

Research article

# Media literacy and LOMLOE: implementing the new assessment criteria

## Alfabetización mediática y la LOMLOE: implementando los nuevos criterios de evaluación

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Assessment criteria (AC) developed in Castilla-La Mancha after LOMLOE eases the way to competency-based assessment. This, in turn, requires a more innovative approach to teaching that allows for critical thinking and the analysis of the world around us. Current legislation in Spain also alludes to the need towards encouraging critical thinking in relation to the media. In this article, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is presented as an ideal solution to this need, while providing guidelines for the introduction of AC provided by the July 12<sup>th</sup> decree 82/2022 in the English classroom. **Methodology:** After considering contemporary studies on the benefits of MIL and taking on board European recommendations on this topic, some materials and activities are designed for their implementation in Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE) in Spain. **Results:** This article provides a user-friendly guide for teachers to implement current AC when assessing learning scenarios (LS) and also presents some materials to be used in first cycle of CSE when designing LS using MIL contents. **Conclusions:** MIL proves to be an ideal ally in the English as a foreign language classroom.

**Keywords:** media manipulation; critical thinking; CSE; EFL teaching; competency-based assessment; MIL; learning scenario; LOMLOE.

## Resumen

**Introducción:** Los criterios de evaluación (CE) establecidos en Castilla-La Mancha a raíz de la LOMLOE promueven la evaluación competencial. Esto a su vez requiere de un enfoque innovador que fomente el pensamiento crítico y el estudio y análisis del mundo que nos rodea. La legislación educativa actual hace referencia a la necesidad de fomentar este pensamiento crítico en relación a la influencia que las nuevas tecnologías y los medios de comunicación tienen sobre la ciudadanía. En este artículo se presenta la alfabetización mediática (AM) como la respuesta perfecta ante esta necesidad, a la vez que se muestra su relación con los CE. **Metodología:** Tras analizar los estudios recientes que realzan los beneficios del estudio de la AM y teniendo en cuenta recomendaciones europeas, se diseñan una serie de materiales para ser usados en el aula de inglés. **Resultados:** Este artículo ofrece una guía de fácil uso para la implementación de los criterios de evaluación del decreto 82/2022 (12 de julio) y ofrece una relación de materiales que pueden ser usados en el aula para diseñar situaciones de aprendizaje usando contenidos de AM. **Conclusiones:** La AM demuestra ser un aliado ideal en la enseñanza de inglés en el aula.

**Palabras clave:** manipulación mediática; pensamiento crítico; ESO; inglés como lengua extranjera; evaluación competencial; alfabetización mediática; situación de aprendizaje; LOMLOE.

## 1. Introduction

As societies evolve and develop hand in hand with technological advancements, our current highly digitised world is requiring us to adapt and develop specific skills and competences that are in constant flux. Specifically in the field of education, these changes have been embraced rapidly and willingly by teachers and school administrators alike. Most schools have become so highly digitised that, in Spain in particular, homework is oftentimes assigned to students via apps that either parents, or students, or both must consult on a daily basis.

In Spain, LOMLOE (the current Spanish Organic Law on Education) emphasizes the importance of introducing new technologies into the classroom, not only as tools to be used in the teaching-learning process, but also as a medium through which students are asked to produce and present their own content. The more their digital devices serve as mediating tools to their studies, work, and entertainment, the more frequent their social interactions have become and, with them, the inevitable exposure to potentially alarming or harmful ideas and ideologies. Given the vast amount of information online, and the difficulty in verifying sources or hidden agenda and/or commercial or political interests behind specific digital content, it becomes clear that, as educators, we need to adapt as well to the digital revolution. More than merely introducing new technologies into the classroom, we also need to prepare students to assess and analyse the information they find posted on the web.

Consequently, many educators have echoed the need to instruct individuals in order to enable them to exercise critical thinking when it comes to using, analysing and producing their own digital content. In this sense, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) presents itself as an ideal solution to these digital education needs. While the Council of Europe advocates for the importance of providing citizens with MIL, current Spanish legislation does not refer to it specifically. Yet many of this legislation's requirements can be neatly covered through the teaching of MIL. My contention is that, within the area of English education, introducing

MIL into the curriculum via the analysis of media manipulation strategies will not only motivate students with relevant and inspiring course content but also empower them to be more critical about the immense amount of information to which they are incessantly being exposed on a daily basis. Additionally, appropriately dealing with these contents in the foreign language classroom will invariably lead towards a communicative and competency-based approach to teaching.

Thus, in this paper I analyse the current legislation in Spain and show how the teaching of MIL can help meet students' educational needs while still complying with Spanish legislative requirements and meeting the Council of Europe's and UNESCO's recommendations. I also provide specific guidelines on how to accomplish this task specifically within the EFL/ESL classroom via media manipulation strategies. After discussing the assessment criteria (AC) provided by the Decree 82/2022 of July 12 for the region of Castilla-La Mancha, I provide a more user-friendly way of applying these new criteria, focusing on the first cycle of CSE (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> academic years). At present, there exists a plethora of MIL materials for native speakers of English, but little for the study of English as a foreign language, especially here in Spain. This paper will help counter that trend by providing guidelines and easy to replicate/modify activities that can be incorporated into the EFL/ESL classroom at different levels and still meet the assessment criteria provided by the current legislation.

### ***1.1. Current situation and needs in a highly digitised world***

One of the main challenges facing new generations is how to deal with a world that is highly mediated by digital devices and the algorithms that drive them. This is of special concern amongst the so-called generation Z (those born between the mid 1990s to the early 2010s), where a considerable body of research points towards the potentially harmful effects of over-exposure to social media at a very young age and the likelihood of developing addictions (Abdelraouf & Amin, 2024; Haidt, 2024; Hu, 2024; Sharma & Singh, 2024; Bayu & Puti, 2023; Treviño Benavides *et al.*, 2023; Dhiman & Chaudhary, 2022; Maguire & Pellosmaa, 2022; Kannan & Kumar, 2022; Keles *et al.*, 2019; Sheldon *et al.*, 2019). This over-exposure to social media mediates their perception of the world and of themselves. Gen Z, or Zoomers, are often exposed to filtered, meticulously selected and modified figures of the world and people around them, offering, therefore, almost unattainable ideals and goals that can lead to several psychological disorders, anxiety and depression being the ones most cited in the academic literature.

The studies cited above recommend that, as teachers, we ought to look for ways in which to aid our students in the difficult quest they face when dealing with the highly mediated world they are so familiar with, accustomed to and, dare I say, comfortable with. To demonstrate the latter, I will share a recent, albeit disturbing, experience I had while working with Gen Zers. This instance took place in April 2024, while I was conducting a workshop on media manipulation strategies at a high school with students between 12 and 13 years of age. I was trying to showcase how, when we are offered something for free, it is because we are the specific target of a commercial campaign. In doing so, I was explaining to them how a platform was offering me 10 euros to spend on the products they sold if I uploaded and stored my photos on their "free" cloud. By sharing my photos with this company, I would give them very personal information about me, my interests, hobbies, pets, holidays, habits and so on, which in turn would provide this company with all the information needed to advertise items I would be more likely to purchase. To my extreme surprise, the students responded with indifference, saying, 'It was better that way!' This really took me by surprise and made me realise that something needed to be done to change the Gen Zers' attitudes toward commercialism, and become more critical about the intentions and hidden agendas

of the social media and apps that envelop them nowadays.

### 1.1.1. Challenges of living in a highly mediated society

As a logical response to the changing of society and how digital platforms have eased their way into everyday life, making the consumption of media ever so common, an interest in fighting media manipulation is on the rise. Nonetheless, this is not a new concern. Back in 1955, Professor Louis Forsdale first introduced 'Media Literacy' as a tool to help students gain literacy in relation to multi-media productions (Carlsson, 2019). Although at that time the term did not gain much traction, in 2004 UNESCO took notice of this concept and began using the term Media and Information Literacy (MIL) as a necessary focus of attention for contemporary society.

Notwithstanding the multiplicity of definitions of ML (Potter, 2022; Wuyckens *et al.*, 2022), becoming literate about media and media messages implies the discerning and assessment of relevant versus misleading information. Thus, it is possible to see how critical thinking must be activated once MIL comes into play.

MIL is included in the curricula in many countries around the world, but not all, which is the case in Spain. However, a significant body of research underscores the need to introduce MIL into the compulsory Spanish national curriculum (Gutierrez & Tyner, 2012; Marta Lazo & Grandío Pérez, 2012; García Ruiz *et al.*, 2016; Pérez Rodríguez *et al.*, 2019).

Moreover, at an international level, the Council of Europe recommends the teaching of MIL in schools from an early level, describing it as being 'of utmost importance for individuals' in order to allow them to 'critically analyse media content' as well as 'to understand the ethical implications of media' (2024). UNESCO also supports and champions the teaching of MIL as a means towards the development of a more democratic society, which encourages and enables individuals to navigate the intricate web of our current information laden environment, providing skills that allow us to discern truthful from misleading information.

In fact, apart from the publication of manuals that aid educators – or anyone for that matter – interested in learning about MIL,<sup>1</sup> UNESCO has also created a MIL Alliance in an effort to promote a joint initiative where different countries across the world can coordinate efforts to implement MIL at an international level. This alliance was created in 2013 and has as its core priorities (1) to develop partnerships that allow for international cooperation to facilitate a global impact, (2) to articulate a platform for experts to speak as one voice, and (3) to enable the creation of global networks that allow for the further study and analysis of MIL. MIL is presented as a tool that:

- Enables individuals to make informed choices about how to participate in peace building.
- Promotes freedom of expression and dialogue, thus fostering equality.
- Facilitates access to information.
- Can promote the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in general.

What is more, UNESCO defines MIL as 'a set of essential skills':

to access, analyze, create and consume information in various formats from print to radio, from video to the internet. It enables individuals to navigate the complexities

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<sup>1</sup> Namely, UNESCO's *Media an Information Literate Citizens: Think Critically, Click Wisely!*, published in 2021, and *Media and Information Literacy: Policy and Strategy Guidelines*, published in 2013.

of the modern information environment, discern truth from misinformation, and participate actively in democratic processes (2024, p. 1).

Thus, considering MIL's potential, it is clear that it is meant to be used in the classroom in order to facilitate dialogue and critical thinking. It is my contention that, doing so within the foreign language classroom, is an ideal option, provided the teacher facilitates access to the performance of tasks, resorting to scaffolding, and any other strategies needed to help students learn and acquire the target language and that the topics chosen to be analysed are not restricted. In Spain, it would also be possible to include MIL in the tutorial plan either at classroom level or for the whole school/high school. Nonetheless, the proposals offered in this article are geared towards the inclusion of MIL within the teaching of English as a second/foreign language, and more specifically in the first cycle of CSE.

### *1.2. Current legislation in Spain*

Despite the recommendations issued by the Council of Europe and UNESCO mentioned above, MIL is not yet a subject specified in the national compulsory curriculum here in Spain (neither in primary nor in secondary education). The current legal framework in the national territory, or LOMLOE, alludes to the need towards the incorporation of information and communication technologies in the classroom (Organic Law of December 2020, p. 122871). In this sense, ICT are referred to as the understanding and knowledge of how some new technologies work, both when it comes to consuming and creating contents using said technologies.

In this respect, LOMLOE also points towards the effects that a generalised use of information and communication technologies have on multiple aspects of everyday lives, emphasising the profound effects this technological consumption has on the constructions of individuals' identities, on their capacity to learn throughout life, on culture, and on democratic coexistence and respect. LOMLOE draws attention to the way in which this mediating effect influences genders differently, and how it has changed children's and youth's environment, impelling educators and students alike towards a deep reflection in this respect.

Besides, Royal Decree 217/2022 refers to the importance of students developing a digital competence (CD), specifying that students should make a 'safe, healthy, sustainable, critical and responsible use of technologies to learn, to work, and to partake in society' (p. 41600, my translation), as well as use these technologies to interact with the world around them. Immediately after this recommendation is cited, media literacy is mentioned; however, once again, it is referred to as the ability to *use* new technologies, not *assess* them. This Royal Decree also refers the need to encourage critical thinking in all subjects (p. 41572) and, later on, points towards the importance of critically reflecting on the use of new technologies (p. 41576). This is referred to in more detail when the following objective is stated:

To critically analyse and take advantage of all the different opportunities to be found in our contemporary society, in particular in relation to culture in the digital era, assessing its benefits and risks, making a responsible and ethical use of them, in order to contribute to the improvement of our quality of life at a personal and at a collective level. (p. 41595, my translation)

This understanding of new technologies and the impact they may have on our society points in the direction of what MIL has to offer. In fact, when referring to the subject of English, and in accordance to my suggestions in this article, this Decree suggests that it is within the area of English as a foreign language that students ought to be made 'to develop critical thinking,



media literacy and an adequate use, which is also safe, ethical and responsible of new technologies' (p. 41714), saying literally that the latter should be a 'relevant learning element in the subject' (my translation).

Further on in the Decree, educational institutions are singled out as the ones who ought to ensure that ICT are used appropriately, laying special emphasis on the way in which violence must be avoided on the net (p. 122920). In this respect, university curricula ought to be revised and modified to include this training within all educational degrees to provide the necessary training to the teachers of the future. This is something that, if done, will probably be carried out by individual teachers.<sup>2</sup> Together with this, students must be encouraged to use technologies confidently, while limiting gender stereotypes that may impinge on the acquisition of digital skills.

Thus, in the following section, I will break down and simplify Castilla-La Mancha's assessment criteria (AC) for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CSE by offering a more user-friendly approach to the implementation of this new criteria, which, due to its novelty, might be a little challenging for those who are not yet familiar with it.

### *1.2.1. Applying the new AC for Castilla-La Mancha in CSE*

In this section, a detailed analysis of Castilla-La Mancha's AC for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CSE will be provided, together with some practical guidelines on how to use these AC (Decree 82/2022, July 12). For practical reasons, I will work on the AC provided by the Decree for first- and second-years of CSE within the discipline of English Studies. Nonetheless, the strategies provided below can be easily adapted to any other academic year of CSE.

LOMLOE sets the basis for competency-based assessment, supported by the AC which is to be developed by each region in the Spanish territory. In this way, AC are divided in relation to the specific competencies (SC) they serve to assess. Similarly, the first task a secondary school teacher ought to do would be to decide the percentage to be awarded to each SC and, in turn, to each criterion. This task could be carried out as a bottom-up or a top-down strategy (examples provided further down).

First of all, though, it is necessary to analyse each AC in detail as written in the Decree, given that, being focused on a competency-based approach, they are charged with content; thus, it is paramount to break them down into more manageable chunks that can be 'visualised', so as to make it easier to ponder them. These ponderations are to be included in the 'assessment booklet' provided by Castilla-La Mancha, a digital platform created to make the assessment criteria more agile, while still complying with data protection laws. Therefore, in the section that follows, one must not interpret that I have done a literal translation of the Decree. Instead, I have simplified and made each AC more manageable for the sake of applicability in the classroom and for the decision of how much each criterion will weight against the others. Similarly, I provide examples of activities that can be used in order to implement these AC. The criteria provided by the Decree are, at times, so dense in content and specificities, it is challenging to clearly differentiate between one and the other. My objective here is to facilitate the workloads of secondary school teachers in Castilla-La Mancha, who are already considerably overwhelmed with the amount of bureaucracy they need to deal with, on top of their teaching preps and course hours.

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<sup>2</sup> I am currently teaching future primary school teachers at the Faculty of Education of Ciudad Real, at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, and within the subject 'Language and Culture', Media Literacy takes an important role; however, this is something I add to existing contents to be taught in this subject.

I will begin by focussing on **SC 1**, which deals with **written and oral comprehension**. This SC is to be assessed according to two AC:

- a) To assess students' ability to understand general and specific information from oral and written texts, dealing with topics which are familiar to students, related with their own experiences, media and social networks. Any written or oral comprehension activity which demands for a general or specific understanding of a text or part of a text can be assessed with this criterion. In this sense, questions such as 'what is the text about?', 'what is the main message conveyed by the speaker?' or 'what do they complain about?' are clear examples of the kind of activity this criterion can be associated with.
- b) To analyse and interpret different texts (oral or written) in a holistic way, taking into account all parts of a message and combining verbal and non-verbal cues. This criterion can be used when assessing activities where students are asked to extract information from a text in order to find out intentions, to infer, to deduce, etc.

**SC 2** has to do with **oral and written production**, and the different AC might be summarised as follows:

- a) Mainly focuses on structure. This criterion allows us to assess whether students are capable of producing texts following specific patterns, namely being able to describe, narrate, compare and inform using both verbal and non-verbal cues. Tasks such as writing an essay, reporting some news, writing a review, delivering a pitch, etc. can be used to assess this criterion.
- b) Coherence and cohesiveness in texts they create. This can be measured by the appropriacy of the language they produce; in this sense, this criterion can be applied in most written and oral productions.
- c) Producing a message aimed at a specific audience, and adapting the text to intentions and the receptors of said message. In this sense, one could say that whenever we provide a context for students' productions, where they need to consider the objective of their speech in relation to audience, it is possible to use this criterion. Once again, this criterion could be assessed for any productive task.

**SC 3**, which relates to **interaction**, can be assessed according to the following AC:

- a) To be able to interact in brief and simple exchanges. This AC can be assessed with activities such as practice drills, guided role-plays and process drama (activities where a situation is presented, and students need to take decisions and interact as they see fit).
- b) To be able to select, organise and implement speech strategies in order to start a conversation, keep it going, ask for permission to interrupt, and ask for clarifications. Again, any activity where students need to interact with other language learners or speakers of the foreign language will need to be assessed using this criterion.

**SC 4**, or **mediation**, is assessed via two AC:

- a) This criterion relates to students' abilities to understand and express, in their own words, the texts they have worked with; thus, the kind of activities that can be used in order to assess this criterion could be activities such as translating, summarising, adapting, etc.
- b) To be able to use strategies to bridge difficulties when conveying meaning and to be able to develop ways in which to communicate, even when the specific word/(s) or expression/(s) students are looking for do not spring to mind. Ludic activities such as *Taboo*-like activities, can be used in the classroom to develop

and assess students' skills to communicate. Rephrasing exercises would also allow us to use this criterion.

**SC 5** is related to **plurilingualism**, and the AC used to assess it are the following:

- a) To be able to compare and contrast similarities and differences amongst languages. This criterion can be used to assess any activity in which students use a foreign language, while avoiding interferences from other languages. This criterion can be combined with all the productive criteria, since it has to do with appropriateness, namely, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2.
- b) This is a particularly challenging criterion to apply given that, as it is presented in the law, it has to do with students' ability to 'use and differentiate knowledge and strategies to improve communication and to learn the foreign language using the support of other students and analogic and digital devices' (p. 24630, my translation). As worded, it is broad enough for some to struggle slightly to identify as to what precisely this criterion refers, especially in relation to implementing it when assessing students. For this reason, I suggest this criterion be used to assess whether students take advantage of the feedback they are provided with, especially in relation to eliminating mistakes in their use of the foreign language. As it was the case with criterion 5.1, this one can also be used in combination with 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1 and 4.2.
- c) This criterion can be assessed by introducing the European Portfolio of languages in the classroom routine, and the adequate completion of the tasks provided (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio>).

Last, we find **SC 6**, which deals with **interculturality and cultural competence**, and is assessed by three criteria:

- a) Assesses whether students show themselves to be capable of being empathetic, respectful and tolerant in intercultural relations, rejecting negative and deprecating stereotypes. Whenever students are asked to talk about the world around them, taking into account cultural differences, we can actually assess this criterion; thus, any productive activities, both oral and written, are liable to be assessed by this criterion, whenever the content aligns. Additionally, when students are working in groups in the classroom, they can be assessed on their tolerance towards colleagues, given that it is highly likely there will be cultural differences in the students' background amongst peers.
- b) To accept linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity within the English-speaking world, valuing it and appreciating difference as something enriching that 'promotes sustainability and democracy' (p. 24631, my translation). In this sense, any activity where students need to work with sustainability in relation to English speaking countries could be instrumental when it comes to assessing this criterion, as well as activities where understanding and democracy are involved, said activities would be mostly productive skills.
- c) This criterion requires students to 'show interest towards linguistic, cultural and artistic diversity in accordance with eco-social and democratic values, respecting justice, equity, equality and sustainability' (p. 24631, my translation). Any activity where any of the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) are worked with is liable of being assessed resorting to this criterion.

Once the AC have been analysed and related to the kind of tools/activities/tasks that can be used to assess them, we can continue with the next mandatory task, which is to decide on the percentage to be awarded to each AC and each SC. This task can be done from a bottom-up (Chart 1) or a top-down (Chart 2) strategy.



In the chart below, the values that appear in green are decided upon first; this will in turn provide the value to be given to each SC.

### Chart 1.

*Bottom-up*

| SC 1 - %<br>Written & oral<br>comprehension | SC 2 - %<br>Written<br>and oral<br>production | SC 3 - %<br>Interaction | SC 4 - %<br>Mediation | SC 5 - %<br>Plurilingualism | SC 6 - %<br>Interculturality |
|---|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1.1 - 19 %                                  | 2.1 - 18 %                                    | 3.1 - 3 %               | 4.1 - 2 %             | 5.1 - 4 %                   | 6.1 - 1,6 %                  |
| 1.2 - 19 %                                  | 2.2 - 18 %                                    | 3.2 - 1 %               | 4.2 - 2 %             | 5.2 - 4 %                   | 6.2 - 1,2 %                  |
|   | 2.3 - 4 %                                     |                         |                       | 5.3 - 2 %                   | 6.3 - 1,2 %                  |

Source: Own creation (2024).

Once the assessment criteria were established (in a proportion out of 100), it was just a question of adding up the values of each assessment criterion, which provide the percentage of each SC. Namely, SC 1 would amount to 38, SC 2 to 40, SC 3 to 4, and so on. At this point, it can be argued that there is a disparity between SCs 1 and 2 and SC 3. In fact, when assessing students' interactions (which are under SC 3), one will also invariably need to assess productive skills via AC 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, as well as receptive skills (resorting to AC 1.1 and/or 1.2). Interacting then is part of producing and receiving information, that is why I decided to give it a lower ponderation, since it can be assessed in combination with other criteria.

Finally, adding up the value of all SCs will amount to 100. Personally, I believe this to be the most accurate way to establish the AC of any given subject, given that working with each assessment criterion individually will allow us to decide which aspects are to be given priority over others. It is, however, also possible to decide these values top-down, by commencing by giving a value to each SC first, as the chart below shows:

### Chart 2.

*Top-down*

| SC 1 - 38 %<br>Written & oral<br>comprehension | SC 2 - 40 %<br>Written and<br>oral<br>production | SC 3 - 4 %<br>Interaction | SC 4 - 4 %<br>Mediation | SC 5 - 10 %<br>Plurilingualism | SC 6 - 4 %<br>Interculturality |
|--|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1.1 - %  | 2.1 - %  | 3.1 - %                   | 4.1 - %                 | 5.1 - %                        | 6.1 - %                        |
| 1.2 - %  | 2.2 - %  | 3.2 - %                   | 4.2 - %                 | 5.2 - %                        | 6.2 - %                        |
|  | 2.3 - %  |                           |                         | 5.3 - %                        | 6.3 - %                        |

Source: Own creation (2024).

Following a top-down approach, teachers would focus on the value they decide to award each SC instead of simply dividing that value amongst each of the individual AC. Although this second approach would also be valid, I believe Chart 1 provides a strategy that allows teachers to focus on what will be assessed more accurately, which better adapts to personal teaching styles, while, at the same time, adjusting to students' specificities.

As I have already mentioned, and despite the fact that these percentages can be decided upon and chosen either individually (if the teacher is the only one teaching 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> of CSE) or at a departmental level (when there are several teachers teaching the same level, 1<sup>st</sup> and/or 2<sup>nd</sup> of CSE, the values need to be the same for all students of the same academic year). Personally, I believe **Chart 1** presents teachers with adequate percentages for the evaluation and assessment of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CSE courses, given that I have worked as a secondary school teacher myself for several years and am familiar with CSE English teaching in Spain.

At this point, and armed with an assessment criteria that has been already been awarded a percentage, I will provide examples of activities where media literacy contents can be introduced in the EFL/ESL classroom, uniting MIL and the AC provided by the current legislation.

## 1.2. Objectives

Taking into consideration the current educational legislation in Spain mentioned above and our students' educational needs, a possible solution can be offered in the form of workshops and activities to be implemented in the ESL/EFL classroom. This solution points towards the implementation of MIL in the English classroom, which will aid us towards the work needed to meet many of our students' educational needs, while still complying with the legislative requirements, not only from the point of view of Spanish legislation, but also from the Council of Europe's recommendations. Similarly, specific guidelines will be provided on how to accomplish this task in the EFL/ESL classroom by focussing on the analysis of media manipulation and fighting disinformation.<sup>3</sup> The results of this research will provide easy to replicate/modify activities that can be adapted and incorporated in the EFL/ESL classroom at different levels and in any other countries where English (or any other language) is studied as a second/foreign language. Nonetheless, assessment strategies addressed in this article are geared towards the implementation of the current Spanish legislation, and more specifically to Castilla-La Mancha's AC for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CSE.

## 2. Methodology

After considering our society's needs and the present educational guidelines to be implemented, not only in Spain, but also at the international level, a set of guidelines can be established. In order to do so, it will be necessary to combine contemporary educational trends where cooperative work is emphasized, catering to students' different skills and abilities, while encouraging their critical thinking development. The use of new technologies and AI are also introduced in the suggested dynamics, AI tools being of particular relevance in the creation of the Figures provided below.

### 2.1. Presenting media manipulation strategies

I find it useful to begin with Sylvain Timsit's media manipulation strategies since they provide a user-friendly set of strategies to the analysis of media products (Timsit in Semikina & Demushina, 2019, p. 6):

1. **Distraction.** To distract people with the banal will keep them from being critical about serious issues. Making people focus on celebrities' lives, sports, or the latest trend are some examples of how distraction functions in our society.
2. **Problem-reaction-solution.** To detect a problem before it arrives or to provoke it in order to provide a solution will make the provider appear like a saviour. An example of this might be the existing marketing on supplements to build up muscle. The existing marketing would present chiselled male bodies as a needed/desirable result (problem), youngsters who feel the need to reach this standard in order to fit in and/or to be liked (reaction), and supplements to take in combination with exercising (solution). A similar example can be found in targeting girls for plastic surgery and dieting products.<sup>4</sup>
3. **Gradualism.** To gradually introduce unpopular measures will keep people from perceiving detrimental change. Examples of this can be the way in which our privacy is more and more limited, or how some apps start off being free to consumers only to later begin charging for them or raising the price.

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<sup>3</sup> For more activities to be carried out in the EFL classroom for secondary and higher education, see Navarro Pérez (2023).

<sup>4</sup> Haidt presents us with plenty of research that shows how social media ads provide different kind of content depending on whether the supposed owner of the account is a boy or a girl (2024).

4. **Appealing to destructive emotions.** To provoke strong emotions of fear and rage will sway peoples' opinions. Oftentimes, we find that the internet encourages or allows for such extreme emotions, which can be easily expressed from the comfort and isolation of our own home, physical distance and a certain or total anonymity.
5. **Ignorance.** To keep the public ignorant by encouraging consumerism and superficial materialism to the detriment of education and critical thinking.
6. **Self-blame.** To make the public believe that they are the ones to blame for their undesirable situation by making them feel they could have amended the situation. Thus, 'if I do not look like my idol, it is my fault for not having resorted to surgery' (which would change this 'problem') or for not purchasing the same clothes and follow their style.
7. **Complacency.** To keep people happy by making them ignore the problems that are around them is to make them complacent. An example of this might be the way in which youngsters are dissuaded of having face-to-face interactions but are content with their popular profiles on social networks, or the way in which many people are appeased by scrolling through their social networks for hours.

Below are some Figures which have been created to present these strategies to students and make them more visual and easier to understand.

**Figure 1.**

*Distraction*

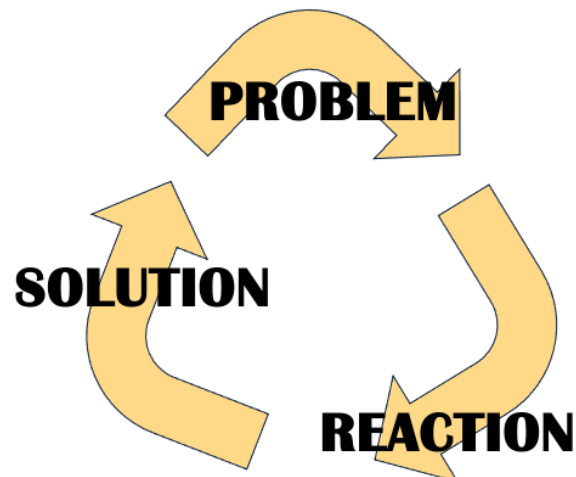


**Source:** Created with AI (2024).

**Figure 3.**

**Figure 2.**

*Problem-reaction-solution*



**Source:** Own creation (2024)

**Figure 4.**

*Gradualism*



**Source:** Own creation (2024).

**Figure 5.**

*Ignorance*



**Source:** Created with AI (2024).

*Appealing to destructive emotions*



**Source:** Created with AI (2024)

**Figure 6.**

*Self-blame*



**Source:** Created with AI (2024)



**Figure 7.**

*Complacency*



**Source:** Created with AI (2024).

At this stage, it is important to make students aware of the fact that these strategies are not merely something external, used on us, to influence us or make us consume a specific product, but also that, to some extent, these strategies can become so interiorised in our unconscious, that sometimes we may perform them ourselves. We not only grow accustomed to living with them on a daily basis, but we also perform them, and they become performative in our behaviour. An example of this can be the way in which *appealing to destructive emotions* (strategy number 4) is something we both endure and often inflict on others. If we consider the words ‘haters’ and ‘hate speech’ (both borrowings are used in Spanish), they are relatively new and are associated with the abusive language and comments often displayed on social media. Oftentimes, the ‘anonymity’ of a profile or the distance a screen sets between people acts as a ‘facilitator’ for such behaviour.

Once a set of strategies has been selected, it is necessary to establish a course of action for their analysis; with this purpose in mind, a set of questions can be formulated.

## **2.2. What to ask in analysing media products**

In order to be able to identify which strategy is at play, a set of questions is provided for teachers to present to their students:

1. Who has created it? What was it created for?
2. Is anyone benefiting from this? Where do the funds for this production come from?
3. What has attracted my attention? Which techniques are used to arouse my interest?
4. Who is this message intended for?
5. How might different audiences interpret this message? How are audiences meant to feel?
6. After considering question 5, are audiences invited to do something about their present situation? If so, what?
7. What information is provided? What information is purposefully omitted?

Once I provide students with the necessary questions to analyse the media productions, I

propose to them a set of activities, which are also linked to Castilla-La Mancha' AC for first cycle of CSE.

### 2.3. Activities to use in the classroom

In this section, I will suggest in detail two possible activities to be carried in the CSE classroom: 'Go figure!' and 'Don't become obsessed with book covers: mind your hate speech'. Both activities are provided with the materials necessary to put them into practice, as well as with the AC that can be used in order to assess 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> CSE students' performance.<sup>5</sup>

#### 2.3.1. Go figure!

The first activity requires using Figure 8, provided below. In groups, students will be asked to analyse this fake advert in a beauty saloon.<sup>6</sup> Students will need to analyse it using the questions provided above (section 2.2), ultimately trying to determine which strategy<sup>7</sup> is at play. In relation to question number 5, *How might different audiences interpret this message?* different groups of students can be given different age groups; this may allow for their answers to questions 5 and 6 to be different, given that the perspectives applied have changed. This activity is best performed in groups of four to five students.

**Figure 8.**

**The skin you have when you are 20 has to do with genetics; the one you have when you're 55 is your responsibility!**



**Message created by an aesthetics clinic**

**Source:** Created with AI (2024).

Once students have analyzed the ad, they are asked to present their conclusions to the others. If they are presented orally, AC 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1 and 6.3 will apply. If we ask our students to provide constructive feedback to their colleagues, criterion 5. 3 will also apply.

A possible LS that can be presented to students straight after completing this activity might be that of turning them into businesspeople. They will need to develop a product, decide who the potential consumers might be, and devise the way in which it will be advertised

<sup>5</sup> For more MIL activities to be carried out in the EFL classroom, see Navarro Pérez, 2023

<sup>6</sup> Although this advert has been created for its use in the classroom, it is heavily inspired in real marketing.

<sup>7</sup> The strategy at play in this fake is 'reinforcing self-blame' however, it would be possible to argue that by presenting ageing as a 'problem' the strategy being used is 'problem-reaction-solution'.

(preferably using one or more of the media manipulation strategies they have learnt about). Once the product is chosen, the potential users identified, and the marketing strategy selected, they will present the product to their colleagues. While each group is presenting, the others will take notes and decide on which strategies are being used. This LS will help them to be critical about the marketing we are subjected to constantly, also contributing to them developing their critical thinking.

The AC to be used when assessing this LS will include the following AC: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1 and 6.3. For the second part of this LS, when students need to assess and comment on their colleagues' productions, the following AC would need to be included: 1.1, 1.2 and 5.3, given that they will first need to interpret the messages being presented with (receptive skills) and, second, present their analysis (productive skills).

2.3.2. *Don't become obsessed with book covers: mind your hate speech*

This second activity is based on news analysis. Although I have selected a specific event that took place in April 2024, more current news can be chosen. Nonetheless, I believe this activity might prove to still be current for some time to come. The event presented here has to do with how Lauren Fryer, a footballer player's partner, felt compelled to take down all her photos from social media due to the hate speech and insults she was receiving. This article clearly showcases how social networks take an important role in our lives and some of the actions we may take as a consequence of said influence.

This activity will require students to reflect to what extent some members of our society epitomize how the media manipulation strategies studied can affect people. This activity is best performed in groups of 4-5 students.

Figure 9.



Source: (Tonks, 2024).

Figure 10.

**Declan Rice's girlfriend Lauren Fryer deletes all of her pictures after cruel bullying over her appearance - as she is supported by Love Island star**

By OWEN TONKS FOR MAILONLINE  
 PUBLISHED: 20:59 BST, 23 April 2024 | UPDATED: 15:09 BST, 24 April 2024









Declan Rice's long-term girlfriend Lauren Fryer has deleted all of her Instagram pictures after receiving a barrage of abuse online over her appearance.

Lauren, 25, who is the childhood sweetheart of Arsenal player Declan Rice, also 25, wiped all posts from her Instagram page in recent days after finding herself the target of cruel online trolls.

She was taunted for her appearance, with the bullying first starting in December last year when an anonymous account told England international team member Declan he 'could do better'.

Recently, Declan was told he had 'low standards' for being in a relationship with Lauren, who is the mother to their 20-month-old son, Jude.

While Lauren still has 64,000 followers on Instagram and has kept her profile public rather than private, she has deleted all her pictures and videos amid the abuse, prompting reality star Liberty Poole, 24, to speak out.

Source: (Tonks, 2024).

In the case of this activity, students would be asked to first look at Figure 9 (without letting them see the article yet) and describe what they see. Straight afterward, they need to read part of the article provided in Figure 10.<sup>8</sup> Students will need to consider and discuss the content on the article, focusing on question 5 of section 2.2, *How might different people interpret this message? And How are they made to feel?* Hopefully students will reflect on the unfairness and cruelty of the hate speech Lauren Fryer was subjected to and side and empathise with her, frowning upon the unkind and disrespectful comments posted about her. This could also lead towards discussions about emotions and psychological well-being as a consequence of interacting with social media.

The next task to be performed by students would be that of finding similar cases of this cruel hate speech in Spanish. They will analyse these cases in the English classroom and make posters to be displayed at their high school. These posters will need to present their message clearly, visually and from a critical standpoint, showcasing how cruel and unjust they are. This activity can be assessed using the following AC: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1 and 6.3.

### 3. Results

In this article, current Spanish legislation has been analysed in relation to the emphasis being put on encouraging critical thinking amongst students. Together with this, some mention is made in this legislation about the significant role media play in our lives. The latter, as has been showcased in this article, can be easily dealt with in the EFL classroom via the introduction of MIL. This content lends itself to the creation of LS, which will in turn be easily assessed with the AC provided by Decree 82/2022 (12 July). In order to facilitate this job for English teachers, the AC for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of CSE (for Castilla-La Mancha) has been broken down into more manageable and comprehensible items, making it easier for teachers to be able to apply them in their everyday practice.

Together with this, some materials are provided for the implementation of MIL in the EFL classroom, which are easily assessed by current legislation at the time they comply with our society's needs in relation to media. Similarly, they are an ideal ally for students when it comes to encouraging their critical thinking and providing them with the necessary tools to protect their integrity by critically analysing the media that surrounds them daily. MIL can provide both – tools for the analysis of mediatic content, and skills and confidence to create their own content – given that some of the strategies used by the media to present content are analysed in detail and recreated, as it is the case in activity 1. In activity 2, students are made to reflect on how media can shape our behaviour and how that behaviour may affect others. This will in turn hopefully allow them to be more critical and thoughtful in the future before engaging in the sharing of and commenting on social media platforms.

### 4. Conclusions

Several studies have been carried out about the need for MIL to be part of the Spanish national compulsory curriculum; however, not enough research provides teachers with the necessary tools to put this work into practice. This article presents readers with some practical material to be implemented in high schools in Castilla-La Mancha for the first cycle of secondary education. Despite the fact that the AC used for their evaluation is the one being used in Castilla-La Mancha, these materials and activities can be introduced in any EFL classroom around the national territory and even internationally.

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<sup>8</sup> The full article can be found in the following link: <https://shorturl.at/EfM0q>



Activities created dealing with MIL, as it can be seen from the ones provided here, lend themselves to encourage critical analysis on the part of students. Furthermore, these kinds of argumentative activities are liable to be used both as oral or written production activities that can be carried out in groups or individually in the EFL/ESL classroom. Together with this, MIL contents are ideal to work on with students resorting to international cooperation via platforms such as eTwinning or Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). This article sets the basis for the incorporation of MIL in the English classroom, proving how MIL caters for our digitized society's needs, at the time it complies with current legislative prescriptions.

Moreover, there exists a need for more work to be carried out for the whole of secondary education as well as for primary education, where more activities are developed and put into practice and results are shared amongst teachers and academics, in order to keep developing materials which are informed by the last research and that can be constantly improved and perfected with interinstitutional collaboration.

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