explain something, we can almost be sure there is someone who was not following.

My **classroom management** style definitely gravitates more towards empathy and negotiation, trying to understand my students and their motivations and behaviours. This approach produced mostly positive results during my Practicum. That being said, I know there are certain situations and transgressions that require a firmer approach (which I would describe as authoritative rather than authoritarian), or even sanctions, such as expulsion from class. During my Practicum, I never felt the need to expel any of my students, and I would do that only as a last resort or in extreme cases. I find that other measures, such making a student sit somewhere else, are usually effective and preferable. In my view, expulsion constitutes an admission that the

teacher cannot address the problematic behaviour and its underlying causes. At best, it is a deferral of the problem, not a solution to it, and would later require a conversation with the student, a tutoring session to address the situation (something that is never done as far as I could tell). The closest I have come to such a measure was telling a couple of overexcited students who were disrupting the class "Come on, don't make me expel you. I don't want to, but I will have to if you don't calm down". The behaviour subsided, and no further action was needed.

Of course, the disposition and attitudes of most students at Institut Montserrat Roig were good, and I know that classroom management can be much more of a challenge in a more socioeconomically complex environment. If or when I find myself in that situation, I will need to be ready and learn to adapt, which does not necessarily mean having to forgo the basic tenets underlying my style of classroom management. I would describe this style as rooted in authenticity (being myself), kindness (truly caring about my students) and empathy (understanding them and connecting to their needs). At the same time, a balance must be struck between support/kindness and setting clear limits (as the authority figures and role models we are), which is something our students really need —and often secretly appreciate— because they are at the point in their lives when their value system and moral compass are being defined. In this regard, I find being a teacher is not so different from being a parent. Given all these considerations, the main challenge for my future development is to continue learning to apply this approach to classroom management with different groups and situations, overcoming difficulties and pitfalls and becoming more comfortable and self-assured in my classroom-managing role.

Time management was one of the aspects I was more worried about going into my Practicum, but it ended up being easier than expected, as I quickly understood that some of my lesson plan drafts tended to be overambitious and was able to adjust them to better fit the real time available. I planned each class to be 55 minutes, which is what they last on paper. The schedule, however, leaves no time between any two classes, which is not realistic at all, as teachers (and often students) need to change classrooms. This results in the actual time available for each session being closer to 45-50 minutes.

I also learnt that one cannot underestimate individual differences in the pace at which students work. When doing a listening exercise, for instance, some students had already answered every comprehension question after one listen, while others had not started writing anything even after watching a video twice. This is why I believe that careful consideration of time in my lesson planning is absolutely essential for a truly inclusive teaching practice. Furthermore, I realised that having students write anything (even a few sentences) takes quite a long time, often more than I had anticipated. Even after accounting for individual differences, this is a general fact that I will have to keep in mind to improve my future lesson plans.

Understanding how much time is required for each activity takes practice and experience, but I found it is quite uncomplicated to adjust a lesson plan as it progresses. The approach I ended up adopting (which proved very effective) was trying not to be too ambitious with the number of different activities in a single class, while always keeping one or two extra activities ready in case I needed them.

The kinds and variety of activities/tasks I provided worked well in general, with more active, game-like activities being the most conducive to student motivation and participation.

Communicative activities in pairs or groups provided learning opportunities that were equally enjoyable and productive for students.

On the flip side, I learnt that debates and similar activites, such as asking for opinions, are only effective insofar as learners are willing and able to participate. To be clear, willingness may be affected by their attitude, motivation, tiredness, and other factors, while ability refers to whether they have an opinion or idea to share and are able to articulate it, which may depend on the choice of topic, the level of conceptual or linguistic difficulty, and the exact wording of the questions posed. All of these factors make it highly challenging to use this kind of activity successfully with all but the most highly-proficient, highly-motivated students.

6. Limitations of the teaching intervention

As regards the limitations of my learning scenario and teaching intervention, there are a few considerations I would like to make.

In terms of duration, a six-session learning scenario is on the short end of the spectrum. I decided to limit that duration to maximise my chances of being able to teach it in its entirety, instead of implementing only a fraction of what I had designed. It turned out that was the right decision, as anything longer would have been impossible to put into practice. At the beginning of my Practicum II period, students were busy with end-of-term projects and exams, and so the beginning of my didactic intervention had to be delayed until the end of March. Then, before March 11 (the last day before the Easter holidays, and the end of my Practicum) students had two full days of *competències bàsiques* examinations, plus several planned activities, such as orientation sessions for post-compulsory education. Such a hectic schedule meant that I was lucky enough to be able to teach all six sessions, and there would have been no time for anything longer.

Of course, had I been able to devote more classroom time to the topic, I could have further developed it by going into some of its aspects more deeply, and working on more practical examples with my students. Some ideas that had to be left on the cutting room floor included more practical analysis of real news articles, further work on journalistic language, and a think-pair-share activity where students practised being able to distinguish a news article from an opinion piece.

It has to be acknowledged, however, that developing critical thinking and media literacy are long-term endeavours, which no single unit, project or learning scenario can accomplish by itself, regardless of its extension. That is precisely why, in the current curriculum, these are considered transversal competencies, meant to be approached and built upon from different subjects over years. All in all, I believe this learning scenario did a good job of being a concise introduction to the main ideas and elements of what is an important and pressing topic in our current social environment—and is becoming more and more so.

To overcome these limitations, it would be interesting to link this learning scenario to other, related interventions by different teachers. This collaborative approach would make it apparent to students that developing their own critical thinking is indeed an ongoing, interdisciplinary endeavour, and an important goal in their education.

The competency-based approach and emphasis on communication of the present learning scenario meant that the formal elements of language (such as grammar) were not as central as my students were used to, which could be perceived as a limitation. Grammar and vocabulary, however, were not absent from my lessons. Instead, specific forms and lexical items were addressed in anticipation of (or in response to) my students' real needs when dealing with comprehensible input (written texts and audiovisual materials) and meaningful communicative interaction.

7. Conclusion

This work has presented the entire process of creation of a learning scenario, «News and fake news: enhancing your critical thinking skills», from the initial vision to its implementation with a group of fifteen students.

I started by developing a solid theoretical framework, where the central concepts of my work were defined, discussed and contextualised by establishing connections to related fields of study and the contributions of recent research. Then, in section 3. Methodology, I detailed every aspect of my methodological approach and pedagogical principles (that is to say, why this learning scenario was designed the way it was), including its materials and assessment. The actual classroom materials used can be found in the Annexes.

The learning scenario itself was detailed in section 4, preceded by a contextualisation of the school and student group. It included every curricular aspect (using the official template) and the lesson plans for each of the six sessions.

Finally, I presented the results of the implementation of the learning scenario, with student feedback and my own critical evaluation, followed by a description of the limitations of my teaching intervention.

All things considered, I believe that I have been able to integrate everything that I have learnt in this MA programme in order to successfully design and implement a learning scenario that is well-grounded, coherent, and competency-based. It responds to the current educational demands of the curriculum and, at the same time, it was adjusted to the needs, competency level and interests of my students.

I am well aware that I have a long way to go in my professional development as an educator, since I believe any process of learning and improving is never perfectly completed. Instead, it is a lifelong journey —one that, for teaching, I have just started. I need to continue on that journey, as I still have much to learn and improve on, but I believe that I am approaching the challenge with the right attitude and a growth mindset. Hopefully, these will help me to, one day, become the good teacher that I know I can be.

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Annex 1. Surveys and Worksheets

This annex contains the different classroom materials that can be printed and handed to students. They are presented in the order in which they are needed in the learning scenario, starting with the Initial Survey for session 1 and ending with the Final Survey used in session 6.

For worksheets, their numbering is shown at the top of the page, and corresponds to the session they are used in (e.g. Worksheet 3 is needed for session 3). Since these worksheets are usually two-sided, a page with no such indication is the continuation of the same worksheet as the previous page, and is intended to be printed on the back of the same piece of paper.

Initial survey

1. Today we begin a unit called “News and fake news: enhancing your critical thinking skills”. How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The topic sounds interesting				
I already know some things about this topic				
I want to know more about this topic				
I would like to develop my critical thinking skills				
I would like to be able to identify fake news and misinformation				

2. How often do you…?

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Every day
Read / watch the news				
Share news on social media				
Think critically about the news you read or watch				

3. How often do you get your news / information from…?

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Every day
TikTok				
Facebook				
X				
Instagram				
WhatsApp (family, friends…)				
Other social media				
Online news sites				
TV news				
Print media (newspapers…)				

Fake news and how to spot it

1. Before watching the video, let's take a look at some words and expressions:

to mislead	Make someone believe something that is not true.
to spot	See or notice (usually by paying attention).
source	Where something comes from.
to double-check	To examine something to make sure it is correct.
hints	Clues or information that help you answer a question or solve a problem.
license plate	A sign with numbers and letters on a vehicle, used to identify it.
billboard	A very large board for advertisements, usually on the side of a road.
placard	A sign with a message written on it, carried by people when protesting.
looting	Stealing from shops during a violent event.
riot shield	A protection used by riot police.
doing the rounds	Circulating, going from person to person.
reverse search	An online search starting from an image, to find where it was used.
rule of thumb	A general rule (not exact or strict, but an approximation).
on a regular basis	Regularly, often.

2. After watching the video, answer these questions:

1. "It's good to always be sceptical" means it is good to...

a) trust the news.
b) question everything.
c) understand what you read.
d) be well informed.

2. What is a "loaded term"?

a) A word with strong connotations that can provoke an emotional response.
b) A word that is considered offensive.
c) A word that has many different meanings.
d) A word that everyone agrees should not be used, because it is misleading.

3. When considering information you read online you should...

a) Check who has shared it.
b) Check who has posted it.
c) Check the language for sensationalism or loaded terms.
d) All of the above.

4. "Social media platforms **are fraught with** misleading images and memes". What does this mean?

a) These platforms **dislike** misleading images and memes.
b) These platforms **include many** misleading images and memes.
c) These platforms **earn money from** misleading images and memes.
d) These platforms **are protected from** misleading images and memes.

5. How can you tell if an image or video is real (and not taken out of context)?

a) Look for signs or any written text.
b) Find the date of the image or video.
c) Look for signs of an AI-generated image or video.
d) All of the above.

6. Which of these could mean that a social media user is a bot (not a real person)?

a) An account with many daily posts but no interaction with other users.
b) An account with very little activity.
c) An account with many posts but no followers.
d) An account with only a few posts but millions of followers.

Where do you get your news?

Complete the following table about different news sources:

NEWS SOURCE	**It is easy to access** (technology, cost…)	**It is reliable** (it has little or no misinformation)	**This is how I access news**
TV News	☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree	☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree	☐ Every day ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never
Social Media	☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree	☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree	☐ Every day ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never
News sites (online)	☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree	☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree	☐ Every day ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never
Newspapers (print)	☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree	☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree	☐ Every day ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never

Idioms & expressions

Consider these idioms related to news and information and complete the sentences:

bad news travels fast	Bad news circulates quickly (or more quickly than good news).
be bad news	To be unpleasant, undesirable, or unwelcome.
be in the loop	To be well-informed; to have information that is not generally known.
be old news	To be considered no longer interesting or important.
be out of touch	To lack up-to-date information.
be up to date	To have the latest information or methods.
breaking news	Something that is currently occurring or developing, or that has just happened.
hear (something) through the grapevine	To hear it informally or unofficially, as a rumour.
keep (someone) posted	To keep them informed about the latest news on a subject.
no news is good news	You can assume that all is well if you have no information to the contrary.
read between the lines	To discover a meaning or purpose that is not obvious or explicit in a piece of writing.
think outside the box	To think creatively or in an unconventional manner.
this is news to me (or someone else)	I (or someone else) did not know this.

1. Steve is _____. We broke up, and I've been seeing someone else for months.

a) old news b) in the loop c) breaking news d) reading between the lines

2. Are you telling me there is an exam tomorrow? _____!

a) I'm up to date b) No news is good news c) I'm in the loop d) This is news to me

3. I _____ that the final exam will include pronunciation.

a) thought outside the box b) heard through the grapevine c) am up to date
d) am out of touch

4. To solve this problem you need to _____.

a) keep me posted b) be old news c) think outside the box d) be out of touch

5. I know you're meeting Julia tomorrow. Good luck, and _____.

a) keep me posted b) be up to date c) this is news to me d) bad news travels fast

6. Do not trust Adam: he's _____.

a) news to me b) up to date c) in the loop d) bad news

(Definitions and example sentences adapted from oed.com)

Worksheet 3

How to write a news article

It is important to distinguish between news stories, opinion pieces and editorials. **News articles (also called news stories or news reports)** should not contain opinions, only facts.

Opinion pieces present the writer's opinion. An **editorial** is a special kind of opinion piece written by the editors of a news outlet. It represents the position of that outlet about a topic.

Features of a news article

Whether it's local, national or international, writing articles on important events is a useful skill to learn. Where to begin when you're writing the news article?

First, you need some news. There has been a break in at this house. The only witnesses are the family. The burglar has eaten their food and destroyed some furniture.

A good reporter will start by finding out the facts. **What happened? When? Who was involved? Where? Why?**

Once you have sorted all of your notes and organised the facts, you're ready to write the article.

Every good news article needs a **headline**. Something attention grabbing: 'Bears Blame Blonde for Burglary.'

Very nice. Everyone loves alliteration in a headline. The same letter or sound at the beginning of each word.

Your **first paragraph** should summarise and describe what happened: 'In the early hours of this morning, a burglar broke into the home of the three bears. Police are looking for a blonde-haired suspect.'

Use your notes to write additional paragraphs and give your reader more detail about what has happened.

You might want to add quotes from your witnesses, using quotation marks.

You should write in a formal way in the third person using pronouns like he, she, it or they.

A well written article will help those who know nothing about the event understand what happened.

Don't forget to add your name to the article, but leave out your personal opinions. Stick to the facts. The what, when, who, where and why.

(Text adapted from https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z2gk9qt#z2xxfdm*)*

How to write a news headline

- ✓ **Headlines are short, accurate and specific**

- ✓ **The present tense is generally used**
  World's oldest person Tomiko Itooka dies aged 116
  Chilean president makes historic trip to South Pole
  Rising seas displace tens of thousands in Papua New Guinea

- ✓ **The infinitive form of verbs (to + verb) is used for <u>future actions</u>**
  Convention to create jobs
  Jimmy Carter to be honored at Washington funeral
  London Heathrow to resume some flights after day of global chaos

- ✓ **Articles (a, an, the) are often omitted**
  South Korean court issues arrest warrant for President Yoon Suk Yeol

Exercises

1. Write a made-up news headline. You can make it about yourself, a topic of interest, an event (real or not)... anything! Use the tips and examples above.

2. Write a made-up news report. You can use the following headline "**New law to ban all homework**", write a new one, or use your headline from exercise 1 (try to write at least 100 words).

Worksheet 4

AI-based 'beauty' filters

TikTok to block teenagers from beauty filters over mental health concerns

Robert Booth, UK technology correspondent — Wed 27 Nov 2024
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/nov/26/tiktok-to-block-teenagers-from-beauty-filters-over-mental-health-concerns

Teenagers are facing wide-ranging new restrictions over the use of beauty filters on TikTok amid concern at rising anxiety and falling self-esteem.

Under-18s will, in the coming weeks, be blocked from artificially making their eyes bigger, plumping their lips and smoothing or changing their skin tone.

The restrictions will apply to filters that change children's features in a way that makeup cannot. Comic filters that add bunny ears or dog noses will be unaffected. The billion-user social media company announced the changes during a safety forum at its European headquarters in Dublin.

The effectiveness of the restrictions will depend on people using the platform under their real age, which is not always the case.

There has been widespread concern that the beauty filters –some provided by TikTok, others created by users– have resulted in a pressure on teenagers, particularly girls, to adopt a polished physical appearance with negative emotional repercussions. Some young people have described how after using filters they found their real face ugly.

Is that really me? The ugly truth about beauty filters

Matilda Boseley — Sat 1 Jan 2022
https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/jan/02/is-that-really-me-the-ugly-truth-about-beauty-filters

Popping a beautifying filter on the TikTok video she was filming seemed harmless to Mia. It made it look as though she had done her makeup, took away the hint of a double chin that always bothered her, and gently altered her bone structure to make her just that bit closer to perfect.

After a while, using filters on videos became second nature – until she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror one day and realised, to her horror, she no longer recognised her own face.

"I just felt so ugly… It's a very scary moment," she says.

“When you’ve got that filter up all the time … you almost disassociate from that image in the mirror because you have this expectation that you should look like that. Then when you don’t, the self-destructive thoughts start. It’s quite vile the way that you then perceive yourself.”

Live, augmented reality filters on photo- and video-based social media platforms including TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat aren’t new but they have evolved from silly hats, puppy dog ears and comically enlarged features to more subtle beautifying effects that may not be immediately obvious to other users.

As well as adding makeup, many of the popular filters that have crept into app libraries also change the face’s proportions, generally to fit female, European beauty standards, with thinner faces, smaller noses and plump lips.

There isn’t yet a full body of research on the psychological effects of these filters but Dr Jasmine Fardouly, a body image expert from the University of New South Wales, says a study she conducted last year suggests the more unattainable the beauty standard that young people are exposed to online, the more harmful it can be…

“It’s promoting a beauty ideal that’s not attainable for you,” she says. “It’s not attainable for anyone, really, because nobody looks like that.

Everybody’s faces are being made to look the exact same way. […]

Answer the following questions:

1. Have you ever used one of these “beauty” filters? If so, how did it make you feel?

2. Are there any advantages to using these filters?

3. Do you agree that they can be harmful and damage people’s self-esteem?

4. Do you think it is possible to maintain a healthy body image using these filters?

Worksheet 5

Can you tell these apart?

Not all kinds of potential misinformation are fake news.
Match each word to the appropriate description:

satire/parody	**false context**	**hoax**	**clickbait**	**impostor content**
propaganda	**fake news**	**bias**	**journalistic error**	**conspiracy theory**

	Internet content which uses sensational headlines to make users follow a link to a web page. *[Adapted from oed.com and eavi.eu/beyond-fake-news-10-types-misleading-info/]*
	A genuine, unintentional mistake by a reputable news organisation. Reliable news sources usually correct such mistakes and even apologise to their readers or viewers. *[Adapted from eavi.eu/beyond-fake-news-10-types-misleading-info/]*
	The dissemination of information, especially in a biased or misleading way, in order to promote a particular cause or point of view, often a political agenda. *[Adapted from oed.com]*
	False stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views. *[Adapted from dictionary.cambridge.org]*
	A plan to deceive someone and make them believe something that is false, often with humorous or mischievous intentions. *[Adapted from dictionary.cambridge.org and oed.com]*
	Authentic images, video or quotes that are attributed to the wrong events or person to give them a new, false meaning. *[Adapted from eavi.eu/beyond-fake-news-10-types-misleading-info/]*
	Tendency to favour or dislike a person or thing, especially as a result of a preconceived opinion; partiality, prejudice. *[Adapted from oed.com]*
	News or social media accounts that pose as a well-known (and often respected) brand or person. *[Adapted from eavi.eu/beyond-fake-news-10-types-misleading-info/]*
	False news stories intended for humour, entertainment or social commentary. They do not try to be misleading, but if taken out of context they could be believed as true. *[Adapted from eavi.eu/beyond-fake-news-10-types-misleading-info/]*
	The belief that an event or situation is the result of a secret plan made by powerful people or governments. *[Adapted from dictionary.cambridge.org]*

Final survey

1. Do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This unit was interesting				
This unit was motivating				
This unit made me think				
I'm happy with my work in this unit				
I'm happy with what I learnt in this unit				
This unit has helped me to spot misinformation and fake news				
This unit has helped me improve my critical thinking				

2. Was there something you particularly liked?

3. Was there something you would have liked to be different?

4. Any other comments?

Annex 2. Assessment Rubrics

This annex comprises the two bespoke rubrics I created to make assessment easier and fair.

Reading aloud rubric

This rubric is used to assess the students' performance when reading aloud in class, up to a maximum of 5 points:

Pronunciation	**0 points** Constant pauses and mistakes make it very hard to understand what is being read.	**1 point** Frequent pauses and mistakes.	**2 points** Generally accurate pronunciation, with several mistakes.	**3 points** Fluent, accurate pronunciation with very few mistakes.
Clarity & Intonation	**0 points** Reading is not clear or not loud enough for others to hear and understand. Intonation problems.	**1 point** Reading is clear and loud enough for others to understand it. Intonation is generally good.		
Attitude & participation	**0 points** The learner does not show a positive or collaborative attitude.	**1 point** The learner shows a positive, collaborative attitude.		

Writing rubric

This rubric is used to assess the students' writing assignment (creating a news article), resulting in a numerical mark of up to 10 points:

Formal aspects	**0 - 0.5 points** Inadequate length. Visual presentation makes it unreadable.	**1 point** Slightly below the required length. Poor visual presentation.	**1.5 points** Adequate length and presentation, with some room for improvement.	**2 points** Required length or longer, clean presentation.
Structure of a news article	**0 - 0.5 points** Structural elements are absent: no headline, first paragraph, etc. Lacking in basic information.	**1 point** Flawed structural elements or one of them (e.g. headline) is missing.	**1.5 points** Main structural elements present, but they are not clear or informative enough.	**2 points** Clear, informative headline and first paragraph. All relevant information is given (what, where, who, when...)
Content and creativity	**0 - 0.5 points** Content is incoherent or not a news article. Poorly written, not creative at all.	**1 point** An attempt was made, but the content does not really work as a news article or shows little creativity.	**1.5 points** Content is generally well-written, coherent and creative, with some room for improvement.	**2 points** Content is well-written and coherent. Shows great creativity.
Accuracy (grammar, vocabulary)	**0 - 0.5 points** Very low accuracy. Constant grammar or vocabulary mistakes that should not be made at this level.	**1 point** Poor accuracy. Numerous grammar or vocabulary mistakes that should not be made at this level.	**1.5 points** Good accuracy in general. Some grammar or vocabulary mistakes that should not be made at this level.	**2 points** Very high accuracy. Correct grammar and vocabulary use with few or no mistakes (that should not be made at this level).
Complexity and style	**0 - 0.5 points** Very low complexity. Lexical and grammatical variety is very limited.	**1 point** Low complexity. Lexical and grammatical variety is limited.	**1.5 points** Adequate complexity. A variety of lexical and grammatical resources are employed, resulting in a richer style.	**2 points** High complexity. Complex lexical and grammatical resources are employed, resulting in a very rich style.

Annex 3. Slideshows (PowerPoint presentations)

Online versions of the slideshows presented in class can be found using the following links:

- Session 1
- Session 2
- Session 3
- Session 4
- Session 5
- Session 6

Additionally, for convenience and quick reference, this Annex includes every slide as an image, in chronological order of presentation.

Notice that some slides (in their original pptx format) have animated text, so that information is presented sequentially. This is particularly relevant for the activity in session 6, where the true or fake nature of each news article, as well as the link to its exact source, is only revealed after it has been examined and voted on by the students.

Session 1

Elon Musk announces he has bought McDonald's: "A new era for fast food"

Source: https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/musk-officially-buying-mcdonalds/?db_rec=djRfMl8xXzBfMTgwXzBfMF8wXw

In a surprise move, Elon Musk has announced that he has acquired global fast-food giant McDonald's.

Musk revealed the deal early this morning, stating, "It's time to bring innovation to the world of burgers and fries."

The acquisition, reportedly valued at over $40 billion, marks Musk's entry into the food industry.

March 25, 2025

The New York Times


BBC NEWS
CNN
FOX NEWS channel
The Guardian
The New York Times
NEWS
AND FAKE NEWS
ENHANCING YOUR
CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

SESSION 1

NEWS
AND FAKE NEWS

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS TOPIC?

Today's plan

1. Answer a short survey (individually)
2. Introduction: News and misinformation
3. LISTENING: Fake News and How to Spot It
4. Let's play a game – can you spot the lie?

INITIAL SURVEY

Please answer the provided survey.

NEWS AND FAKE NEWS. ABOUT THIS UNIT

Six sessions

1. Introduction (today!)
2. Where do you get your news?
3. How to write a news story
4. How AI changes things
5. Becoming critical thinkers
6. Let's play a game!

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THIS TOPIC?

- What is "news"? How do we use the word?

  "The report or account of recent events or occurrences, coming to us as new information" [adapted from OED.com]

- Do you get false information on social media?

- Do you stop to think if what you read is true or false?

- What is misinformation? What is fake news?

FAKE NEWS AND HOW TO SPOT IT

Vocabulary

to mislead	placards
to spot	looting
source	riot shield
double-check	doing the rounds
hints	reverse search
license plate	rule of thumb
billboard	on a regular basis

FAKE NEWS AND HOW TO SPOT IT

Watch the video, then answer the comprehension questions.

TWO TRUTHS, ONE LIE

1. **Write 3 sentences about you (one must be a lie).**
2. **Try to make it hard for your classmates to guess.**
3. **Stand up and move around the classroom.**
4. **Read your 3 sentences to some of your classmates.**
5. **Can they spot the lie? Or did you fool them?**

Examples	I'm afraid of spiders / heights / ...
	I've never been to Africa / Girona / the UK...
	I'd like to live in Canada someday.
	As a child, my favourite toy was a Barbie doll.
	If I had to learn a new instrument / language, it would be...

Session 2

SESSION 2

Where do you get your news?

Are you well-informed?

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR NEWS?

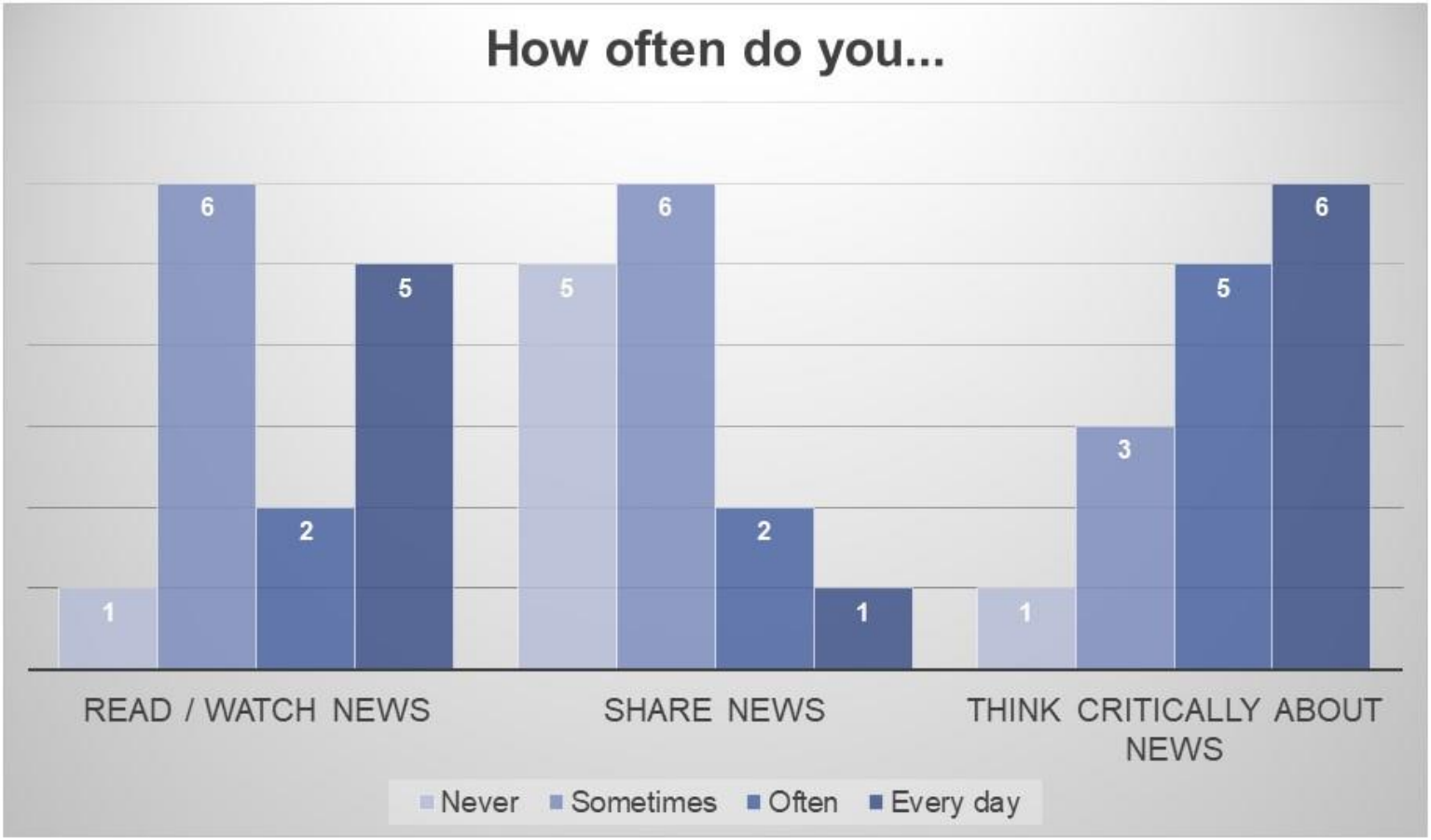
Today's plan

1. Initial survey results
2. Where do you get your news? (in pairs)
3. Discussion: access and reliability
4. Listening: How to choose your news
5. Let's talk about media bias
6. Idioms (if we have time)

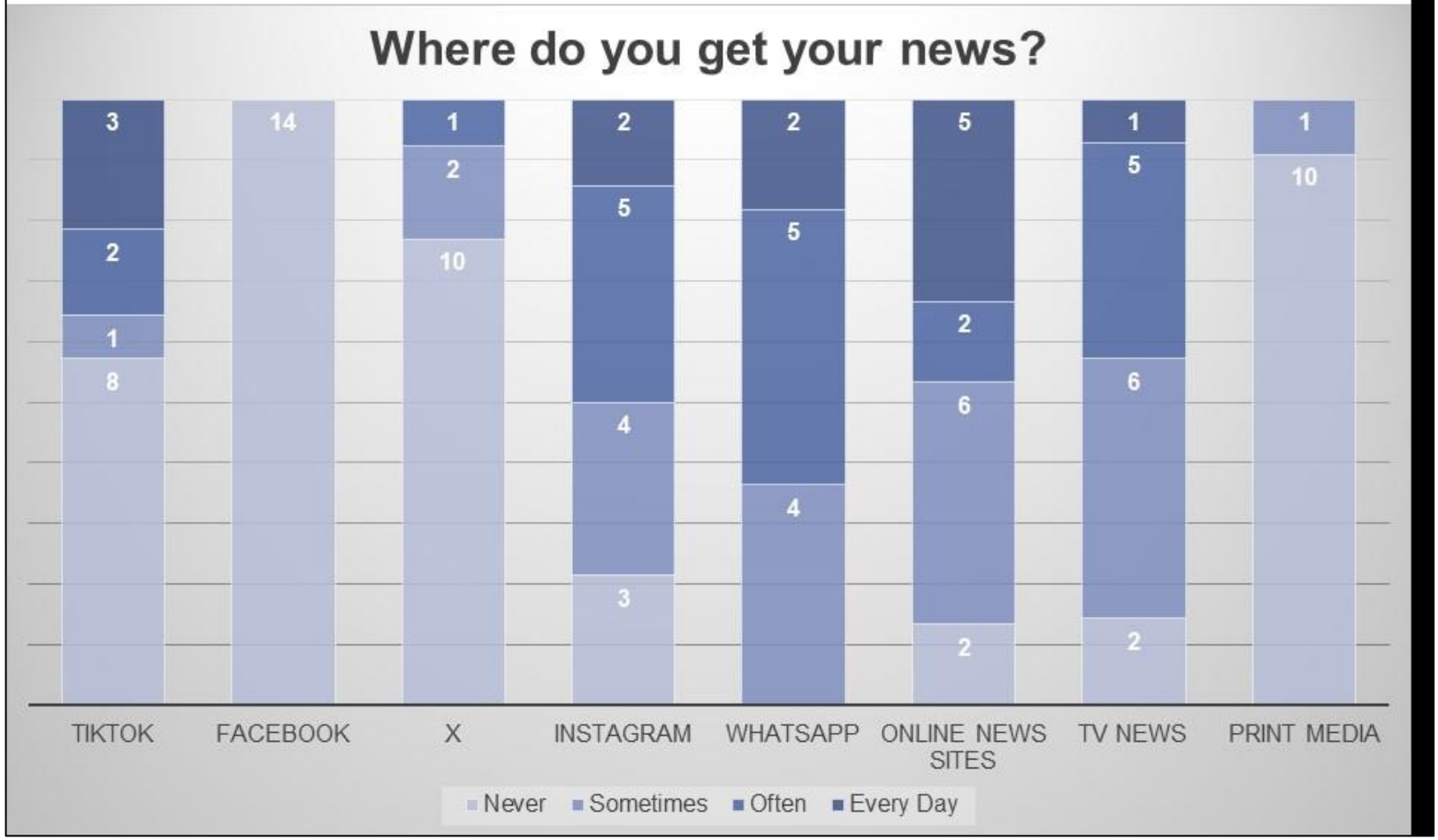
INITIAL SURVEY RESULTS

- All of you said the topic is interesting.
- A majority (71%) said you have some knowledge of the topic, but most of you (86%) want to know more.
- You would like to develop your critical thinking skills (79%) and be able to spot fake news (86%).

INITIAL SURVEY RESULTS



INITIAL SURVEY RESULTS



WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR NEWS?

Complete the worksheet in pairs.

Discuss:

- Which of these sources is more accessible?
- Which is more reliable?

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR NEWS?

Useful words and expressions

- media / mass media
- to mislead
- breakdown of trust
- (news) outlet
- viewpoints
- newscaster
- coverage
- media bias
- to take a guess
- (un)accountable
- falsehoods
- outrageous
- gatekeeper

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR NEWS?

- Get the original news (look for the source)
- Avoid following chaotic stories in real time
- Read coverage on multiple outlets
- Be aware of media bias

And last but not least...

- Mind your mental health
  (if the news is giving you anxiety, take a break)

MEDIA BIAS

- What does *bias* mean?
- What is media bias?
- Are there any unbiased media?
- Are *you* biased? What about your friends and family? Teachers?
- What is the best way to deal with media bias?

Session 3

SESSION 3

HOW TO WRITE A NEWS ARTICLE

Today's plan

1) Reading: How to write a news article.
2) Write a made-up headline.
3) Write a made-up news story.
4) Share your stories.

WRITE A NEWS STORY

REMEMBER TO INCLUDE...

✓ Headline

✓ First paragraph (essential facts)

✓ What? When? Who? Where? Why?


SESSION 3
In small groups, each student reads their news story to the rest, who may suggest improvements.
If anyone did not fishish writing, the others can help.

SESSION 4 How AI changes things

Today's plan

1. Introduction: AI and deepfakes
2. LISTENING: "How to spot deepfakes"
3. READING: "The ugliness of 'beauty filters'"
4. What's your opinion?

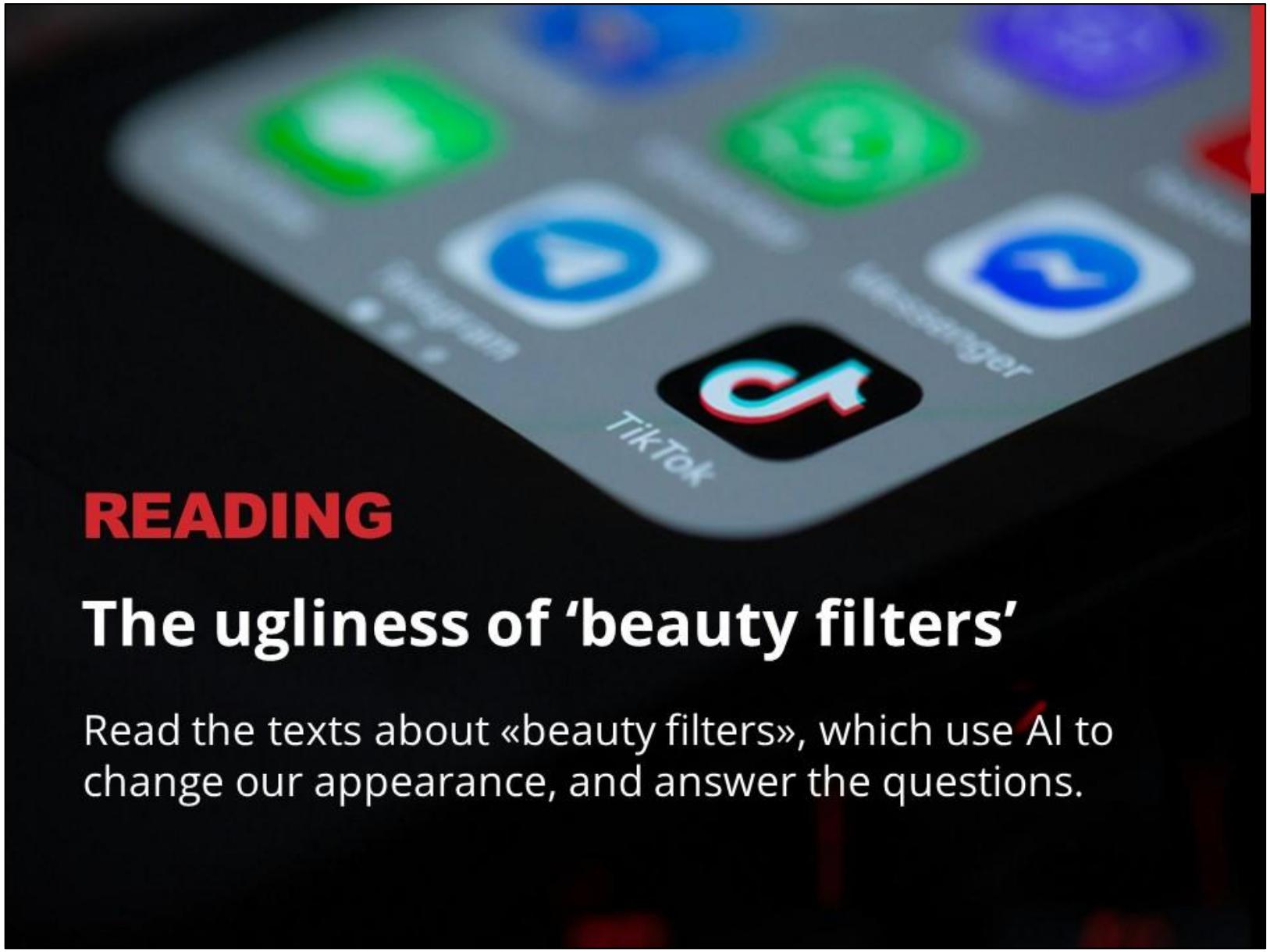
Reflection question:
How can we tell if an image or video was generated using AI?

SESSION 4

How AI changes things

- What is a deepfake?
- How can AI transform the news?
- Do you think it is a good use of technology?
- Can you think of a positive example of a deepfake?
- Can you think of a negative one?

HOW TO SPOT DEEPFAKES AND AI-GENERATED IMAGES



READING

The ugliness of ‘beauty filters’

Read the texts about «beauty filters», which use AI to change our appearance, and answer the questions.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Stand up and move around!

1. "I have used these filters".
2. "There are advantages to using these filters". / "Using these filters can be a good thing".
3. "These filters can be harmful to people's mental health and damage their self-esteem".
4. "When we use these filters we become fake".
5. "I believe we can use these filters and still maintain a healthy body image".

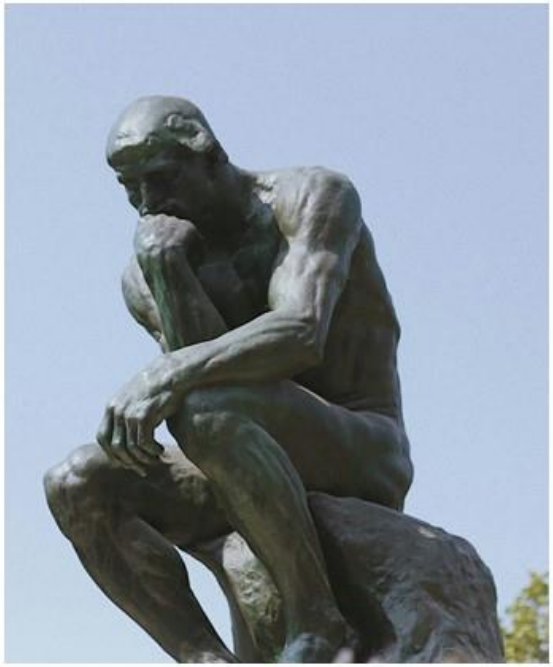
SESSION 5

Becoming critical thinkers

- **What is critical thinking?**

Let's create a WORD CLOUD

1) Go to **menti.com**
2) Enter code **2810 4150**

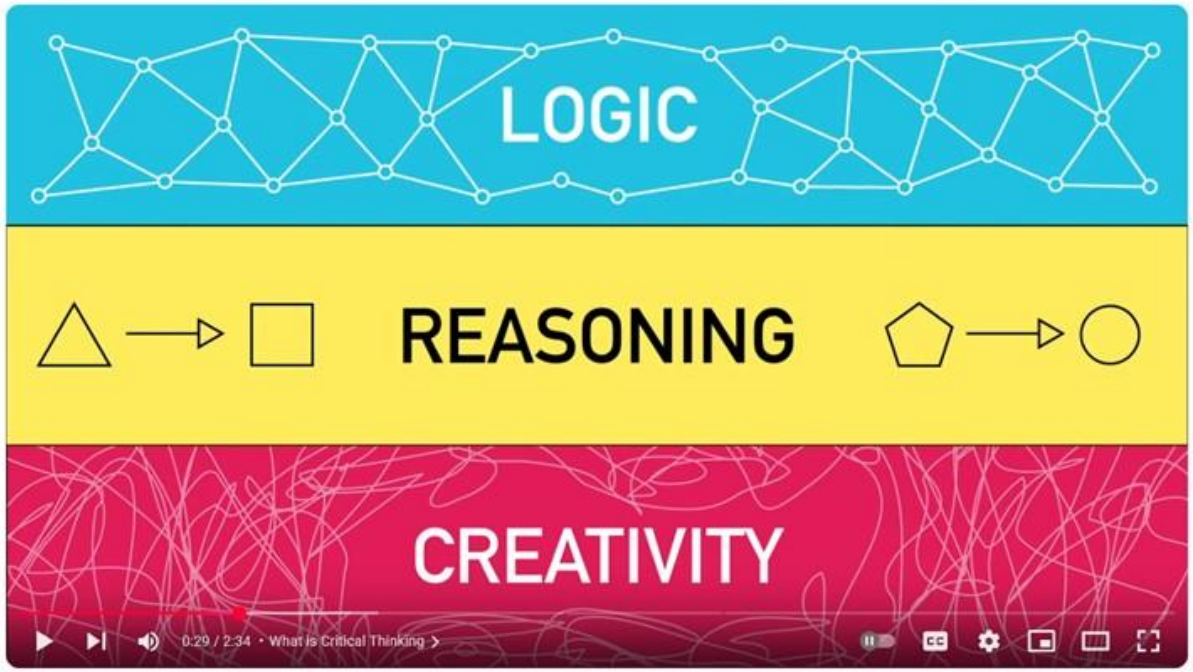


WHY VIDEOS ARE A GREAT WAY TO IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH

- You probably already watch videos on YouTube almost every day
- Millions of videos (in English!) about any topic
- So you improve your English by doing something that you…
  - already like!
  - would have done anyway!
- Same thing with movies, TV series, videogames, music…

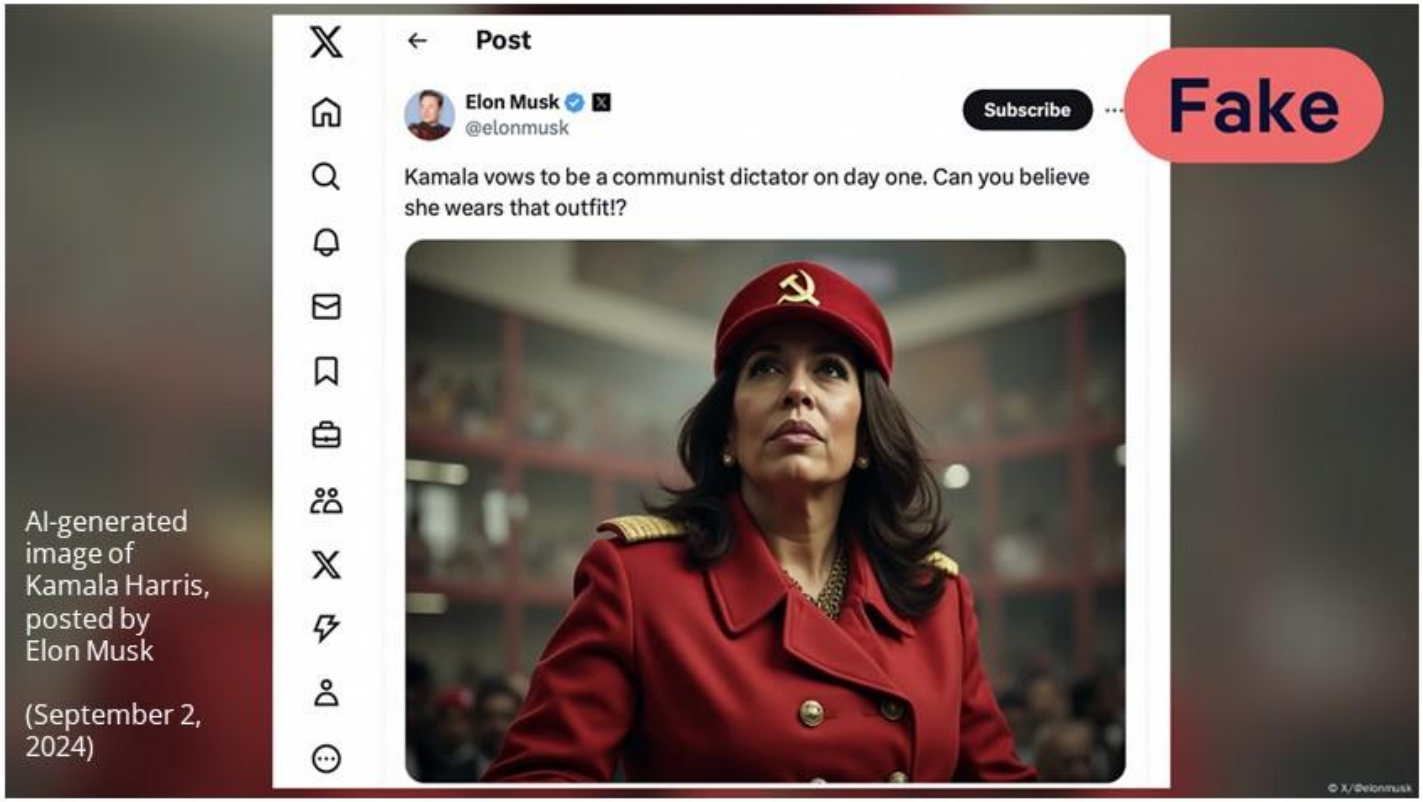
WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

Watch this short video to learn more about critical thinking.



USING CRITICAL THINKING. A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

AI-generated image of Kamala Harris – What questions should you ask when you see this?



WHAT IS 'FAKE NEWS', AND WHAT ISN'T?

(BBC Young Reporter)

Watch the video and complete the Worksheet on different kinds of misinformation

Session 6

SESSION 6

Spot the fake news

1. Get together in teams

2. Consider each story:
   - Language
   - Image
   - Ideas presented
   - Context
   - ...

3. Is it true or false? Vote!

Do not wipe toilet seat with toilet paper, says Japanese maker

https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdekj28yjw4o

Japanese toilets - equipped with music players, automatic flushes, and heated seats - are clearly not afraid of making a splash with their innovative designs. But these cutting edge seats have an unlikely nemesis: toilet paper.

Toto, a top Japanese toilet bowl maker, said last week that users should refrain f g their seats with toilet paper, as it risks creating micro scratches on the surfa

BBC NEWS

‘Heck of a light show’: spectacular bloom of bioluminescence returns to Tasmania’s coastline

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jan/01/bioluminescence-bloom-tasmania-australia-algae-blue-lights

Masses of glittering algae have returned to Tasmania’s coastline in a spectacular bloom of bioluminescence that experts say is the largest seen in years.

TRUE

The Guardian

Dallas Hospital Staff Outraged After Management Introduces Ads to Hospital Screens

Text generated using chatGPT. Photo © The Onion (https://theonion.com/icu-monitor-autoplaying-hardees-ad/)

A growing wave of frustration is sweeping through St. Mary's Medical Center, Dallas, after management introduced advertisements on the hospital screens, sparking outrage among staff and patients alike.

The controversy began earlier this week when hospital management unveiled a new initiative to offset operational costs. In a move that they described as "innovative," the hospital started ng ads on large digital screens in the hospital's waiting areas, elevators, and even with n rooms.

FALSE

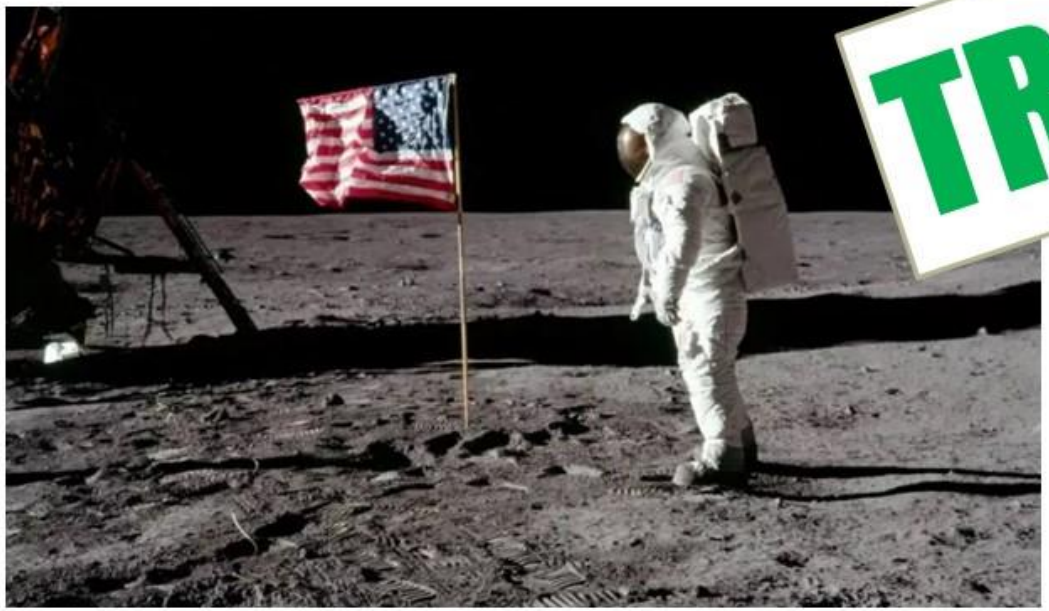
USA TODAY
A GANNETT COMPANY

NASA Apollo 11 moon rock was destroyed in a fire, records reveal

https://www.newsweek.com/nasa-apollo-11-moon-rock-destroyed-fire-ireland-2007370

A piece of moon rock gifted to Ireland following NASA's historic Apollo 11 mission in 1969 was tragically destroyed in a fire, newly uncovered documents from Ireland's National Archives reveal.

The rock, which had traveled almost 240,000 miles from the moon to Earth, was [...] initially stored in a government basement for over three years, the artefact was eventually entrusted to the Dublin Institute for Adva[illegible] Studies in 1973. It was placed at Dunsink Observatory for public display but was lost in a fire there on [illegible]77.



TRUE

Newsweek

Zoo gorilla becomes global sensation for her unlikely love of books

Text generated using chatGPT. Photo © The Onion (https://theonion.com/zoo-gorilla-looks-bored-out-of-mind-reading-wuthering-heights/)

A 14-year-old western lowland gorilla named Kazi has taken the internet by storm, captivating millions worldwide with her unique and endearing obsession with books—even though she can't read them.

Kazi, who resides at the San Diego Zoo, has become a sensation after zookeepers noticed her increasingly curious behavior toward books, turning pages, and gently hugging them as though they were old friends.

FALSE

Los Angeles Times

New York toddler accidentally swallows luxury diamond ring at upscale boutique

Generated using chatGPT

The incident occurred at "Gilded Treasures," an exclusive store located on Madison Avenue. Store staff immediately noticed Emma with the ring and quickly alerted her parents. "We tried to stop her, but she had already swallowed it in a split second," said Daniel Green, 35, a financial consultant. "It was like something out of a nightmare. I've never seen my wife go pale so fast."

Emergency services were called immediately and the family rushed Emma to New York Presbyterian Hospital. After several hours of monitoring and a delicate procedure to remove the ring via endoscopy, Emma was finally declared safe. "She's perfectly fine now, just a little shaken up," said her mother.

FALSE

The New York Times

This year's Spanish Scrabble champion? A man who can't speak Spanish.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/12/14/spanish-scrabble-champion-nigel-richards/

Despite hardly speaking the language, New Zealander Nigel Richards was competing in the Spanish-language Scrabble world championship.

Richards won the competition in Granada, losing only one of his 24 games and topping 147 competitors from across the world. Benjamín Olaizola, the runner-up, told Spanish radio network La Cadena SER that Richa[illegible] victory was a "humiliation".

TRUE

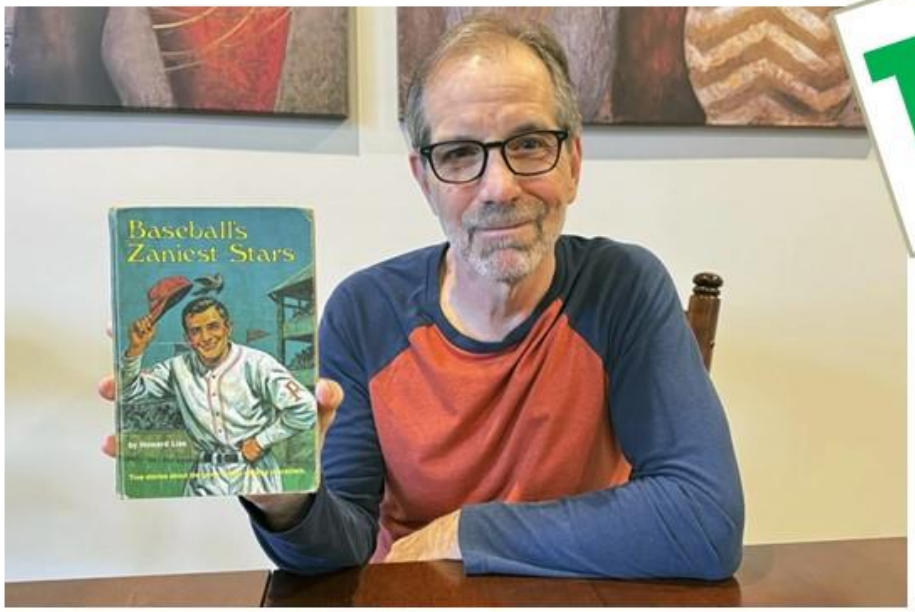
The Washington Post

Detroit-area library says Chicago man can keep overdue baseball book – 50 years later

https://apnews.com/article/michigan-library-overdue-book-86747a3d68c0524273f2ff690bf3df7d

Fifty years later, a man who grew up in suburban Detroit tried to return a very overdue baseball book to his boyhood library. The answer: You can keep it — and no fine.

Chuck Hildebrandt, 63, said he visited the public library in Warren while in town for Thanksgiving, carrying a book titled "Baseball's Zaniest Stars." He had borrowed it in 1974 as a [illegible]old "baseball nut" but never returned it.



TRUE

AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Researchers create artificial skin that heals itself in minutes

Text generated using chatGPT. Photo © The Onion (https://theonion.com/zoo-gorilla-looks-bored-out-of-mind-reading-wuthering-heights/)

In a groundbreaking development, researchers have unveiled a new type of artificial skin capable of healing itself in less than one hour. The self-healing material, designed for medical and prosthetic applications, mimics the natural regenerative properties of human skin.

The skin not only repairs physical damage but also regains its full functionality [illegible]g hope for a new era in wound care and rehabilitation.

FALSE

THE TIMES

High-Tech Heist: Cybercriminals Use AI to Hack London Bank Vaults Without Leaving a Trace

Text generated using chatGPT. Photo © The Onion (https://theonion.com/zoo-gorilla-looks-bored-out-of-mind-reading-wuthering-heights/)

In a stunning display of technological sophistication, cybercriminals have employed artificial intelligence to hack into several secure bank vaults, bypassing traditional security measures without leaving a trace.

Experts warn that this AI-driven approach marks a new era in cybercrime, raisi s over the safety of financial institutions worldwide. Law enforcement agencies a ack down the perpetrators, as the heist leaves no physical evidence, only di

FALSE

BBC NEWS

Engineer builds solar-powered helicopter using only recycled materials

Text generated using chatGPT. Photo © IStockPhoto.com

A woman from California has successfully built a solar-powered helicopter entirely from recycled materials.

The 34-year-old engineer, who spent over two years developing the project, used discarded electronics, metal scraps, and repurposed plastics to construct the lightweight [illegible] Powered by solar panels, the helicopter can fly short distances without relying on t[illegible]nificantly reducing its environmental impact.

FALSE

USA TODAY
A GANNETT COMPANY

Missing Florida dog travels 20 miles before ringing doorbell and returning home on Christmas Eve

https://www.cbsnews.com/miami/news/missing-dog-returned-to-family-home-and-rang-the-doorbell-2/

After a nearly weeklong search, Athena found her way home to her Florida family in time for Christmas Eve — and even rang the doorbell.

Athena, a 4-year-old German Shepherd and Husky mix, escaped her home in Green Cove Springs, near Jacksonville, on Dec. 15, prompting a search among the community and ne[illegible]s for her.

TRUE

CBS NEWS

Idaho man arrested for clearing snow with a flamethrower

Photo: Unsplash.com

An Idaho man was arrested this week after using a flamethrower to clear snow from his driveway, drawing the attention of local authorities. The 39-year-old resident, who reportedly thought the device would make snow removal more efficient.

While no one was injured, police cited concerns over public safety, as the flam posed a fire risk to surrounding property and nearby wooded areas.

NBC

4G internet is set to arrive on the moon later this year

https://www.cnbc.com/2023/03/28/nokia-set-to-launch-4g-internet-on-the-moon-later-this-year.html

Nokia is preparing to launch a 4G mobile network on the moon later this year, in the hopes of enhancing lunar discoveries — and eventually paving the path for human presence on the satellite.

The network will be powered by an antenna-equipped base station stored in a Nova-C lunar lander designed by U.S. space firm Intuitive Machines, as well as by an accompanying sola ered rover.

TRUE

CNBC

Scientists have taught spinach to send emails and it could warn us about climate change

https://www.euronews.com/green/2021/02/01/scientists-have-taught-spinach-to-send-emails-and-it-could-warn-us-about-climate-change

It may sound like something out of a futuristic science fiction film, but scientists have managed to engineer spinach plants which are capable of sending emails.

Through nanotechnology, engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have transformed spinach into sensors capable of detecting explosive materials. These pl[illegible]re then able to wirelessly relay this information back to the scientists.

euro news.

‘Willy Wonka, that you?’ A ton of chocolate leaked from a factory and flooded a German street

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/12/12/willy-wonka-that-you-ton-chocolate-leaked-factory-flooded-german-street/

It was an accident. It was a municipal headache. It was a Roald Dahl fan’s dream. Just before 8 p.m. Monday, liquid chocolate began streaming out of the DreiMeister chocolate factory in Westonnen, a suburb of Werl, Germany.

A tank at the factory had overflowed, prompting a river of chocolate to breach the fact[illegible]rounds and ooze onto Weststrasse, the nearest road.

TRUE

The Washington Post

Newborn becomes first baby to be named an emoji: 😍😍😍

Source of the fake news story: https://prettycoolsite.com/california-newborn-baby-name-emoji-smiley-heart/

California newborn becomes first baby to be named an emoji: Her first name is " 😍😍😍 ".

Cultural diversity in the US has led to great variations in names and naming traditions. Names have been used to express creativity, personality, cultural identity, and values.

The Guardian