

Exploring multiliteracies and self-esteem development through Disney villains in EAL Education

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Abstract

This article explores how self-esteem develops in English as an additional language (EAL) students through the figure of the villain in Disney films. The study, conducted during the 2022-2023 academic year in a 3rd grade class at a public school in Valencia, employed the pedagogy of multiliteracies to enhance students' self-esteem and facilitate knowledge construction. Inspired by villains from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *101 Dalmatians* (1961), *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *The Lion King* (1994), the didactic unit used these characters to teach English and to prompt discussions on acceptance and self-esteem. Various instruments were utilized to gather and interpret data in order to assess the research objectives. The incorporation of multimodal resources, as advocated by the pedagogy of multiliteracies, ensured that lessons were engaging and in line with contemporary language education practices. The results indicate a positive impact on students' self-esteem, knowledge construction, and motivation to express their ideas and reflections.

Keywords: self-esteem; EAL teaching; multimodality; multiliteracies; villain.

1. Introduction

Today's society reflects the traits of a globalized and digitized world in which a multitude of languages, identities and cultures coexist. Learning English as an additional language (EAL) at an early age offer significant opportunities for socialization and personal growth in this dynamic era. Therefore, as English teachers, when working with students in Primary Education, it is crucial to focus not only on language proficiency but also on fostering students' personal development. This includes encouraging them to think independently, seek new perspectives, express their interests and understand their emotions. Ultimately, this guidance helps them become meaning makers and explore their identities.

The concept of literacy in the 21st century extends beyond traditional reading and writing, encompassing a wide range of multimodal texts and media that students encounter daily. Effective language education must incorporate these diverse forms of representation to facilitate comprehensive learning and meaning-making. The pedagogy of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Cope and Kalantzis, 2015) supports this approach by integrating multimodal resources, which align with contemporary educational needs and help students develop their multiple literacies and construct knowledge from various sources. These literacy practices are deeply intertwined with students' sense of self, making the development of identity and acceptance a critical component of education.

Despite the inherent joy, happiness, and curiosity of childhood, learners often encounter confusing messages or situations that can threaten their self-esteem. As Mruk (2006: 3) explains:

whether self-esteem has to do with an abiding sense of worthiness as a person or the experience of being able to solve problems competently, or both, self-esteem is intensely personal, in part because it says something about who we are and how we live our lives.

In this line of thinking, the need to work and enhance children's self-esteem is often overshadowed by a strong focus on curricular and theoretical content. Providing students with opportunities to reflect on their emotions, appreciate their identity, and accept themselves is crucial. The EAL classroom can play a key role in this process. This article explores how learning English can foster students' self-esteem by engaging them in reflections and discussions on multimodal resources and related topics.

Based on a selection of four characters that play the role of the villain in renown Disney films, a learning path was designed through which learners in primary education can work on the notion of acceptance and appreciation of who they are and how they feel about it. As will be shown, the figure of the villain in the films of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *101 Dalmatians* (1961), *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *The Lion King* (1994) embody the representation of significant conflicts related to self-confidence, self-worth, and resent-

ment. By examining these villains, students in primary education can explore themes of acceptance and self-appreciation.

For instance, The Evil Queen's obsession with physical appearance raises questions about beauty standards and self-worth: "Magic mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?" Similarly, Ursula's desire for Ariel's voice and Scar's ambition to become king highlight issues of envy and self-perception. Cruella de Vil's extravagant obsession with fur, to the extent of harming animals, underscores a lack of self-acceptance. These fictional villains provide a rich context for triggering discussions and reflections in the EFL classroom, helping students to explore their emotions and understand the concept of self-esteem.

2. Literature review

In this section, we first explore the concept of literacy and introduce the pedagogy of multiliteracies as a teaching methodology that conciliates the goal of communication and meaning making through the use of multimodal resources in additional language teaching. Next, we discuss the relevance of self-esteem as a crucial factor in students' learning and overall well-being. Finally, we examine the representation of villains in selected Disney films and the values they convey.

2.1. From literacy to multiliteracies: understanding learning as meaning-making

Traditionally, an individual was considered literate if he or she had the ability to read and write. These two skills were thought to be sufficient in order to encode and decode messages. However, as Yates (2007) notes, there is no purpose to decoding without making sense of it. There is no meaningful learning if there is not a process of reflection behind it. In the 21st century society, children are constantly exposed to different types of texts and modes of representations in which meaning is portrayed through images, colors, music and sounds. Hence, the concept of literacy goes beyond reading and writing as well as just the acquisition of vocabulary or grammatical structures in the English lessons. As Kern (2000: 9) explains, literacy should be viewed as "a process of creating and transforming knowledge", incorporating sociocultural practices and the development of new perspectives (New London Group, 1996; López-Sánchez, 2009; Cassany and Castellà, 2010; Kucer, 2014; Bataller- Català and Reyes-Torres, 2019). This approach to literacy can be applied in additional language education.

In today's multimodal society, there are countless resources from which learners can create meaning and turn information into knowledge. Consequently, EAL teaching must address the multimodal pedagogic demands of the global digital world (Reyes-Torres and Portalés-Raga, 2020). Multimodality entails communication occurs through various methods of representation such as images, sounds, texts, colors and music simultaneously (Kress, 2010). Therefore, in order to understand the meaning of a given source of information, it is

necessary to take into account all the elements involved in it. In the context of movies, it is essential to decode and create meaning by paying attention to the images, movements, sounds, dialogues, facial expressions, colors and words that appear since all these elements construct the communicative act itself.

Authors such as the New London Group (1996), Cope and Kalantzis (2015), Warner and Dupuy (2018), Lacorte and Reyes-Torres (2021), Zapata (2022) and Paesani and Menke (2023) argue that in the 21st century, the term literacy should be replaced by multiliteracies to reflect the diversity of texts and modes of representation. Since children are exposed daily to an endless number of communication channels and media, the messages they receive are represented in very different ways. Consequently, integrating these diverse modes into classrooms across subject areas in Primary Education becomes a necessity if we want to provide them with opportunities to access, interpret and share information effectively.

Furthermore, integrating multiliteracies into EAL classrooms, in particular, offers an inclusive pedagogical approach through which students can be immersed in a plethora of topics, including self-esteem. As a result, students can see their own identities, languages and experiences reflected and validated. This validation fosters a sense of belonging and helps build their confidence to express their unique perspectives. As Morgan and Ramanathan (2005: 158) note, diverse multimodal materials can “engage identities and the imagination in provocative ways unmet through other textual resources”. Such engagement allows students to see themselves as active participants in the learning process, creating and interpreting meaning rather than passively consuming information. By participating in tasks where their contributions are valued and celebrated, students develop a sense of achievement, which is intrinsically tied to higher self-esteem.

This highlights the dual role of multiliteracies in facilitating both meaning making and critical thinking, while also serving as the medium through which content is engaged and understood (Kim and others, 2020; Zapata, 2022; Paesani and Menke, 2023). EAL teachers, therefore, can take advantage of various multimodal and authentic resources to guide students in constructing knowledge. Disney films, in this case, expose learners in third grade to authentic target language, speech forms, cultural experiences and meaningful narratives. By seeing how diverse characters navigate challenges and grow, students can be inspired to view their own identities and struggles in a more positive light.

Accordingly, learning any language nowadays involves guiding learners to construct meanings from different sources, developing their multiliteracies, encouraging them to use their previous experiences, reflect and exchange perspectives. In other words, learners must take an active role in their own education. To this end, it is important for educators to take into consideration the multidimensional nature of literacy. According to Kucer (2014), three key components can be distinguished:

- Cognitive dimension. It refers to the set of values, attitudes, characteristics, backgrounds, and abilities that learners bring to the classroom in order to approach a text and create meaning.
- Conceptual dimension: It deals with any contents, topics or linguistic aspects that teachers guide students to learn in order to foster their knowledge and enable them to develop new insights.
- Sociocultural and aesthetic dimension: It draws attention to the reader as a subject shaped by his or her cultural context. The aim is to provide them with tasks that allow them to interact with other individuals and exchange their views.

In this study, the connection between literacy and learner identity is crucial. Pahl and Rowsell (2013: 15) emphasize that “literacy practices are infused with identity”. Therefore, literacy and identity cannot be understood as two separate aspects of children's lives. In fact, it is possible to observe how students' improvement in English class may be challenging if their self-esteem is low.

2.2. Building self-esteem in the EAL classroom

Youth is a critical period for developing positive self-esteem, which needs to be nurtured from early childhood. According to Haeussler and Milicic (2014: 14),

the concept of the self is gradually constructed through time and experiences lived by the subject. Some of them, due to their intensity or significance for the individual have more programming value than others: the positive or negative experiences that adults remember from their childhood explain what people feel about themselves.

Hence, while the national curriculum is filled with conceptual and procedural content on mathematics, science and language, students often lack the opportunity to work on their emotions, goals and their passions, which should be integral to their education.

From a holistic point of view, self-esteem affects the educational process as a whole, just as education influences the development of high or low self-esteem. In the EAL classroom, self-esteem has a significant impact. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2022) highlight that increasing students' self-esteem can result in the improvement of language acquisition. Similarly, Seligman (2002) stresses the relevance of character-building and well-being for learners to thrive and participate in meaningful social relationships. Thus, students need to understand themselves, learn to express their emotions, and develop self-love and care. Education impacts self-esteem through experiences, comments, feedback or significant situations. The EAL classroom can also play a role in the process of enhancing learners' emotions and feelings.

Research has shown that self-esteem is closely linked to academic performance and social behavior. High self-esteem contributes to greater confidence in tackling new tasks, resil-

ience in the face of challenges, and a willingness to participate in classroom activities. Conversely, low self-esteem can result in anxiety, withdrawal, and a reluctance to engage, which negatively impacts learning outcomes. Therefore, addressing self-esteem is not merely a supplementary aspect of language education but a fundamental component that influences students' overall learning performance and well-being.

2.3. Exploring self-esteem through Disney's antagonists

Disney films, in addition to providing fun and entertainment, convey plots of great relevance in terms of the values, perspectives or messages that they present. Analyzing these films from a multimodal perspective and discussing the issues they portray in the EAL classroom engages students in meaning construction and reflection.

The villains in Disney films serve as antagonists, often embodying conflicts related to self-esteem. For example, The Evil Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is obsessed with being the fairest in the land, relying on her magic mirror instead of appreciating her own beauty. Similarly, Cruella de Vil in *101 Dalmatians* displays a lack of acceptance despite her elegance and extravagance. Ursula in *The Little Mermaid* offers happiness by altering Ariel's physical appearance. Scar in *The Lion King* feels inferior to his popular brother and resorts to murder to gain the throne. In each film, the villains' feelings of inadequacy, jealousy, or greed reveal issues related to low or damaged self-esteem.

These character-driven conflicts provide a rich foundation for classroom discussion. By examining the motivations and insecurities of these villains, students can explore deeper questions about self-worth and identity. This process of reflection not only enhances their understanding of the characters but also prompts them to consider their own feelings and experiences.

Transitioning from analyzing these characters to practical classroom applications, it becomes evident that teachers have a pivotal role in shaping students' self-esteem. By creating activities that allow learners to explore and express their emotions, educators can help students build a stronger sense of self. The EFL classroom, with its emphasis on communication, literacies development and expression, is particularly well-suited to this task.

To conclude, fostering learners' multiliteracies transforms the EFL classroom into a space for reflection and the enhancement of self-esteem. Disney fiction, with its complex villains, provides an excellent multimodal resource for designing a learning path focused on emotional learning and self-exploration. By embracing these narratives, teachers can guide students in understanding their emotions and experiences, ultimately supporting their personal and academic growth.

3. Research design

This research follows an interpretative paradigm that aims to analyze and understand the data provided by the participants. Consequently, a mixed study was conducted, focusing on students' responses and activities performed before, during, and after implementing four lessons in the EFL class. The participants included 24 third-grade students from a public school in the city of Valencia. The students, whose English proficiency ranged from A1 to A2, generally displayed commitment and a positive attitude toward the project.

As detailed in table 1, the didactic unit consisted of four lessons based on each of the four Disney villains selected. The structure of each lesson was as follows: (1) Warm-up: The lesson began with the discovery and discussion of a "Wanted" poster featuring the day's villain, sparking curiosity and engagement. (2) Pre-viewing questions: Students were posed with reflective questions related to the villain and the upcoming clip, setting the stage for deeper understanding. (3) Viewing and discussion: Students watched scenes featuring the villain and then engaged in a discussion about key ideas related to the content and the overarching theme of self-esteem. (4) Activity: An interactive activity, game, or task related to the lesson's theme followed the discussion, allowing students to apply what they had learned. (5) Calm-Down activity: The lesson concluded with a mindfulness exercise, which included a self-affirming statement and ended with a group hug to reinforce a sense of community and self-worth.

This structured approach not only facilitated the exploration of self-esteem themes through engaging and multimodal content but also provided a supportive environment for students to reflect on and express their emotions. Below is an outline of the lessons and the topics covered.

TABLE 1

Didactic unit

LESSON	TOPIC	LANGUAGE SKILLS
The Evil Queen	Appreciating one's own beauty	Thinking and communicating
Ursula	Physical appearance and complexes	as a result of Listening
Cruella de Vil	Acceptance	Speaking, Reading,
Scar	Comparisons and one's own personal issues	Writing and Viewing

In addition to the didactic unit, data was collected through three main instruments: (1) a questionnaire that included a Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE) (Rosenberg, 1965), (2) an activity called “My ID card” carried out before and after the didactic unit, (3) a research diary.

The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE) is a 10-item questionnaire designed to measure the students' level of self-esteem. This test includes 10 statements that children score from 0 to 3 based on their agreement (“strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree”). Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem. The results are categorized as follows:

- 20 to 30 points: High self-esteem. The student demonstrates good self-esteem and self-acceptance.
- 16 to 19 points: Medium self-esteem. The student does not exhibit any serious self-esteem issues, but could benefit from enhancement.
- Less than 15 points: Low self-esteem. The student has significant self-esteem issues.

Together with the RSE scale, a fully qualitative activity called “My ID card” was designed. Learners were given a blank identity card on which they drew themselves and listed characteristics and traits that they felt proud of. This activity was primarily conducted in English; however, students were allowed to use Spanish if they struggled to express certain ideas, vocabulary or any other linguistic elements.

Finally, a research diary was used to document any significant events that could provide insights into the children's self-esteem and their English language development. This diary was mainly used to record the students' reflections during the didactic unit, along with noteworthy comments or situations that provided clues about the process the children were undergoing to build knowledge. This comprehensive approach ensured a solid analysis and interpretation of the students' self-esteem and learning progress.

4. Results and discussion

The results of the research are presented and discussed in this section. The analysis begins with a focus on data derived from comparing pre-test and post-test results, supplemented by information from the research diary. Regarding the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE), several graphics illustrate and explain the evolution of the students' self-esteem, offering a holistic view of the class results. These visuals help to clearly depict changes in self-esteem levels across the group, highlighting both individual and collective progress.

For the qualitative results, a set of codes and categories was designed to analyze the reflections that the learners made during the didactic unit (and that were collected in the research diary). This approach provides a structured method for examining the students' thoughts and feelings, revealing deeper insights into their self-esteem and learning experiences.

Finally, we discuss the activity “My ID card”, which served as the second part of the pre-test and post-test. Evidence of the students' work is presented to demonstrate how they

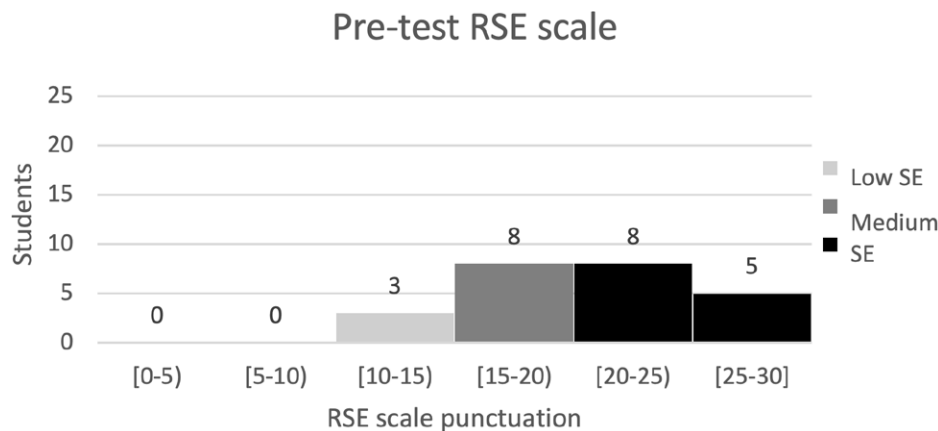
performed this task before and after the intervention. This comparison highlights the impact of the didactic unit on their self-perception and self-expression, offering concrete examples of their progress.

4.1. Rosenberg self-esteem scale results

Figure 1 below shows the results of the Rosenberg self-esteem test performed before the intervention.

FIGURE 1

Results of the pre-test questionnaire

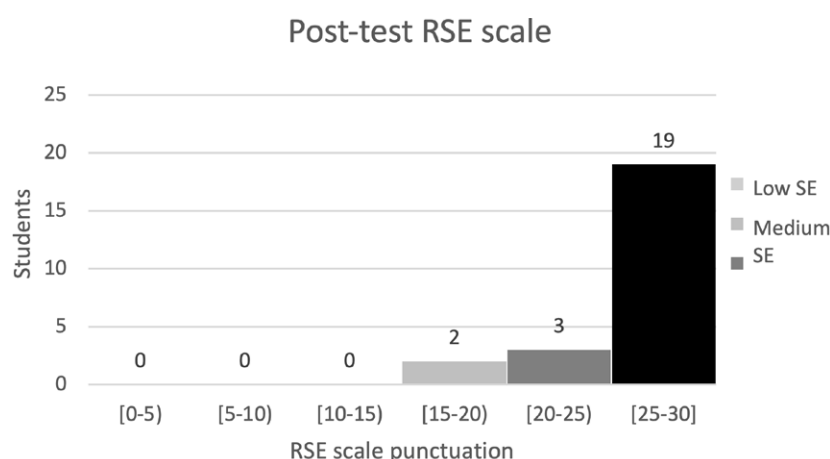


Overall, the class exhibited an average level of self-esteem, with no significant deficiencies or exceptionally high levels. Out of the 24 students, three scored below 15 on the RSE, indicating low confidence. Eight students scored between 16 and 19, reflecting medium self-worth that could benefit from enhancement. The remaining 13 students scored in the high self-esteem range. In summary, approximately half of the group had a medium or low self-esteem, suggesting room for improvement, while the other half demonstrated favorable levels.

Figure 2 shows the results of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale test carried out after the intervention. The data reveals that the intervention had a positive impact on the majority of the class. Of the 24 students, 22 showed high self-esteem, while only 2 displayed medium self-esteem. Notably, no students scored in the low self-esteem range. Furthermore, the graph indicates that 19 of the 22 students obtained an outstanding score between 25 and 30. Comparing figure 1 and figure 2, it is evident that the class moved from an average self-esteem situation to an optimal one. The significant improvement suggests that the lessons have had a strong impact on the students' self-perception and confidence.

FIGURE 2

Results of the post-test questionnaire



4.2. Qualitative results

This section presents an analysis of the reflections recorded as a result from the implementation of the didactic unit, the activity title “My ID card” and the comments written in the research diary. All data are discussed and interpreted according to the three dimensions of literacy established by Kucer (2014): cognitive, conceptual and sociocultural. A table categorizes the data into these three dimensions, each with its own set of codes. This coding of the data will be used later to discuss the results.

TABLE 2

Codification: the 3 dimensions of literacy

CATEGORY	CRITERIA	CODES
Cognitive Dimension	Critical thinking and understanding of the topics	CTUT.
	Connection with previous knowledge or ideas	CPK
	Expression of personal thoughts and values	EPTV
	Presentation of identity traits	PIT
Conceptual Dimension	Communication and understanding through visual elements (visual literacy)	VE.
	Communication and understanding through written texts	WT
	Introduction of new vocabulary for expressivity	NVE
	Presence of significant and personal ideas about the topics	SPI

Sociocultural and Aesthetic Dimension	Willingness and interest to reflect from each villain	WIV.
	Empathy and understanding of the villain's concerns	EUV
	Positive attitude and motivation towards learning through films	PAM
	Relation of the students with the literary characters	RSL

4.2.1. Didactic unit reflections

Tables 3, 4 and 5 present a selection of comments made by students while watching Disney clips featuring the villains from each film. These reflections, recorded while the lessons were being taught, allow us to focus the investigation on the students' literacy development and their process of constructing meaning.

TABLE 3

Qualitative results: cognitive dimension

DU REFLECTIONS	CODES
COGNITIVE DIMENSION	
"She could be more beautiful if she didn't have an evil personality, not everything is on the surface".	CTUT/EPTV.
"I think that Ariel should not have signed the contract without looking, I would have read it before".	CTUT/EPTV
"For example, I am not a big fan of my hair, but I would not change it for another person".	PIT/EPTV
"I don't think Ariel should have changed herself for another person, she is amazing and beautiful as a mermaid"	CTUT/EPTV
"It is similar to Ariel's problem who should have accepted that she is a mermaid and that there is no problem with not having legs".	CTUT/CPK
"We should not compare ourselves with the rest because it does not have a positive impact on us".	CTUT/PIT
"I used to compare myself with other people and it did not make me feel good".	PIT/CPK

Regarding the cognitive dimension, it can be observed that students made insightful comments by drawing on their personal values and prior knowledge. For example, one student remarked "She could be more beautiful if she didn't have an evil personality; not everything is on the surface" (EPTV). Additionally, they demonstrated significant critical thinking skills

in their reflections, such as: “I don’t think Ariel should have changed herself for another person; she is amazing and beautiful as a mermaid” (CTUT).

Moreover, students not only grasped the main ideas of each lesson but also made connections between the villains. For instance, during the lesson on Cruella de Vil, after watching the scenes, one child commented “It is similar to Ariel’s problem, who should have accepted that she is a mermaid and that there is no problem with not having legs” (CTUT & CPK). Finally, while discussing Scar’s situation, a student raised his hand and said “I used to compare myself with other people, and it did not make me feel good” (PIT & CPK). This demonstrates how, in the process of constructing meaning, students were able to relate to the literary characters and express their own personal ideas and concerns.

TABLE 4

Qualitative results: conceptual dimensions

CONCEPTUAL DIMENSION	
“We know she is a villain because of her black dress and her long nails”.	VE.
“The most important thing in our lives is ourselves, that is why we should not underestimate the person we are”.	SPI
“When Ursula sings poor unfortunate souls, does poor mean that they are not very fortunate? Is the same word we use for referring to someone who lacks money isn’t it?”.	NVE
“You can easily tell she is a villain because she smokes and her laugh is quite scary”.	VE
I think that if we join de Vil we can get the word de-vil which stands for something malevolent”.	NVE
“His scar denotes that he is an evil character, probably he had gotten it from a fight”.	VE
“I have realized that in Disney they use the color green for the villains, look at the smoke that comes from the rocks behind Scar!”.	VE

As shown in table 4, students engaged with the conceptual dimension by focusing on the linguistic and artistic features of the films. They contributed new ideas by identifying and understanding some of the multimodal elements of the films. For example, one student observed “We know she is a villain because of her black dress and her long nails” (VE). Another student inquired “Is there any meaning behind Cruella’s name? I think that if we join *de Vil* we get the word *devil*, which stands for something malevolent” (NVE).

They also analyzed the use of language. This is illustrated by a student's reflection during the lesson on *The Little Mermaid*: “When Ursula sings ‘poor unfortunate souls’, does ‘poor’ mean that they are not very fortunate? It’s the same word we use to refer to someone who lacks money, isn’t it?” (NVE). Finally, it is important to highlight how children were able to present their own personal ideas thanks to their understanding of the topics and contents addressed (SPI). For instance, during the lesson on the Evil Queen, a child remarked “The most important thing in our lives is ourselves; that is why we should not underestimate the person we are” (SPI).

TABLE 5

Qualitative results: sociocultural and aesthetic dimensions

SOCIOCULTURAL AND AESTHETIC DIMENSION	
Students are fully concentrated and follow any instruction despite being the first lesson.	PAM.
“I strongly believe she is beautiful; she just needs to appreciate her own beauty”.	EUV
“Even though she has some evil ideas, I love her elegance and her way of talking”.	RSL
“Yes! I love The Little Mermaid it is my favorite film and Ursula is the villain I love the most”.	WIV/PAM
“I can understand Cruella. Sometimes it is frustrating when we make a lot of effort for accomplishing something, but we don’t achieve it”.	EUV
“I am a very thin person like Cruella, and I love how it does not stop her from wearing her favorite clothes”.	RSL
“Have the scenes ended already? Time is literally flying in these lessons!”.	PAM
“Sometimes I also get very worried about any concern I have and I can’t stop thinking about it, in the same way it happens to Scar”.	EUV

Finally, in relation to the sociocultural and aesthetic dimension, the discussion about Disney villains encouraged students to interact and exchange perceptions based on their social and cultural backgrounds. The following example demonstrates how they established and expressed emotional connections: “I am a very thin person like Cruella, and I love how it does not stop her from wearing her favorite clothes” (RSL). Additionally, students were able to understand others' perspectives, even if they differed from their own, and showed empathy for the villains: “Sometimes it is frustrating when we make a lot of effort to accomplish something, but we don’t achieve it” (EUV).

The aesthetic aspect is also noteworthy, as students were fully engaged and enjoyed the EFL class. They made comments such as: “Have the scenes ended already? Time is literally

flying in these lessons!" (PAM), and "Yes! I love The Little Mermaid. It is my favorite film, and Ursula is the villain I love the most" (WIV).

As can be seen, students developed insightful reflections that reveal their literacy development in the process of constructing new understandings.

4.2.2. Activity "My ID Card"

In addition to other findings, the first significant result that must be highlighted after from this activity is the connection found between learning English and the development of students' self-esteem. As students wrote about the physical traits that they like about themselves, they reflected on their identity and became more self-aware. The following sentences, in figure 3, represent the initial version of the work they did: "I love my nose", "I love my eyes", "I am big and tall", etc.

FIGURE 3

Students' ID cards: initial version



At the beginning, many students struggled to identify anything they liked about themselves or any characteristics that defined them. These students were used to answering questions in school about Math, Science, or History, but not about themselves, their dreams, or their feelings. In fact, to complete the initial draft of this task, some students wrote about things they liked in general rather than about themselves.

After the intervention, the same activity was conducted along with the RSE questionnaire, as in the pre-test. This time, the results showed a significant difference. First, students felt more comfortable and were able to share their ideas and thoughts more freely (figure 4). Second, their drawings were larger, and they used more space on the sheet to express who they are and what they like about their physical appearance or personality. As seen in figure 4, the second version of the ID cards is full of personal information: "I am loving", "I am sensitive", "I like my personality", "I am confident", "I am brave", etc.

FIGURE 4

Students' ID cards: final version



Finally, focusing on the visual aspect of the ID cards, students not only depicted themselves using a wider range of colors in the final version (figure 4), but also added more details such as scars, hairstyles, or their skin color. The card on the right side of figure 4 is particularly significant because this student depicted features that define who he is and where he comes from, thus conveying his true identity. In general, substantial improvements can be observed between the first and the final version of the "My ID card" activity. This demon-

strates that the designed didactic unit had a positive impact on students' self-esteem, their awareness of identity, and their use of English.

5. Conclusions

This study explored the intersection of self-esteem development and English language learning in the context of primary education. Guided by the principles of the pedagogy of multiliteracies, the research design centered on a didactic unit focused on the discussion of villainous figures in Disney films such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *101 Dalmatians* (1961), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), and *The Lion King* (1994). The use of these familiar Disney narratives played a key role in captivating the attention of third-grade students and fostered their reflections on self-worth, acceptance, and identity.

The structured format of the didactic unit, comprising warm-up sessions, reflective discussions, interactive activities, and calming exercises, provided a nurturing environment for students to engage with multimodal content and express their emotions freely. This holistic approach not only facilitated meaningful learning experiences but also nurtured a sense of community and belonging among the students.

Quantitative analysis of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSE) scores showed a significant improvement in students' self-esteem levels following the intervention, with the majority of students transitioning from average to high self-esteem. This positive shift underscored the efficacy of the didactic unit in empowering students to embrace their unique qualities and cultivate a positive self-image.

Qualitative analysis further illuminated the cognitive, conceptual, and sociocultural dimensions of students' literacy development. Student reflections showed critical thinking skills, linguistic insights, and empathetic understanding, highlighting the multifaceted nature of literacy in the 21st century.

Moreover, the "My ID card" activity provided tangible evidence of students' enhanced self-awareness and confidence, as reflected in their drawings and self-descriptions. The evolution from simple affirmations to more elaborated expressions of identity highlighted the transformative impact of the didactic unit on students' self-esteem and English language proficiency.

In conclusion, this study offers compelling insights into the potential of integrating discussions on self-esteem and identity development into the teaching and learning of EAL. By harnessing the power of familiar Disney narratives, multimodal resources and reflective practices, educators can create inclusive learning environments that empower students to embrace their uniqueness, celebrate diversity and thrive as confident communicators in an

interconnected world. Future research endeavors should consider adopting the multiliteracies pedagogy across various grade levels and in relation to other pertinent topics such as SDGs, social justice or diversity. Additionally, extending the duration of the study could facilitate a more comprehensive analysis of students' progress through targeted assessments. As we continue to navigate the complexities of 21st-century education, let us provide learners not only with the guidance to explore the world, but also with pedagogical approaches that prioritize holistic student development. Given that self-esteem is a crucial element in children's current and future lives, it is essential to foster new generations of empowered learners.

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