Collabowriting drama: A way to understand students’ critical literacy

Degree work under the modality of creation or interpretation

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Introduction

During my experience as English teacher in a private school, I have realized the importance of taking into account students’ interests, including them into the lesson planning in order to give students a meaningful learning experience. In this particular case, the tenth and eleventh graders who I am teaching to, are quite interested on topics related to theater and drama in general, reason why I decided to use this topic to encourage them to write. This project is about the observation and inclusion of ideas, beliefs and thoughts that EFL students’ may produce during the collaborative writing of a drama script into the final version of the document.

My principal motivation for carrying out this process is the students’ interest in working on this area of art, since sometimes we as teachers tend to develop or promote certain abilities in students, but we forget to support the skills that they already have, so, taking advantage of the fact that I was part of a theater group in which we performed English plays, I decided to propose them to use their interest in drama in writing a script in a collaborative way.

In the following sections there is a description of a proposal for a creation project, in which tenth and eleventh graders were expected to use their critical thinking in writing an EFL drama script. This paper is divided on the following sections: Justification and purpose, description of creation area to be addressed, literature review, and work plan (including schedule) and references.
Objectives

The main objectives, in terms of the use of English for the production of this project were the following:

- To foster students’ collaborative writing in English as a foreign language.
- To evidence students’ critical literacy through the collaborative writing of a drama script.
Justification

The importance of carrying out this project lies on the need of enhancing students to take an active part into the EFL learning process (by using collaborative writing in this case), developing a sense of critical literacy through their abilities and interest on drama.

Writing collaboratively may not result an easy task, since each author has different perspectives, desires, ideas, beliefs and prospects about what the final paper may be, and is for that reason that it becomes necessary for them to delimit some aspects before start writing a text. The first aspect to be defined is the type of text to be produced and the reasons to choose it. For this project, students decided to work on a drama script of an existent tale. Their main reason to focus on this kind of writing is their interest on drama productions and which implies writing a script. After clarifying the type of text, it was necessary to delimit the context of the text to be written, defining characters and their features, as well as characters’ behaviors on each scene.

The process mentioned before require students’ knowledge of the tale story, comprehension and analysis of both the tale story and the new knowledge that they are producing, analysis of their ideas and their mates’ ones, creation a new product and evaluation of the final product. Those steps are part of the critical literacy, as these encourage students to reflect and to be aware about what they read and their and also to propose changes in writing, reflecting their vision of society and culture. This increase of critical literacy trough collaborative writing is my expected impact on students.

This project was conducted for three months on a population of 13 students (5 tenth graders and 8 eleventh graders) of a private school in which most of students come from Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF)*. The institution is located in the center of La Calera,
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a town located near Bogota. As this population has shown to have special interest on drama and bearing in mind the fact that teachers may look for the way of doing students enjoy their learning process, it resulted interesting for me to focus the class on their creation of a product that contributes to their English learning process, and at the same time allow them to state their critical literacy.

*Colombian wellbeing institute (translated by the author).*
Purpose

As mentioned before, one of the main aspects of participants’ motivation is drama. The students are really interested in knowing about drama performances and productions. Due to it, the objective of this project is to foster students’ collaborative writing in English, under some principles of critical literacy to produce a theater play script.

For achieving this purpose it is necessary to delimit some specific objectives. The first one was to observe which the interesting topics for students in learning English were. Then, it was needed to analyze students' interest in writing drama texts. The third objective was to look for the strategy to combine students' main Motivational topic (drama in this case) and creation of a text, in order to observe their reflective and analytical process during the writing step.

After looking for different strategies to focus English classes in drama, which is the more interesting topic for the target group, I chose collaborative writing as a helpful tool to motivate them to use English as a means to produce a text in which each one of them may give their own ideas and thoughts, constructing new knowledge through critical literacy.
Description of the area of creation

As the work of students for this project consists on the writing of a drama script, the creation area is Drama.

Drama has some synonyms as “dramaturgy” “dramatic gender” or “dramatic literature” and it is defined as the writing of plays through dialogues among the characters for their later theatrical performance. The definition of drama given by the *Diccionario de la Real Academia de la lengua Española (DRAE)* is the following: “género literario al que pertenecen las obras destinadas a la representación escénica, cuyo argumento se desarrolla de modo exclusivo mediante la acción y el lenguaje directo de los personajes, por lo común dialogado”

Drama is divided in realistic genres (tragedy and comedy) and unrealistic genres (melodrama, didactic play and tragicomedy). The main elements of drama according to Infante (2009) are these:

**The action**: Plot of the story which gathers all the events of the characters. The actions are divided into scenes, which in most of the theatrical performances, are three: The beginning, the knot and the end.

* “Literary gender to which belong works intended to be staged, whose plot unfolds exclusively through action and direct language of the characters, usually in dialogue” (translated by the author)

**The word**: referring to every single verbal action to be carried out on the performance. There are four types of organizing the word in each scene: The dialogue (among characters), the monologue (a character talking to himself), the aside (a character talking to the audience) and the
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annotations (the instructions written by the author about the way in which the play may be performed).

**The time**, which most of the times is lineal (beginning, knot, end), since it is a real time for spectators.

**The space**, defined as the place or set of places on which the play happens. As mentioned before, Drama is strongly linked with performance. As said by Raber (2001) “what is drama without a theatre in which performance takes place? It is, I will argue, a powerful abstraction of Renaissance concepts of selfhood identity and reflection on how such concepts produce forms of power” (p.16).
Whenever we try to define the term “collaboration”, many ideas, like helping others, serving in-need population or establishing positive relationship with people may come to our minds. Mattessich et al. (2001), for instance, define collaboration as a “mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards” (p.59). Another definition, given by Sinclair et al. (1995) refers to collaboration as “the act of working together to produce a piece of work; specially a book or some research” (p.33). This definition is more focused on the specific issue of collaboration that I have chosen for developing this project: collaborative writing.

Some of the definitions that Speck et. al (1999) provide to the term collaborative writing are the following:

“Collaborative writing is the lonely task of reading each source and annotating it, trying to figure out how many ways to write an annotation that doesn´t begin with ‘the authors notes (says, recommends, asserts) that’. . . . Collaborative writing is learning to trust others to take care of the voluminous details of bibliographic work, even though are all equally responsible for the project” (p. XII).
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From my perspective, collaborative writing is a helpful strategy to engage EFL learners in the process of creating and producing new content in a foreign language. At the same time, it results a motivating tool, since students are facing the experience of sharing ideas and beliefs with their partners in order to create a unique text which is thought to fulfill the expectations of each co-author, giving them the satisfaction of a well done collaborative work.

As one of the objectives of this study was to analyze the students’ use of critical literacy (C.L) through their writing process, it results necessary to mention the definition of “critical literacy” to be addressed for this paper. Based on Morrell’s (2008) and Lankshear’s (1993) definition of C.L, the concept in this project was delimited as the capacity of students to produce a reflective view of their context through and during the production of a text.

According to Dozier et al., “critical literacy involves understanding ways in which language and literacy are used to accomplish social ends. Becoming critically literate means developing a sense that literacy is for taking social action an awareness of how people use literacy for their own ends, and a sense of agency with respect to one’s own literacy”(p. 17). With this assertion, the authors highlight the importance of participants to demonstrate social awareness through literacy processes as a way of being part of the change.

These authors also mention three important tools in fostering critical literacy: “Chose in reading”, “reading levels”, and “guidance” (pp. 102-103). With the first tool, they refer to allow students to choose a literary piece from different options, in order to strengthen their capacity to choose and to discuss about different choices. The second one, reading levels, is an important topic to bear in mind and refers to look for a text which may be interesting to read in the levels of fluency, problem solving and comprehension.
The third tool mentioned by the authors is the guidance. Students may be always needing us as teachers to be their guides in any process they engaged, so it results necessary for us to accompany them, providing as much help as required by learners, without solving them steps in a process, but allowing them to complete in a satisfying way for them.

As an important part for the development of this project, it results necessary to look for theoretical basis which can evidence the existence and validity of the research topic. In this section, there are some theories and research reports on the same field of inquiry which should give an explanation about the main constructs of this research, which are motivation and teacher-student relationship. The following are some studies carried on in different countries which support my interest on implementing drama as a way to motivate students’ collaborative writing.

The first study is called “Connecting Drama and Writing: seizing the moment to write”. This study was carried out by Teresa Cremin et al. (2006), who were interested on examining the relationship between drama and writing in the English context. This is a qualitative study which as a main objective to understand the nature of the support that process drama offers to children as writers and to identify any features of writing which regularly surfaced in children’s drama related writing. For that purpose, the authors applied: video stimulated recall, observation of the case study children’s involvement, analysis of their writing and focus group interviews. They also conducted a pilot study focused on two approaches: “genre specific” and “seizing the moment” to write. After analyzing data, authors could find that in addition to a palpable increase in motivation and commitment, an enhanced sense of focus, flow and ease in writing was noticeable when the children wrote in-role during process drama. This study is relevant for my project in the sense that it highlights drama as a helpful tool for enhancing students to write,
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opening their minds to new possibilities, using writing as a way to express and liberate themselves.

Another study related to my project is “English writing through Drama with process - writing and collaborative approaches” by Germen (2013). The purpose of this study was to enhance and optimize students´ writing and learning process through the use of activities based on drama. The author used the process-writing and collaborative approaches as his fundamental theory to introduce drama in the English classes. The instruments used for collecting the data were questionnaires and interviews. The results of this study showed that drama activities enhance the confidence of the students when they had to present a questionnaire or a public speech, the students became in more active in the drama games, and, the activities applied encourage to the students to fulfill the task and to acquire a specific knowledge more effectively. The author concludes that inserting drama activities, process-writing and collaborative approaches in the classes results beneficial to the students, because these are valuable elements to improve the English writing lessons. The results of this project invites me to think how meaningful may result to apply drama in EFL classrooms in a different context to the author’s one, it means, to see what happens when applying it in a Colombian context.

The next study is called “collaborative Writing Interactions in One Ninth-Grade Classroom”. In this work, Helen Dale’s (1994) purpose is to provide insights into successful collaborative writing interactions. This mixed research addressed factors that affect the success of collaborative writing groups in one ninth-grade classroom. The instrument for conducting this study was the examination of the discourse of three coauthoring triads: a model group, a typical group, and a problem group. The findings of this study suggest that: collaborative writing has the potential to foster engagement in writing and learning; Dialogic interaction is at the heart of
Collabowriting drama effective coauthoring and is the link between those areas in which the three groups differed; engagement, conflict, and social factors; The most effective collaborative writing discourse occurred among students writing in a positive social environment who were engaged with each other, the writing process, and the topic; Coauthors worked with others productively and prompted each other to generate ideas, plan effectively, engage in discussions of ideas, and evaluate their choices at the word, structural, and idea levels.
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**Methodology**

This chapter attempts to explain the pedagogical intervention implemented for the construction and development of the creation project carried out in a public school of La Calera. In that sense, there is a detailed description of the approach, the setting, the methodology and the evaluation used during the process.

**Learning theory: Multiple intelligences (Howard Gardner)**

The theory of multiple intelligences was suggested by some other authors, before being retaken and defined by Howard Gardner, namely: Louis Thurstone, who proposed the existence of seven types of intelligence (Guzman & Castro, 2005); Guilford, who developed a model in which he suggested that the intelligence was divided in 120 components (Smith, 2001); and, Robert Sternberg, whose theory proposed three subdivisions of intelligence, called: experiential, contextual, and componential (Smith, 2001).

Those studies supported the theory about multiple intelligences proposed by psychologist Howard Gardner (1993a), but what made them different to Gardner’s theory is that he, analyzing his colleagues’ models, discovered that “none of these theorists was worried about the role of biology and creativity in humans’ intelligence” (p. 20).

Gardner (2006) explains that an *intelligence* supposes the ability to solve problems or to create need products in any society or culture. He considers better to describe the human cognitive competence using the term *intelligence*, which groups the talents, abilities and mental capacities of an individual.
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According to the definition of intelligence, Gardner proposes eight types, which are the following: Musical (ability to listen, sing, create and analyze music and play instruments and to analyze general sound), linguistic (capacity to comprehend the order, meaning and use on the words in reading, writing, listening and speaking), logical–mathematical (ability to identify abstract models in the strictly mathematical sense, calculated numerically, formulate and test hypotheses, using the scientific method and inductive and deductive reasoning), visual–spatial (capacity to present ideas visually, create mental images, perceive visual details, draw and make sketches), bodily-kinesthetic (ability to perform activities that require strength, speed, flexibility, hand-eye coordination and balance, use of hands to create or make repairs and expressed through the body), interpersonal (capacity to recognize and respond to the feelings and personalities of others, working with people, helping people to identify and overcome problems), intrapersonal (ability to set goals, evaluate skills and personal disadvantages and control one's own thinking, meditating, display self-discipline, maintain composure and give the best of him/herself) and naturalistic (ability to observe, identify and classify the members of a group or species, but can also be applied in any field of knowledge and culture).

The importance of multiple intelligences on my project relied on the fact that, as it was a creative work carried out by steps, the students could work and strengthen most of the intelligences proposed by Gardner. Table 1 shows how MI theory was addressed on the project, depending of the stage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>TYPE OF INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPED</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES THAT EVIDENCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPECIFIC INTELLIGENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning basic concepts about theatre</td>
<td>• Verbal – linguistic intelligence</td>
<td>- Clarifying concepts through a mind map.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Selecting a story to be worked | • Verbal – linguistic intelligence  
• Interpersonal intelligence  
• Logical intelligence | - Reading and analyzing different tell stories.  
- Debating and giving arguments about the reasons for choosing a specific tell story.  
- Making questions and creating relationships between tell stories and their context. |
| Writing the script | • Verbal – linguistic intelligence  
• Visual-spatial intelligence | - Writing, reading and revising a theatrical text.  
- Creating and drawing the main scenes of the story. |
| Performing the script | • Verbal – linguistic intelligence  
• Bodily – kinesthetic intelligence  
• Intrapersonal intelligence  
• Visual spatial intelligence  
• Logical intelligence | - Saying their scripts, bearing in mid meaning and pronunciation  
- Wearing costumes and acting.  
- Interiorizing features of the character to represent.  
- Managing the scenario. Drawing and using the scenography.  
- Following sequences during the performance.  
- Solving problems before, during and after the performance |

Table 1: Multiple intelligences worked on the project.

As the above table shows, different intelligences took place in each step of the creation project, making students to open their minds to several ways of understanding life, and challenging them to explore and know different abilities that they probably did not know they had.
**Language theory: Cognitive development (Lev Vygotsky)**

According to Oakley (2004), Vygotsky bases his cognitive theory on three main aspects: the culture, the language and the zone of proximal development. These main topics attempt to clarify how language and learning are produced in humans. For this project, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) plays an important role during the creation process.

Zone of proximal development is defined as “an area of learning that occurs when a person is assisted by a teacher or peer with a skill set higher than that of the subject” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. #). It is also defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). One of the most famous phrases of Vygotsky, related to ZPD, is the following: “what the child is able to do in collaboration today, he will be able to do independently tomorrow” (p. 211).

Vygotsky (1978) states two developmental states: the actual developmental level and the potential development level and asserts that the ZPD “is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p.33).

Collaborative writing (CW) was the writing strategy that students apply on the process of creating a script. The type of CW used in this project was the “horizontal-division writing” (Image 1), defined by Stratton as the form of parallel writing in which “each participant is responsible for a particular section of a document” (p. 30).
According to this kind of CW, students were divided into small groups, and each group was in charge of writing the script of a different scene of the tale. At the end of the writing section, each group was asked to read the part they did, and their partners gave opinions, asked questions and suggested changes in order to do it acceptable for the entire group. In the “assessment” section, there is a more detailed description of the process of C.W.

It was the tool that better allowed students to get the “potential development” that Vygotsky proposes, for it allowed some students to guide others, and even me, as the teacher could guide their process of writing, helping them to get higher results in learning and using the foreign language.
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**Setting and participants**

The school where this project took place is called “Fundación Atlas”. It is located in La Calera, a town near Bogotá. I chose to do the project on that school because I studied there, so the principals knew me, they gave me their help and permission to carry out this work.

This school has just one shift, from 7:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Most of the selected population comes from “ICBF”. This work was carried with a population of twelve students (5 tenth graders and 8 eleventh graders) who volunteered to participate in the project. The group was composed by eight girls and four boys who had three hours of English class a week (two hours on Tuesday and an hour on Friday).

**Pedagogical intervention**

According to what I have seen on the teaching environment, I have realized that most of the teachers care all the time on “how to deal with students’ needs” or, “how to motivate students to learn things they lack”, that was the reason why I thought about the need of looking for a project that was focused on students’ interests and abilities, on what they really enjoy doing and reading more than on their lacks.

Talking with students, as a first instance, I could notice that most of them were interested on different aspects of drama, there was even a tenth grader studying musical theatre, but unfortunately he left the school before the project was carried out. That common interest was my starting point, so the next step was to look for the adequate theory and the accurate activities in order to get a satisfactory result for both the students and me, as teacher.
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\textbf{Creation Process}

The project was divided into six main stages that allowed the students to construct and enjoy their English learning process. In this section, the reader will find the detailed explanation of each one of those stages as well as the evaluation of each one, including at the end a table which contains the entire chronogram with dates, activities and objectives.

\textbf{Stages}

\textbf{Reading (types of theatre)}

After agreeing with students about carrying out a collaborative writing project, taking into account their interest on theatre, the first activity was to read about this branch of art, for having some theoretical foundations about this artistic gender and the different types of theatre that exist. The textbook used for that search of information is called “Metáfora 8” by Norma press.

As this book was in Spanish, their challenge was to take the main ideas and make a conceptual map in English. The purpose was to make them use the English language. After this exercise, students were asked to read an article that I carried to class, called \textit{¿Cómo hacer un guión para teatro?}, written by Yolanda Sasoon. This article was a helpful tool for them to know the main points and aspects to bear in mind when writing a script for theatre.

About this reading, students had to do a review of the main tips and aspects to take into account when writing a script. Then, they did a short sketch, in pairs during class time. This exercise, with the idea of engaging students into the project of writing scripts and reading them, managed interaction with others and attention.
Choosing and reading a tell story

The second stage was to look for a story that represents best students’ interests and likes. At the end of that stage, they decided to work on the tell story called *Devil’s three golden hairs*, written by Grimm brothers. This tale is about a lucky poor boy that was predicted to marry the princess of the kingdom, and despite all king’s attempts to kill the boy, the prediction was accomplished.

During this step it was possible to observe learners’ critical literacy development, in the sense that the selection of the story was focused on looking for a text that they could adapt, reflecting on it their thoughts about any kind of social aspect. The aspect that most called their attention regarding social part, was the repetitive role that men and women play on medieval tales, so it was about this topic that the reflection was carried out during the performance.

Writing a review of the chosen story

In order to understand students’ comprehension about the story, they were asked to write, in pairs, a brief review about it, writing and describing in the first part, the characters and the general setting were the tell story took place for Grimm brothers. At the end of the session they read their reviews and one of them was in charge of produce the final version of the review, regarding partners’ opinions. This was a first close up to the type of collaborative writing explained before, called “Horizontal division writing”.

Collaborative writing process

The collaborative writing process was the key part of the project, not only because it was going to be the final product of their English work, but also because during the performance of this process of writing collaboratively, many abilities, opinions, decisions, debates, thoughts and
Collaborative writing of drama

general knowledge emerged, enriching the process in a reflective way and throwing as central theme of critical reflection the female and male role within the story to be worked on. This reflection, as mentioned in a previous section of the document, constitutes the result of one of the tools mentioned before, proposed by Dozier (2006), which is the guidance.

As we had class twice a week, the first class day on each week was focused on collaborative writing of each one of the scenes, taking into account the read article at the beginning of the process. The second day of class of each week was dedicated to read, revise and change concepts, words and grammatical order of each scene, in order to get the final product they wanted to obtain.

At the end of this stage there was a general reading about the drama script produced by the students, with some help and guidance from me, to revise general aspects like coherence, cohesion and accuracy of words.

Drawing scenes

As a result of that constant critical literacy process, many ideas emerged from the learners. One of these was the suggestion of doing drawings about the main scenes of the story. This idea was not only a proof of students' reflective and purposeful process, but also a clear show of the developed visual- spatial intelligence that Gardner mentions.

Performance of the script

Image 2: Students’ drafts of the script.
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The main goal of this project, as the title suggest, was to understand student’s critical literacy through their collaborative writing. As the final product was expected to be the drama script I never thought about the possibility to act out that script.

It was another student who proposed that option of performing the script and all but one agreed with that idea. It was an amazing new for me, because since that moment they were engaged with the rehearsals and as I had been in an English theatre company, it was not so difficult for me to help them with the process of learning by heart their scripts, bearing in mind the accents and pronunciation.

Unfortunately, the girl who was in charge of acting out the main character was the one who was not so engaged with the performance and the day we recorded the performance, she did not arrive to the class, so I had to act out that character. This was also a challenge for me, because I did not know the entire script, but I remembered most of it.

**Chronogram**

The production of the work is expected to take 5 months, from the reading and understanding of the area of creation to the final performance which is thought to be carried out at the school. Students are having three hours of English a week and the chronogram to be implemented work as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME (hours)</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday 31-07-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Talking about students’ likes and dislikes.</td>
<td>Knowing students’ common interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 07-08-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Talk about theatre and drama.</td>
<td>To have a first close up with students’ ideas and particular interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Discussion of the proposal of collabowriting a script.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 11-08-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Reading: types of theatre.</td>
<td>To take some theoretical basis of the work to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 14-08-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Conceptual map (types of theatre).</td>
<td>To observe students’ understanding about what they read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 21-08-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Choosing a tell story for its script's collaborative writing.</td>
<td>To observe student’s ability to make decisions as a group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tell story reading.</td>
<td>To get some principal ideas about the story to be worked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 25-09-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Writing a review about the tell story.</td>
<td>To observe students’ opinions, likes, beliefs and thoughts about the tell story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Reading reviews, discussing and writing a final version of the review.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 28-08-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Dividing the tell story into scenes.</td>
<td>To evidence both students’ understanding and critical analysis of the tell story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Recognizing the characters, places and situations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 04-09-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Collaborative writing on scenes 1-4.</td>
<td>To observe students’ creativity, group work and critical literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 08-09-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Reading, Revision and correction of scenes 1-4</td>
<td>To observe students’ critical literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 11-09-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Collaborative writing on scenes 5-11.</td>
<td>To observe students’ creativity, group work and critical literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 22-09-2015</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>Reading, Revision and correction of scenes</td>
<td>To observe students’ critical literacy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation

One important step in every project is the evaluation. It allows teachers to observe, analyze, guide and value the whole learning process of each student, helping learners to get better results each time. Evaluation itself cannot be totally successful without continuous assessment, this is the reason why in the following section there is a detailed description about how where students assessed and evaluated in this project, including some theoretical descriptions that helped me to define better the main concepts mentioned before. The first step consists on giving some theorists definitions about the term “assessment” and how were those definitions addressed to the development of the work.

According to Cameron (2001) “assessment is concerned with pupils’ learning or performance, and thus provides one type of information that might be used in evaluation”
Collabo *writing* drama

(p. 222). This definition highlights the relation between the two processes of grading students and the contribution that assessment gives to do an accurate evaluation.

With regard to Cameron’s definition, my project was all the time assessing students’ performance on the different activities carried out. This assessment, with the aim of having enough information for the evaluative process, consisted on a global analysis of students’ achievements.

She also mentions Vygotsky’s opinion about assessment, which states that a real assessment is not done over students’ individual performance, but over the products of a student who work with helpful others, in a social process.

Bearing in mind this view of assessment, I planned most of the activities (which are described later) for being carried out by groups, or by pairs. This fact made students feel more comfortable and confident when doing each activity, since they could discuss with each other about their opinions.

Another important definition is given by Armstrong (1999), who asserts that "Authentic assessment covers a wide range of instruments, measures and methods. The most important prerequisite of authentic assessment is observation, and the second most important is the product documentation of the students and their problem solving processes" (p. 156). I included these prerequisites proposed by the author on the assessment: observation was my most helpful tool to witness students’ performance and improvement class by class, and documenting students’ problem solving, especially in writing, let me evidence their progress in using English to express themselves.
Collabo writing drama

Conceptual map

Frola (2011) states that the mental map allows to observe concepts, in a hierarchic order, between them and their most important characteristics. She also says that this instrument lets students clarify the way in which relations among conceptual contents are established, and that the evaluation of this instrument may take into account both the process of doing it and the final result.

This instrument was used on the first stage of the process of creation. In this step (as explained before), students had to read a short document about theatre and types of theatre, and after the reading section they had to do, by pairs, a conceptual map. The way of assessing that process was, as mentioned by Frola, taking into consideration both, students’ performance during the activity (discussion with their partners, engagement with the design of the map, ability to divide roles for doing the map) and students final product (clear and coherent conceptual map).

Debate

Frola defines the debate as “a methodological alternative that allows a group to expose in front of a public the previously constructed concerns, based on searches and quests from different sources” (p. 42). Debate was in important instrument in two stages of the work: First, in the discussion that took place during the stage of choosing a story (since the participants exposed their opinions and exchanged ideas about the different fairy tales they knew and which one to choose), and during the correction of each scene (for students were discussing and giving opinions about some changes in words and word order).
This assessment tool was divided by Frola in three different stages: Script elaboration, production planning, and performance. As explained before, the main product obtained for this project was a drama script (script elaboration), written in a collaborative way (See Annex 1), so in this sense, any video was expected to do. Due to a continuous process of critical literacy, in which students actively participated in each class giving opinions and suggestions, the idea of performing and recording the drama script they were writing emerged. After taking the decision of acting the script, students and I started working on the phase called *production planning*, according to Frola (year), which consisted on learning by heart the script, working on the body and gestural expressions, looking for the costumes and creating the scenography. At the end of the planning stage, we worked on the final performance (the third step proposed by Frola), which was recorded, and constitutes an important product of the work.

After assessing the set of steps that allowed the project to be done, it was necessary to do a general evaluation about the whole project and about how the different activities contributed to achieve the objectives of project. For the explanation of the evaluative process, I have taken some theorists’ definitions and concepts of evaluation, which are quite related to the way I did that process.

Rosales (2000), for instance, states that “initial evaluation or diagnosis may lead decisions related to the didactic process planning” (p. 74). This concept is related to one of the most important stages of my project, since the application of a diagnosis (described in detail later) at the beginning of the course let me know students’ weaknesses and strengthens on English, and based on that information I could plan and focus my classes for their improvement.
Another definition is given by Santos Guerra (1996), who defines evaluation as "A process leading to comprehension and to improve educational activity process" (p.19). This view expresses that the evaluation should not be merely a process of grading students, but also a process through which students can see their progress in learning. The way in which I addressed this process of evaluation was by giving to students a continuous feedback of their performance in class.

As mentioned earlier in the present section, the type of evaluation chosen was the qualitative one. This kind of evaluation was accurate for the project in the sense that it is more focused on the process and the personal achievements of learners, than on the final result itself. Some definitions of qualitative evaluation (mentioned below) help me to support the use of this type of evaluation on my work.

According to Perez (1999) evaluation is not just the confirmation of knowledge, but an important method for teachers to meet students’ feelings and attitudes towards the teaching-learning process. This assertion is relevant to describe the way in which the entire project was evaluated, since the most important aspect for me to take into account when grading students was their performance in each class, their effort in carrying out the activities proposed, their behavior and their respect through others.

On the other hand, Patton (2003) described three kinds of data collection: open-ended interviews (yield in-depth responses about people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge), direct observation (Fieldwork descriptions of activities, behaviors, actions, conversations, interpersonal interactions, organizational or community processes, or any other
Collaborative writing drama

aspect of observable human experience), and written documents (Written materials and other
documents from organizational, clinical, or program records, personal diaries, letters, artistic
works, photographs, and written responses to open-ended surveys).

From those methods mentioned before, the one I used for the evaluation of students’
project, was the collection of written documents, specifically the final script, written
collaboratively by the whole group of students, due to it was the product in which participants
were working during all the semester.

**Grading scale**

After talking about the processes for grading students it is necessary to explain the
grading scale through which the assessment and evaluation were done.

The grading scale managed by the school is focused on students’ final result in terms of
activities, as it is showed in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL GRADING SCALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOW</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The activity (ies) proposed for the class was/were not completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BASIC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The activity (ies) proposed for the class was/were partially completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The activity (ies) proposed for the class was/were completed, but it could have been better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPERIOR</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The activity (ies) proposed for the class was/were fully completed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: School grading scale
For this project, I adapted the school’s grading criteria (table 3), giving more value to students’ performance during class than to simply final results:

**GRADING SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>The student’s attitude and interest on the development of activity as well as his/her performance in class is lower than expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASIC</td>
<td>The student’s attitude and interest on the development of activity as well as his/her performance in class is good, but can be better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>The student’s attitude and interest on the development of activity as well as his/her performance in class is very good. His/her effort is noticeable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPERIOR</td>
<td>The student’s attitude and interest on the development of activity as well as his/her performance in class is higher than expected. His/her effort is noticeable and higher than others’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Qualitative grading scale

According to this table we can observe that the most relevant aspect when grading students was their development in class, as well as their engagement in doing the activities. For exemplifying how I used the grading scale, I will take the first stage of the process (conceptual map), for showing to the reader what aspects and how those aspects were being graded (Table 4):
CONCEPTUAL MAP

- The student shows a lack of effort in the activity. (behavior)

**Low**
- The student was not helping his/her partner in the process of writing and translating into English the main ideas and concepts of the text. (engagement)
- The student’s conceptual map was not completed, or if so, the result do not match with the expectations of the activity. (final project)
- The student’s effort to do the activity was not as high as expected. (behavior)

**Basic**
- The student was helping to his/her partner just partially in the process of writing and translating into English the main ideas and concepts of the text. (engagement)
- The student’s final product was completed, but the result do not match with the expectations of the activity. (final project)
- The student’s effort in the activity was high and constant during the whole class. (behavior)

**High**
- The student was actively helping his/her partner in the process of writing and translating into English the main ideas and concepts of the text. (engagement)
- The student’s effort in the activity was higher than their partners’ one. He/she proposed and created different ways of designing the conceptual map. (behavior)

**Superior**
- The student was discussing with his/her partner about the selection of words, concepts and kind of conceptual map. The asked questions and gave opinions to the teacher. (engagement)
- The final map was done with accuracy in the foreign language and very high creativity, clarity and coherence.

Table 4: Grading the conceptual map activity.
Description and Analysis of the Results

According to the objectives proposed for this work, the results obtained at the end of this process are mainly three:

**Students’ improvement of the use of English**

This was the most important objective, talking about the English teaching-learning process. When I started teaching English to that group, I asked them to write a short paragraph about their likes and dislikes, in order to observe their weaknesses and strengthens in using English to express themselves.

After reading their answers I could notice a great need to learn many things about grammar and vocabulary. Most of them had difficulties with the use and conjugation of the verbs, as well as with the knowledge and use of grammatical categories.

The following image shows an excerpt of writing, taken from one of the participant students, in which we can evidence the problems that I have already mentioned:

![Image 3: grammar mistakes (Student A diagnosis)](image-url)
Carrying out the process of writing a document, helped them to clarify and improve their knowledge, bearing in mind the fact that during the process of writing I taught them tenses and vocabulary that they needed for the script, and I asked them to include the topics seen in class in their writing, so they were learning English in a different way to the traditional one, and this teaching process allowed me to be a guide for them, as critical literacy and Vygotsky’s ZPD suggest me to be.

At the end of the process, and after reading the final document nearly four times, I could notice students’ improvement in using English, in the sense that they understood and use verbal tenses and grammatical categories, and at the same time they were able to use the vocabulary learnt.

Image 4 shows an excerpt of a scene written by student A, the same one that wrote the text I showed in the previous image:

![Image 4: Improvements in Student A grammar use]

However, this project did not do the students manage the foreign language in a very high level, since the time was not enough, but thanks to their engagement and interest on carrying it out in the best way, their level of English improved a lot.
Students’ collaborative writing

Before starting the implementation of this project, any of the participants had written any document through collaborative writing. When I asked them about their previous experiences in writing texts in groups, many of them said that when they had any group work, they divided the work in equal parts and each member of the group did a different task and at the end they joined their assignments. This way of group work, the cooperative one, is very common among students, due to the fact that many reasons impede students to work together on the same activity, especially if it is assigned to be developed out of the classroom.

Image 5: students’ group work

When they started working as a team, many discussions appeared, since each one had a different perspective and wanted to make his/ her opinions more valid than others. For instance, the class in which they had to do the conceptual map in couples, a student came to me and told me: “teacher, I cannot work with her, please let me work alone or with other partner different to her”.
Collabo\textit{writing} drama

I told the student that the only possibility he had was to work with the lady that I had asked him to work with, so he did not like that decision, but after some minutes the boy got calmed and their conceptual map was done normally.

\textbf{Image 6: Collaborative writing}

Many similar situations are normal to appear when students have not worked with a different person to his/her best friend. But during the time of this project, the participants started being more tolerant and open minded, so at the end of the work they could work with any of their classmates in a peaceful and kind tone.

\textbf{Students’ critical literacy}

The third aspect and one of the most important is the evidence of students’ C.L during the process of writing collaboratively.

When the project began, students were critical enough for understanding the necessity of finding a story with social aspects to be analyzed. This fact made the reflective and analytic reading process easier for them and for me. They early understood that the main idea of choosing a preexistent text was to look for context contrasts and possible adaptations in the new version.
As I have mentioned before, there was a debate for choosing the story to be re-written. In that debate each student showed their options and listened to others’ opinions, and at the end, the story called Devil’s three golden hairs was selected for them to be written as a script. After the selection of the story, the students started reading the story in order to find the main issues to be addressed. At the end of this stage, there were two main issues to be discussed: one student proposes to change the format of the story. He stated that if the original work was in a written form, it would result interesting to act out the script, more than simply writing it in a theatrical format. Most of his partners agreed with the idea, so at the end of the writing process, they started learning the scripts and getting the necessary things to the performance.

The second issue was proposed by some students that highlighted the possibility to choose a girl who acted out, disguised as the main character of the story, the boy. This, with the idea of represent the social issue that human identity, and especially sexual identity is facing nowadays.

At the end of the writing process, the participants worked on learning the script by heart as well as in the search of the necessary stuff for performing the story. Unfortunately, not all of them could find the accurate costume, so they got sad about this fact. The other fact to point here is that the day that students and I programed for the recording of the video, the girl that was selected as the main character did not arrive.

For that reason, and bearing in mind that we did not have more time, I had to assume that role. It was a challenging experience, in the sense that I did not have the script on my mind, but it was also a funny and meaningful experience that allowed me to be closer to my pupils.
Implications and Impact of the Proposal on Education Context and Language

Talking about the local context, there is not any similar project enhancing students to use collaborative writing as a means to learn or improve their level of English, so it was a strong motivation for me to work on that issue, since I wanted to try a different project to carry out. The relevance of this project lied also in the fact that I was going to propose to the students a work based on their interest, which was drama, instead of simply impose a research based on their lacks and/or needs, so this fact made me think that, as it happened, they would be more motivated and willing to carry out the proposal.

This project allowed participants to have closer relationships with their partners, since it asked them to work with others, to learn as a team and to be responsible with the task in order to create a good document to be presented as their product of the class. It was also a funny experience for participants, for it allows them to create, propose, give opinions, debate, have high levels of communication and grow in values and personal abilities.

Talking about the language implication of the project, it could be highlighted the participants’ appropriation of the language content learnt through the class, not only in grammar, but also in the vocabulary they used inside the document (characters, places, setting and artifacts). This result could not be the same without motivation, so it was an advantage to focus the project on working issues they liked, since they were learning actively, by asking and looking for new words and even translating Colombian expressions into English, to make them feel closer to the characters and the play.
Collabo\textit{writing} drama

My experience as a teacher in using C.W in the EFL classroom as a way to evidence students’ critical literacy was highly significant, because I could play the role of guide, proposed by Dozier, in which I was talking with them all the time, helping them to make decisions, to choose words, to use grammar and syntax in a proper way, to teach them pronunciation, and some other tasks that allowed me to notice their engagement with the process and their desire to help others and being helped by others, too.

The main impact of this project on education and language relied on the need and importance of taking into account students strengthens and interest when planning the strategy to teach English, since many students do not like learning this language, and if educators do not look for the best way to make them enjoy their learning process, probably it is not going to be as successful as expected. I mention this issue because having motivated students, highly improve their behavior and attitude towards the class, and make them feel proud of what they do and learn in each session, allowing facts as multiple intelligences or critical literacy to be developed in an easy and natural way.
Collaborative writing drama

Conclusions

The project had two main objectives which motivated me to carry it out and to observe and analyze each step during the creation process. One of the objectives consisted on fostering students’ collaborative writing in English as a foreign language. Regarding this issue, both the process and the final result showed that students felt motivated about writing a theatre script in English in a collaborative way, since this strategy made them be free of expressing themselves and exchange opinions and knowledge, but overall because this project was a new way for them to learn English, so it gave them confidence and interest in the learning process. Based on those results and bearing in mind the definitions and importance of collaborative writing mentioned at the beginning of the document, it is possible to state that implementing creative and collaborative tasks in the ELF classroom will strengthen students’ connection with the English learning process, helping them to develop both the interpersonal intelligence and the ZPD, by understanding what it means to work as part of a team, enhancing in this way better channels of communication with their peers, and improving the classroom environment.

The second objective was to evidence students’ critical literacy through the collaborative writing of a drama script. Regarding the concept of critical literacy that was applied to that project, which highlights the need of participants to reflect about the social context through a text, it was possible to observe students’ capacity to propose changes in the original text, in order to give it a modern sense that reflected their reality in some way. The most representative proof of it was their idea of asking a girl to act the main character who was a boy, looking for the way of evidence the rising sexual issues as homosexuality, since this representation of reality invite the people to think beyond a typical medieval tell, analyzing social issues that correspond to our own context.
Collabo*writing* drama

This result, as well as the use of the tools proposed by Dozier to have a good level of C.L, were significant to prove the capacity of students to create different projects and products, taking as the base of their proposals their social context, looking for the way of state a position towards current social issues that may affect them in a positive or negative way. Due to it, I will settle that enhancing students to reflect about their context trough creative writing activities, will result a meaningful strategy to promote critical literacy in the EFL classroom, making students be more reflective and analytic about their daily life and the issues that surround and affect them in some way, as long as the teacher gives them the necessary guidance to make them feel confidence in themselves and the thoughts they want to express.

About the use of C.W as a means to evidence students' critical literacy, and based on the process and achievements supported by both assessment and evaluation, it is possible to say that this kind of projects in the EFL classroom, help students to have an integral growth, since they are not only improving their language skills, but they are also learning both to express their ideas and thoughts and to tolerate and respect others’ opinions, and at the same time, during the process of creation, they are developing they personal skills and intelligences, getting in this way a better knowledge about themselves and being more propositive and critic in their daily life.
References


Collabo**writing** drama


Video (students’ performance): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SCLrWBMiY0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SCLrWBMiY0)
Annex 1

DEVIL’S THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

(For seeing the performance, click here)

NARRATOR: Once upon a time, there was a boy who was born with good look. It was predicted that he will marry the princes of the kingdom when the king heard this gossip he went to the boy’s village and convinced his parents to let him adopt the boy. As soon as the king arrive to the river, he put the little boy into a box and threw it into the river, but the box floated and it was found by a farmer who foster the baby and cared him a lot.

Fourteen years later, the king was patrolling the kingdom, and he stopped in front of a farm. There he asked for some water for his horses and saw a boy who gave the water. The king could easily recognize that this boy was the one that he had thrown into the river, so he immediately planed something to end the boy’s life. He decided to write a letter and send it with the boy to the castle.

KING: Good morning tender boy

BOY: Good morning

KING: I need you help! I need you to go to the castle and give this letter to the queen, can you?

BOY: Ok! But I am not going to do it for free, am I?

KING: Of course not! Here you are some money for the soda.

NARRATOR: The boy start walking, but after many hours walking through the forest he got lost. After one hour walking into the darkness, he saw a light and he thought it may be a shelter for him.

BOY: oh! Virgin of the holy trinity, I see a light! I may go through it.

NARRATOR: The boy knocked the door and an old woman opened the door.

OLD WOMAN: What do you want here?

BOY: I am really tired, so I want to, may be, stay here this night.
OLD WOMAN: Oh dear! You may get into trouble if you stay here! This house is walted by thieves who may kill you as they see you here.

BOY: It doesn’t matter! I will stay here for I’m really tired. I have been walking for a long journey, so I’m going to sleep right here.

NARRATOR: He felt asleep. After some time the thief arrived home and saw the boy

THIEF: Who is him? Oh, look! He has a letter of the king.

NARRATOR: When he read the letter he discovered that the king asked the queen to kill the boy as the letter were delivered by him, so he decided to change the letter writing instead that the boy had to marry the princess as the letter were received by the queen.

When the king arrived to the kingdom, he knew that his daughter was married with the boy. He got angry with the queen for doing it.

KING: What did you do? Why did you allow the princess to marry that disgusting boy?

QUEEN: I´m sorry! I did what the letter said.

KING: Where is the boy?

QUEEN: He is in the backyard with the princess.

NARRATOR: The king went to the backyard to talk with the boy.

KING: hello boy, I see you love my daughter and if you want to stay with her, you have to go to the hell and bring me the three golden hairs of the devil.

BOY: I will go!

PRINCESS: No, please, don´t do that! If you do it, your life will be in risk.

BOY: Don´t worry! I´m not afraid about the devil and I love her, I am going to do it for her

PRINCESS: Well, I love you, and I´m going to pray for you until you come back.

Boy: Ok, I love you
NARRATOR: The boy started walking to hell. After some time, he found a guardian who stopped his walk.

GUARDIAN: Where do you go?

BOY: I want to go to hell.

GUARDIAN: If you tell me why the font that emanated wine, now doesn’t give even water, you will cross the door.

BOY: Yes, I will tell you when I return.

NARRATOR: The boy could cross and continued his walk to hell. The boy arrived to other town where there was a guardian who stopped his walk.

GUARDIAN: Where do you go?

BOY: I want to go to hell.

GUARDIAN: If you tell me why the three that gave golden apples, now doesn’t have even leaves, you will cross the door.

BOY: Yes, I will tell you when I return.

NARRATOR: The boy could cross and continued his walk to hell. The boy arrived to a river. There was a man in a boat who asked to the boy:

BOATMAN: Where do you go?

BOY: I go to the hell

BOATMAN: If you tell me why I can’t go out of this boat, I will carry you to the other side.

BOY: Ok! But when I return.

NARRATOR: Finally, the by arrived to the hell. There, there was devil’s grandmother. The boy told her his problem and she decided to help the boy. When the devil arrived to hell, his grandma was cooking.

GRANDMA: Where have you been?
DEVIL: I was hunting butterflies and I am really tired. Please let me sleep near to you, while you brush my hair.

NARRATOR: When the devil fell asleep, his grandma took off the first hair.

DEVIL: Oh grandmother, be careful with my hair!

GRANDMA: It is that I had a nightmare where I saw a tree that gave golden apples but now doesn’t have even leaves.

DEVIL: That is because in the roots of the tree there is a rat. They have to take it off and the tree will have leaves and golden apples again.

NARRATOR: He fell asleep and she took off the second hair.

DEVIL: Oh hell, what’s up?

GRANDMA: Calm down son! It’s that I had another nightmare in which I saw a source that emanated water, and now it doesn’t give even water.

DEVIL: That is because in the bottom of the font there is a frog.

NARRATOR: The devil fell asleep again and her grandma took the third hair.

DEVIL: What the f...? Stop taking my hair!

GRANDMA: I’m sorry, I had another nightmare! I dreamed that in a boat there was a man rowing from side to side of a river and he couldn’t go out.

DEVIL: He just has to put the paddle in the hands of other person.

NARRATOR: As the grandma had the three hairs she let the devil sleep. The boy took note of the answers and after receiving the hairs, he left the hell and he went to the river.

BOATMAN: you came back! Did you bring the answer?

BOY: Yes, I bring the answer, but I will tell you when you when I go to the other side.

NARRATOR: The boat man carried him to the other side of the river.

BOATMAN: Can you tell me what do I have to do?

BOY: Yes, what you have to do is to put the paddle into the hands of other person, and then you can set free

BOATMAN: Thank you.
NARRATOR: The boy arrived to the town where the tree was damaged.

GUARDIAN OF THE TREE: Did you come back?

BOY: Yes I did.

GUARDIAN OF THE TREE: Did you bring the answer or not? If you brought the answer we will reward you with our gold.

BOY: Yes, what you have to do is to take of the rat which is in the roots of the three.

GUARDIAN OF THE TREE: Thank you for helping our village.

NARRATOR: The boy arrived to the other town.

GUARDIAN OF THE FOUNT: You came back! Did you bring the answer?

BOY: Yes I did.

GUARDIAN OF THE FOUNT: If you brought the answer we will reward you with our gold.

BOY: Only what you have to do is to take off the rat which is in the bottom of the fount and then it will emanate wine again.

GUARDIAN OF THE FOUNT: Thank you for helping our village.

NARRATOR: The boy arrived to the castle with the hairs and the gold given by the people. When the king saw the gold of the boy he wanted gold so he told to the boy:

KING: If you want to stay with my girl you have to tell me where you found that gold.

BOY: Yes! What you have to do is to go to the river and there you will find a boat man. After you cross the river you will find all the gold you want.

NARRATOR: When the king arrived to the river, the man of the boat put the paddle into the hands of the king, and he was condemned to stay into the boat forever. The boy and his princess could live happy for the rest of their lives.

The End