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Filología y Didáctica de la Lengua  
Filologia eta Hizkuntzaren Didaktika

Universidad Pública de Navarra  
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Campus de Arrosadia  
31006 Pamplona  
Teléfono 948 169 428. Fax 948 169 448  
[huartedesanjuan.filologia@unavarra.es](mailto:huartedesanjuan.filologia@unavarra.es)



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Estudios / Ikerketak

# Modelos de secuenciación en la didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras\*

Paolo TORRESAN

Centro di Ricerca sulla Didattica delle Lingue  
Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia  
independent.academia.edu/PaoloTorresan

**Resumen:** Este ensayo tiene como objeto la representación de los modelos de secuenciación más notables en la didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras. Empezamos con la secuenciación didáctica de tipo PPP (*Presentation, Practice, Production*), que tuvo una especial difusión a través del método estructural. A continuación consideramos un modelo de secuenciación que se reconoce como compatible con un enfoque comunicativo: el *modelo de la unidad didáctica*, planteado por autores italianos (Freddi 1979, 1994, Porcelli, 1994; Balboni, 1994, 2008, 2008<sup>2</sup>; Vedovelli 2002). Seguimos con el modelo de la *Deep-end Strategy*, formulado por Johnson (1980) y reformulado por Harmer (2001). Finalmente describimos la didáctica por *threads*, de Woodward (1998), la cual, en nuestra opinión, encaja con la concepción *estético-narrativa* de la didáctica avanzada de Thornbury (1999a).

**Palabras clave:** secuenciación didáctica; pos-método; estrategias didácticas.

**Abstract:** This article deals with the most significant sequencing patterns in foreign language teaching. It begins with a discussion of the PPP teaching sequence (*Presentation, Practice, Production*), which became particularly widespread with the structural method. We then review, in turn the *Teaching Unit model*, widespread in the Italian tradition (Freddi 1979, 1994; Porcelli, 1994; Balboni, 1994, 2008, 2008<sup>2</sup>; Vedovelli 2002), the *Deep-end Strategy model*, formulated by Johnson (1980) and elaborated by Harmer (2001), and, finally, the Woodward's *threads teaching model* (1998). According to us, this last proposal, could be integrated by Thornbury's *aesthetic-narrative lesson design* perspective (1999a).

**Keywords:** Sequencing; Post-method; Teaching Strategies.

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\* Traducción del italiano: Gloria de la Garza (FES Acatlán UNAM). Revisión: Viviana Páez y Adriana Núñez.

## 1. La secuencia PPP

Durante décadas, ha prevalecido en la didáctica de lenguas la secuencia PPP (*Presentation-practice-production*), extensamente empleada sobre todo en el método estructural. En una lección inspirada en esta secuencia, la regla se *presenta*, luego se *reutiliza* en un contexto muy controlado (mediante *drills*) y finalmente se *aplica* en producciones libres.

En realidad, en una lección estructural, el espacio dedicado a la tercera P (la *producción libre*) generalmente es limitado. Por lo tanto, es más correcto hablar de una secuencia binaria, de tipo PP (P), lo que muestra que la tercera fase ha constituido (y en muchos casos todavía constituye) una realidad factible sólo en los niveles más altos, cuando el alumnado ha alcanzado un amplio control del código.

La secuencia PPP ha sido objeto de numerosas críticas (Brumfit, 1979; Byrne, 1986; Harmer, 1996; Hedge, 2000; Read, 1985; Scrivener, 1994; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996; Woodward, 1993 y 2001; Criado, 2013), que se pueden resumir como sigue:

- La lengua es un fenómeno complejo, no segmentable en elementos distintos.
- La enseñanza, reducida a una repetición mecánica de elementos descontextualizados, actúa en detrimento de la motivación.
- La enseñanza requiere recurrencia y una consolidación continua. Un paradigma lineal, de tipo acumulativo, no lo prevé.

En la práctica de los docentes que se inspiran en un enfoque comunicativo se ha limitado la implementación de la secuencia PPP en los niveles iniciales, allí donde los estudiantes necesitan seguridad para la enseñanza de *patterns* lingüísticos de especial complejidad (cfr. Rutheford, in Johnson 1996) o, finalmente, en el caso de docentes novatos (Thornbury 2013). Por consiguiente, aunque la secuencia PPP nunca haya decaído –al punto de hablar de un elemento transversal a los enfoques (Criado 2010)<sup>1</sup>– con el paso del tiempo se ha registrado cierta limitación en su empleo. Además, desde los años ochenta del siglo pasado se han ido consolidando propuestas secuenciales alternativas. Dichas propuestas pueden agruparse según la base del elemento que es objeto de discusión: el *contenido* de la progresión y la *forma* de la progresión.

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1. Esta secuencia se impuso como modelo tanto en la didáctica, como en la formación docente, llegando incluso a la paradoja de que en cursos de formación que tenían como objetivo la superación del estructuralismo, se llevaban a cabo mediante la *presentación* (de contenidos), luego en el *empleo* de los mismos por los sujetos en formación, a través de la *preparación* de las lecciones inspiradas en esos contenidos.

## 2. La revisión del contenido de la secuencia PPP

En lo que respecta al *contenido*, señalamos dos alternativas a la secuencia PPP:

- la *unidad didáctica*;
- la *lección circular*.

En los siguientes subapartados se describirá someramente cada una de ellas.

### 2.1. La unidad didáctica

La *unidad didáctica* es el fruto de una larga elaboración en el ámbito italiano, iniciada a partir de los años 80 (cfr. Freddi 1979; 1994; Porcelli 1994; Balboni 1994; 2008; 2008<sup>2</sup>; Vedovelli 2002). Aquellos que sostienen esta propuesta consideran que la secuencia ideal es del tipo:

- *input* (i.e. comprensión de texto);
- estudio de la gramática;
- *output* (i.e. producción oral y escrita; sea controlada, es decir, dirigida a la reutilización de las estructuras, o libre, centrada sobre el significado).

Los términos utilizados son:

- *globalidad* (abordaje de un texto que es objeto de la comprensión);
- *análisis* (estudio de las reglas presentes en el texto);
- *síntesis* (aplicación de la reglas en producciones controladas o libres).

Si se compara la secuencia GAS (*Globalidad, Análisis, Síntesis*) con la tradicional PPP, notamos que:

- el punto de partida no es la regla, sino el texto (G);
- la gramática no se enseña, sino que el estudiante la infiere a partir del texto (A);
- la práctica (*Practice*) y la producción (*Production*) se desarrollan conjuntamente en la tercera fase (S).

Los autores (cfr. Freddi 1979; 1994; Porcelli 1994; Balboni 1994; 2008; 2008<sup>2</sup>; Vedovelli 2002) basan el modelo de secuenciación de la unidad didáctica en:

- las reflexiones de la *Gestalt* (corriente psicológica moderna, de comienzos del siglo XX, según la cual la percepción de un evento es siempre regulada por la búsqueda de una forma, *Gestalt*. Es decir que los detalles particulares son interpretados en base a la totalidad, bajo el axioma: *el todo es mayor que la suma de las partes*);



– los señalamientos que provienen de las neurociencias de los años 80 (Danesi 1988)<sup>2</sup>:

- *principio de bimodalidad*: la distinción funcional de los hemisferios cerebrales (el izquierdo destinado al análisis y el derecho a la síntesis);
- *principio de direccionalidad*: la elaboración acontece primero en el hemisferio derecho y posteriormente en el izquierdo.

A la vez debemos reconocer que en la definición de la *unidad didáctica* intervinieron dos cuestiones que emergen en las discusiones de la época:

- el *input adecuado*;
- el *noticing*, entendido como la observación de las regularidades presentes en el texto que es objeto de comprensión.

El papel central del *input* remite a la *hipótesis del input comprensible* de Krashen. Si se parte de la regla, sostiene el estudioso californiano (1981, 1982; 1985), se produce una conciencia efímera (*aprendizaje*); en cambio, si se parte del texto, suponiendo que resulte comprensible para el estudiante (y por lo tanto adecuado a su competencia), las reglas se asimilarán mediante el inconsciente de manera estable (*adquisición*).

Quienes apoyan la *unidad didáctica*, sin embargo, corrigen la premisa del proceso subconsciente de Krashen, admitiendo que una reflexión formal sobre las reglas, a partir de un texto comprendido, acelera y consolida los procesos de adquisición. Es un reflejo, en el ámbito italiano, del amplio debate en torno al concepto de *noticing* que domina la lingüística aplicada de la segunda mitad de los años 80. Quienes definieron este término fueron Schmidt y Frota en 1986: el concepto remite a una atención consciente hacia la lengua (los componentes de la competencia lingüística: morfología, sintaxis, léxico, fonética, prosodia, textualidad) sin la cual, según su opinión, no hay *intake*, es decir, dominio estable.

La tercera fase presenta cierta indeterminación, no está claro de qué manera *Practice y Production* se deban articular en el interior de la *Síntesis*<sup>3</sup>.

Sustancialmente, el modelo de la *unidad didáctica* representa una forma de resolución de los nudos problemáticos de la secuenciación PPP: invoca la contextualización del material lingüístico y el rol activo del estudiante en la toma de conciencia de las reglas. Sin embargo, por el modo en el cual es implementada,

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2. Sujeto, no obstante, a críticas en tiempos recientes; cfr. Howard-Jones, 2009.

3. En nuestra opinión, esta indeterminación evidencia el escaso impacto que los estudios sobre la *Output Hypothesis* (Swain 1985) han tenido en el ámbito italiano y, en general, el hecho de que no se haya establecido un amplio debate sobre el rol de la producción en la adquisición lingüística.

la *unidad didáctica* manifiesta también una cierta continuidad con la secuencia PPP. A saber:

- consta siempre de tres fases;
- se desarrolla en modo lineal (al menos hasta la introducción de la estructura reticular del modelo, acaecida con Balboni 2008<sup>2</sup>);
- asume un carácter normativo<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.2. *La lección circular*

La *lección circular* se presenta como un esquema que da un vuelco a la secuencia PPP (el conocimiento procedimental precede al declarativo).

Las primeras señales de circularidad se pueden encontrar en los inicios del método comunicativo, con las reflexiones sobre la *Deep-end Strategy* (Brumfit 1979; Johnson 1980; véase También Byrne 1986; Willis J. 1994; Willis D. 2004; Johnson y Jackson 2006).

Johnson y Jackson (2006: 538) escriben:

In this strategy, the traditional *Presentation* → *Practice* → *Free Production* (PPP) sequence is replaced by one in which students first produce with available resources (*free production*), followed by the teacher presentation of needed items (*presentation*) and controlled practice if felt necessary (*practice*). Several advantages have been claimed in the language-teaching literature for this sequence. One is that it helps develop ‘risk-taking strategies’ by requiring the learner to perform (initial free production) before relevant teaching (*presentation* and *practice*) takes place.

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4. Balboni afirma (en Fiorise 2015): «Negli anni Trenta gli psicologi tedeschi ipotizzarono –e l’ipotesi è stata confermata dalle neuroscienze nei decenni successivi– che la percezione dei fenomeni che avvengono nel mondo intorno a noi ha tre fasi: la prima è globale, imprecisa, molto emozionale, volta a cogliere il senso globale e a valutare il contesto, la situazione; la seconda fase è analitica, si va a cercare nel fenomeno quello che ci interessa o che ci fa paura o che ci piace, ci si ragiona, si escludono dall’attenzione i dettagli che non ci servono; alla fine si realizza una sintesi, ossia cataloghiamo il fenomeno (o le parti che ci interessano) e lo accomodiamo nella grande biblioteca della nostra memoria (a medio termine, se si tratta di memorizzare com’è organizzata la stanza d’albergo, a lungo termine se impariamo come usare il mouse), lo inseriamo nella nostra esperienza classificandolo come piacevole, spiacevole, interessante, noioso, da ricercare, da evitare, ecc. Questo è il normale funzionamento del cervello, che utilizza in maniera differente ma integrata i due emisferi cerebrali per compiere queste operazioni: non tenerne conto, significa andare contro natura. Partire dalla sintesi grammaticale, sperando che questo poi generi un fenomeno, la comunicazione, è contro natura: alcuni, più ‘intelligenti’ o ‘intuitivi’ o ‘autonomi’, riescono lo stesso a memorizzare le cose, ma la grande massa degli studenti non classifica e non memorizza un’informazione che non ha costruito secondo la sequenza naturale: globalità, analisi, sintesi».

The sequence is *perform* → *teach* rather than *teaching* → *perform*. A second advantage [...] is that the sequence is need-driven, what is presented and practiced is determined by initial performance in free production.

Una *lección circular* moderna, que toma como referencia el modelo GAS (de la *unidad didáctica*), antepone la *Síntesis* (la producción) a la *Globalidad* (la comprensión). En otras palabras, el texto objeto de lectura o auditivo se presenta más adelante; se accede de inmediato a varias actividades productivas y se permite que los estudiantes verifiquen las hipótesis formuladas a partir de una serie de indicios (preguntas abiertas, imágenes, sonidos, etc.).

Una *lección circular* refleja la manera en que se aprende una habilidad en el ámbito artístico, por ejemplo la música o las artes gráficas, en que el estudiante produce y luego mide la distancia entre lo que ha producido y el modelo.

Consideramos que una *lección circular* se adapta bien a los niveles altos, despierta la fantasía, induce a una participación activa, estimula la producción y crea curiosidad hacia el texto.

Ejemplos de *lecciones circulares* se encuentran en Taylor 2001; Willis, Willis 2007, Torresan 2009.

### 3. La revisión de la forma de la secuencia PPP: la didáctica como trama

Otras propuestas están dirigidas no tanto a revisar el contenido o a argumentar sobre cuál sería la sucesión óptima de las fases, sino a discutir el concepto mismo de «fase», como parámetro obligado en las operaciones de la planificación de la clase (*lesson planning*):

En un ensayo publicado en 1998, Woodward y Lindstromberg proclaman (5):

A different approach is to think not so much in terms of 'vertical' connections within one lesson, but of 'horizontal' connections from lesson to lesson.

Ambos conciben las fases de la secuencia PPP como «conexiones verticales», es decir, «bloques», contenedores, en los cuales se colocan las actividades según las habilidades (receptivas o productivas) y las competencias (morfológicas, sintácticas, léxicas, etc.) que los estudiantes deben practicar y desarrollar. Estos bloques se repiten de lección en lección, y constituyen una forma mediante la cual el programa se materializa.

La secuencia PPP en la lógica estructural es, de hecho, un modelo para aplicar y repetir; el éxito de la acción didáctica se garantiza en la medida en que el docente respete el orden de las «fases».

Woodward y Lindstromberg (1998) se interrogan sobre la posibilidad de crear conexiones «horizontales» entre las acciones didácticas y definen su propuesta *didáctica por threads* («hilos»). En la imagen que se presenta a continuación (fig. 1) representamos la *didáctica por threads* concebida por Woodward y Lindstromberg (las siglas en la parte superior se refieren a los días de la semana).

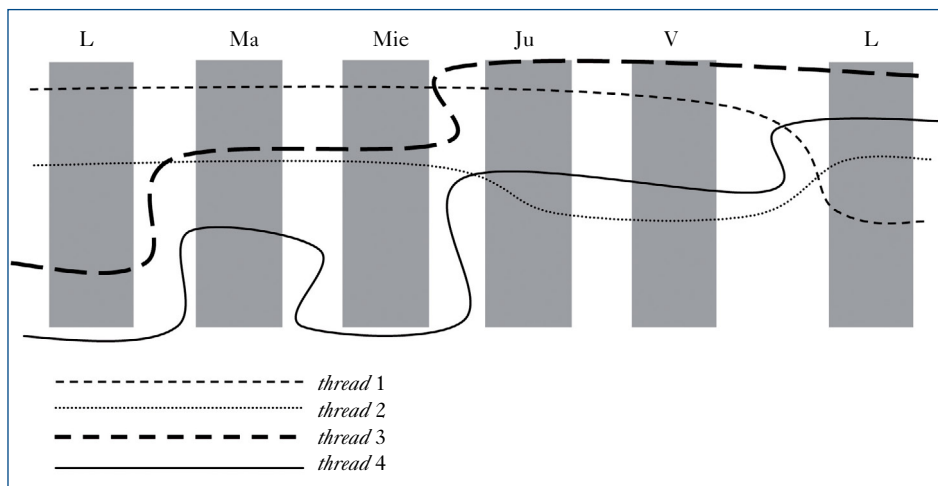


Figura 1. Planificación por *threads*. (Tomada de Woodward, Lindstromberg 1998: 6; ligeramente adaptada).

Un *thread*, dicen los autores (Woodward, Lindstromberg 1998: 7),

is an activity or a set of activities set up by you and your students. It can be used and reused although it doesn't have to be used every lesson. Once introduced in one lesson, it can be picked up again quickly in later lessons with a minimum of explanation because it is familiar to everyone. Once a thread is set up, you have less to plan. Some threads you can use for just a minute of a lesson. Others can be used for twenty minutes or more.

Los *threads* son, en consecuencia, «*activities*». Tomemos prestada la definición de *actividad* presente en Criado (2009: 15):

a unit of action in classroom of teaching materials, involving goals, content and strategies as an integrated construct.

En otros pasajes, la definición de *thread* usada por los autores se amplía hasta comprender muchas variables del evento didáctico (Woodward, Lindstromberg 1998: 13):

Almost any of the various ways of doing dictation (e.g. teacher to students at slow speed with no questions from students, teacher to students at natural speed with questions allowed from students, or student to student in pairs), dialogue building (e.g. starting with a picture, with key words, or with a story) or picture composition (e.g. you display a numbered sequence of pictures and elicit an oral story from the class, or students order in a jumbled set of pictures and write a story). Arrangements and movements of people, e.g. students in pairs or students in small groups moving from table to table, can also be considered as a type of thread since these choreographical elements can recur and evolve from lesson to lesson.

Woodward y Lindstromberg reflexionan también, sobre la calidad de un *thread*, y sostienen que un buen *thread* es tal cuando están garantizadas las siguientes condiciones (Woodward, Lindstromberg 1998: 8):

- a) The basic idea is negotiated with your students.
- b) It is enjoyable and useful to your students.
- c) It is used for as long as it remains enjoyable and useful and is dropped when interest in it wanes or the idea becomes over-routinized and dull.
- d) It deals with a particular aspect of teaching/learning a language and it fosters a consistent, long-term approach to this aspect.
- e) It makes planning easier and faster, so creating a sense of ease in you, the teacher.
- f) It can be used from lesson to lesson with the minimum effort, fuss and explanation time.
- g) It can be used from day to day at the same, or at different times, in the lesson.
- h) It includes slight variation in working progress, so as to keep students guessing a little.
- i) It may build slowly from level to level, increasing in length and complexity.
- j) Individual students can use the idea to structure independent study.
- k) It can be adjusted to cater for individual differences.

Por consiguiente, la *didáctica por threads* constituye una dimensión flexible, recursiva y abierta. El planteamiento que deriva de ella es del tipo *bottom-up*: la trama, que la *didáctica por threads* implica, es un esbozo que se define y afina atendiendo a las respuestas de los estudiantes. Otros autores que llegan a conclusiones similares son Harmer (con el concepto de *patchwork*; 2001), J. Willis y D. Willis (con el concepto de *task sequences*, 2007).

La contribución de Thornbury, contenida en el ensayo *Lesson Art and Design* (1999a), confiere una dirección significativa al entrecruzamiento de los *threads* invocado por Woodward y Lindstromberg. En un examen llevado a cabo en la Internacional House de Barcelona mediante un cuestionario piloto (aplicado a 39 estudiantes) y confirmado luego por una encuesta de mayor escala (100

estudiantes) realizada por un colega en Grecia (Luke Prodromou), Thornbury verificó que para la mayoría de los entrevistados una lección bien lograda es, sustancialmente, una lección interesante, capaz de entretener al estudiante (1999a: 5-6).

From the learner point of view, the success or not of a lesson probably depends less on exclusively classroom-specific factors, such as whether it was a PPP lesson or a task-based lesson, than on much more broadly applied, cross-generic criteria to do with whether it was interesting or boring.

Según Thornbury, lo que define aburrimiento o interés es precisamente un *criterio estético* (1999a: 5):

The experience has persuaded me that good lessons share characteristics that are independent of the teacher, the context, and the teacher allegiance to any particular method. My strongest claim is that, from the point of view of the learners [...], these good ‘characteristics’ are largely *aesthetics* and, as such, are not peculiar to the culture of the classroom, but are shared by other expressive art forms.

En el primer lugar de la clasificación de las analogías destaca la comparación con el mundo del cine, del teatro o del juego; la lección ideal es como una película bien lograda, como una obra teatral en la cual los roles de los actores están perfectamente orquestados, como un juego capaz de sorprender. Si nos detenemos en la primera comparación, la del cine, hay que reconocer que la figura del docente como director de cine no es una novedad. En los años 90 se debatió mucho sobre el estudiante como centro del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, y en consecuencia también sobre el papel del docente como facilitador, tutor, director, lo que implica mantenerse al margen para dejar a los estudiantes en la escena. En la *concepción estética* de Thornbury, sin embargo, el docente es un director no tanto en el sentido de animador, sino como guionista, que cuida en los mínimos detalles el “guión” para realizar en la clase. En efecto, el aspecto narrativo constituye uno de los ingredientes fundamentales de la *concepción estética* de Thornbury (1999b: 6), junto al tema, al ritmo, a la armonía (*flow*), y al sentido de *completitud* (sobre este punto, cfr. incluso Ovsiankina 1928; Lewin 1936). Todos nosotros disfrutamos al aprender a través de historias (Bruner 1985). Thornbury distingue, sin embargo, la *historia* (*story*) de la *trama* (*plot*), haciendo suya una distinción presente en Forster (1990: 87):

«The king died and then the queen died», is a story. «The King died and then the queen died of grief», is a plot. The time sequence is preserved but the sense of causality overshadows it [...]. Consider the death of the queen. If it is in a story we say: «And then?», if it is in a plot we ask «Why?».

Es la conciencia de una intencionalidad, de un dibujo, de una profunda cohesión entre los elementos, que hace la diferencia entre una serie yuxtapuesta de acciones (*story*) y una trama (*plot*)<sup>5</sup>. La trama (*plot*) es, sustancialmente, el elemento fundamental de la propuesta de Thornbury. Gracias a ella se imprime una dirección clara a la *didáctica por threads* de la que hablan Woodward y Lindstromberg.

Respecto a una *didáctica por fases*, una *lección como trama* se distingue por una concepción compleja de la progresión donde no encontramos yuxtaposición sino un esquema libre, estéticamente orientado (no es casualidad que la planificación didáctica se define como *lesson design*). En esta secuenciación es posible:

- un número no obligado de pasos, regulados más en términos de estrategias que de fases;
- la eventual repetición de algunos pasos (podemos tener secuencias de actividad de comprensión, por ejemplo, relacionadas unas con otras);
- una concepción plástica de la actividades (exaltando la variedad de usos, formas y de integraciones posibles);
- una concepción continua de las actividades (a través de las cuales la lengua producida, analizada o reutilizada pueda re-circular y constituir la premisa de nuevas actividades en el interior de la misma lección o en lecciones sucesivas; cfr. Breen, Candlin 1987).

Estamos convencidos de que tales características expresan el equilibrio dinámico del cual es capaz un docente experto, en constante equilibrio entre *estructura* (i.e., disponibilidad de *scripts*) e *improvisación* (i.e., respuestas inmediatas a necesidades concretas; cfr. Sawyer 2004, 2011).

## 4. Conclusiones

En didáctica a menudo se subraya lo importante que es la variedad dentro de la motivación (Skehan 1989; Dörnyei 2001; Harmer 2001). Sin embargo, el principio se relaciona sólo con las actividades individuales, sin considerar la progresión de las mismas.

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5. En particular, en una trama bien llevada a cabo se recuperan elementos surgidos con anterioridad así como sucede en muchas artes en las que el aspecto narrativo tiene un rol central, como el cine o la improvisación teatral. Escribe a tal propósito Johnstone (1981: 116): «The improviser has to be like a man walking backwards, He sees where he has been, but he pays no attention to the future. His story can take him anywhere, but he must still ‘balance’ it, and give it shape, by remembering incidents that have been shelved and reincorporating them. Very often an audience will applaud when earlier material is brought back into the story [...], the reincorporation does give them pleasure [...]. They admire the improviser’s grasp, since he not only generates new material, but remembers and makes use of earlier events that the audience itself may have temporarily forgotten».

En este ensayo, hemos definido las características de una *didáctica como trama*, la cual representa un posible desarrollo de la *didáctica por threads* de Woodward y Lindstromberg (1998), sobre la concepción estético-narrativa de Thornbury (1999a)

Una *didáctica como trama*:

- implica la posibilidad de idear y apreciar itinerarios originales, caracterizados por *articulaciones* leves que consienten la recuperación del léxico y de estructuras de manera eficaz;
- supera los límites de una concepción atomista de las actividades, formulando posibilidades de una sintaxis compleja de la lección;
- lleva a afirmar que el texto no sólo es el centro de la lección, en cuanto a contenido en torno al cual giran las operaciones formales, sino también la forma que asume la lección;
- la creatividad y por lo tanto la autonomía del docente como aquella de los autores de materiales didácticos.

La *didáctica como trama*, en breve, es la versión más abierta a la improvisación del docente en comparación con otras formas secuenciales descritas en este ensayo: PPP, GAS, *Deep-end Strategy*.

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# Revisión y recepción de la retroalimentación en Lengua Española para Maestros. Estudio comparativo

Elia SANELEUTERIO

Universitat de València  
elia.saneleuterio@uv.es

**Resumen:** El estudio analiza cómo reciben, valoran y aprovechan los estudiantes la revisión de sus producciones escritas por parte del profesor en una asignatura de educación lingüística.

Se comparan cuatro procedimientos de actuación docente: el uso o no de rúbrica conocida y la proporción de comentarios insertos o no en el documento original. Respecto al estudiantado, se observa la influencia del interés mostrado por el *feedback* en la percepción de utilidad de dicha retroalimentación.

La metodología, basada en la investigación-acción, combina estrategias cuantitativas (a través de encuesta en dos grupos diferenciados) y cualitativas (análisis de contenido de mensajes de respuesta y observación durante las tutorías).

Los resultados recomiendan explicitar la rúbrica, crear en el estudiante la expectativa y exigirle un esfuerzo simbólico. Finalmente, concluimos como preferible la retroalimentación mediante mensaje adjunto con paneles de revisión sobre el texto original.

**Palabras clave:** *feedback*; retos de escritura; aprendizaje lingüístico; paneles de revisión; Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior (EEES).

**Abstract:** The study analyzes how students receive, consider and take advantage of their written productions review by the teacher on a course of language education.

Four teaching performance procedures are compared: the use or not of known rules and the proportion of inserts or comments in the original document. Regarding the students, other variable is observed: the influence of their interest for the feedback on the usefulness attributed to that feedback.

The methodology is based in Action Research and combines quantitative strategies (through questionnaire in two different groups) with qualitative research (Content Analysis of student answers and observation during the tutorials).

The results recommend explain the rules, instill in students the expectation and demand them a concrete effort. Finally, we conclude as preferable to feed back the information via attached message with virtual review boards on the original text.

**Keywords:** Reaction; Writing Challenges; Language Learning; Review Panels; European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

## I. Marco teórico

Partimos de la toma de conciencia de las limitaciones en expresión escrita con las que convive una parte considerable del alumnado universitario y a las que el cuerpo docente se está habituando, inmerso en el dilema de implicarse u obviar el problema y atender prioritariamente a la adquisición de competencias específicas de la materia que imparte. Esta situación preocupa especial e inevitablemente a los profesores de lenguas, sobre todo maternas, que ven cómo la adquisición de los contenidos lingüísticos que se han de evaluar se demuestra también a través precisamente de la forma en que se exponen –paradoja que adquiere pleno sentido si las tareas de expresión escrita en efecto se plantean en relación directa con los contenidos y conceptos que se trabajan en el aula (Allué, 2013; Gómez Devís y Llopis, 2011)–. Nos situamos en un contexto amplio de «re-conceptualizar la escritura como una actividad de inclusión y no de exclusión, de cooperación y no de competición, de apertura y no de cierre» (Saneleuterio y García-Ramos, 2015:428), convencidos de que este tipo de tareas, en la clase de lengua, se convierten en un recurso *ad hoc* para que los aprendices avancen en la transformación de los saberes declarativos en saberes procedimentales (Allué, 2013: 124). Es decir, desde la filosofía de la inclusión educativa adaptada a la realidad y exigencias universitarias, creemos que los obstáculos generales e insalvables que muchos estudiantes encuentran al redactar trabajos académicos solo los encontrarán en procesos reales de escritura, por un lado, y, por otro, que estos obstáculos son valiosos en la medida en que son susceptibles de convertirse en retos personales que pueden solucionarse con ayuda de una atención personalizada por parte de la figura docente –e incluso con la colaboración entre iguales, cuya efectividad está siendo demostrada para el ámbito de la formación lingüística en educación superior (Saneleuterio y García-Ramos, 2015)–. La idea es que cada problema gramatical, ortográfico, etc., concreto de cada estudiante, sea contemplado por él o ella, con la orientación docente pertinente, como ocasión o territorio privilegiado para el aprendizaje, como impulso para afinar cada vez más en el camino del dominio avanzado de la lengua escrita.

Nadie imagina que el profesorado de las escuelas de música y conservatorios pueda llegar al aula, ponerse al violín, al piano, a la trompeta... y dedicarse durante casi una hora a mostrar al alumnado lo magníficos intérpretes que son, lo bien que conocen el funcionamiento de sus instrumentos, etc. Todos esperamos que el profesorado, en las aulas de música, escuche al alumnado, le corrija, le haga sugerencias de mejora, le proponga nuevas tareas (generalmente individualizadas, según los avances de cada cual), e incluso que organicen conciertos trimestrales

abiertos al público. ¿Por qué, pues, todavía en muchas aulas de secundaria, y sobre todo según en qué asignaturas, el alumnado sigue siendo el público del concierto y no los instrumentistas? (Allué, 2013: 124)

Lo que la profesora Consuelo Allué Villanueva constata en el instituto es perfectamente aplicable a la educación superior, cuanto más si nos situamos en materias de primero de grado que presentan cuestiones de enseñanzas lingüísticas en el centro de su programación. Queremos insistir en que la adquisición de competencias comunicativas avanzadas, en nuestro caso focalizando en la lengua escrita y en relación a un nivel mínimo de C1 del Marco Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MERL), no ha de preocupar solo en los últimos cursos de la universidad, más allá de que todo aspirante a graduado debe demostrar cierto nivel expresivo como requisito para superar su trabajo final, de carácter siempre académico, al menos en carreras de educación.

En concreto, el estudio que presentamos analiza, en el contexto de Lengua Española para Maestros –una asignatura de primer curso, común en los grados de Magisterio–, cómo reciben, valoran y aprovechan los estudiantes la revisión de sus producciones escritas por parte del profesor o profesora. ¿Sienten que están afinando y conociendo sus instrumentos concretos para sacar óptimas expresiones de sí mismos a través de la mejora progresiva de sus aportaciones y según sus capacidades? ¿Se acerca a una formación individualizada, pero de excelencia, siguiendo con el símil de los conservatorios?

Una asignatura que pretenda dotar al alumnado de estrategias avanzadas de dominio del lenguaje escrito no puede evaluar igualmente los primeros textos producidos, necesarios para el aprendizaje, que los últimos, donde este ya debe haberse producido. Sin embargo, tampoco podemos dejar de prestar atención a esos primeros textos, pues el alumno o alumna avanzará en la medida en que detecte y comprenda sus propios errores. (Saneleuterio, 2016: 2)

Para ello, se requieren dos condicionantes en la metodología docente: que incluya *feedback* exhaustivo y profundo acerca de los textos de cada estudiante y que la dinámica se plantee en un contexto de evaluación formativa (Saneleuterio, 2016). Respecto al primero, la retroalimentación anclada en cada producción escrita concreta aporta una serie de beneficios que aceleran el aprendizaje: a) el aprendiz no se siente solo ante lo que le queda por aprender y siente que el docente comparte responsabilidad en el proceso (Gessa, 2011); b) el hecho de que el reto sea mutuo le confiere seguridad; c) se fomentan actitudes de autorrevisión textual que alimentan la autoconciencia ortográfica y gramatical (Camps, Guasch, Milian y Ribas, 2000; Rodríguez Gonzalo, 2012; 2014; Camps,

2014); d) la información aportada por el profesor acelera el aprendizaje, porque atiende los fallos individuales y se centra específicamente en la zona de desarrollo próximo de cada estudiante sin limitaciones preestablecidas (Saneleuterio y García-Ramos, 2015). En efecto, es decisión del profesor o profesora seleccionar entre los tipos de comentarios posibles: sobre ortografía, gramática, léxico, estructuración textual, cuestiones a nivel discursivo, de coherencia semántica, de adecuación al género discursivo o al registro esperado, etc. Justo esta diversidad hace que la retroalimentación que recibe el aprendiz sea verdaderamente ajustada a su realidad y capacidades. Sin embargo, ese mismo abanico de posibilidades puede generar una sensación de inabarcabilidad. Y es que el problema surge ante el tiempo y esfuerzo docentes que se requieren para comentar pormenorizadamente las debilidades –y también las fortalezas– de cada uno. Es innegable que la aportación del profesor o profesora resulta considerable; muchos cuentan con motivación y disposición para dedicarse a ello siempre que el discente lo valore o lo aproveche. Pero ¿se produce realmente esta valoración y aprovechamiento?

Por otro lado, estamos viendo florecer en la enseñanza universitaria, como ya hace tiempo que ocurre en niveles educativos obligatorios, formas de orientar las clases cada vez más personalizadas, adaptadas a las necesidades de cada estudiante; en concreto, en el área de las enseñanzas lingüísticas, vemos que, tanto en el planteamiento de las actividades como en la evaluación de las mismas, va primando el desarrollo de competencias (Perrenoud, 2005; Ambròs *et al.*, 2009; Allué, 2013). Entre ellas, la actividad metalingüística es requisito para adquirir verdadera competencia gramatical (Camps, Guasch, Milian y Ribas, 2000; Camps, 2014: 11-12); implica una reflexión por parte del aprendiz que aumenta la conciencia y el control del lenguaje en cuanto a su aspecto formal (Rodríguez Gonzalo, 2012), y que nos interesa porque resulta especialmente efectiva durante la fase de revisión (Rodríguez Gonzalo, 2014: 22). Los maestros en formación han de tenerlo en cuenta porque así habrán de aplicarlo cuando se incorporen a la realidad docente, principalmente aquellos que ingresen en el cuerpo de Educación Primaria y según los currículos vigentes de Lengua Castellana y Literatura (López-García-Torres y Saneleuterio, 2016); desde su propia experiencia como aprendices llegarán mejor a entender el proceso de aprendizaje del lenguaje escrito que ellos mismos, ya como profesionales, tendrán que despertar entre sus futuros alumnos.

Y es que este enfoque en la adquisición de competencias, así como la evaluación al servicio del aprendizaje y la adaptación de las metodologías docentes a los niveles y estilos del alumnado, constituye una de las premisas de la declaración de Bolonia (1999), que quedaron recogidas, junto con otras transformaciones, en los planteamientos del Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior (EEES) y que todavía están afianzándose en la universidad española y europea (Boud *et al.*,

2010), así como, más específicamente, en la enseñanza de lenguas en la educación superior (Tudor, 2005).

Ora parta del profesor, ora se trate de tareas de intercambio o evaluación *inter pares* (Pérez *et al.*, 2008; Caplloch, González y Castejón, 2008; López, 2009; Saneleuterio, Rosell y García, 2012; Ibarra, Rodríguez y Gómez 2012; García, Saneleuterio y Rosell, 2012; García-Ramos y Saneleuterio, 2014), la retroalimentación en las tareas de escritura se inscribe en un contexto de evaluación formativa o, en un sentido más amplio, evaluación orientada al aprendizaje (EOA) (Carless, Joughin y Mok, 2006; Padilla y Gil, 2008; Ibarra y Rodríguez, 2010). La entendemos como una evaluación centrada en los procesos y que prima la integración progresiva de la reflexión; «es una ayuda al estudiante en su actividad de aprendizaje y en la metacognición de dicho proceso, al tiempo que un instrumento para la reflexión del docente sobre su actividad» (Gómez y Saneleuterio, 2015: 320). Esta nueva forma de entender la evaluación, al implicar no solo la tarea activa y planificadora del profesorado, sino también la de los estudiantes, favorece el desarrollo de competencias básicas como el pensamiento crítico, la comunicación o las estrategias negociadoras, la autoconciencia ética en las relaciones académicas e interpersonales, la resolución de problemas de estudio, aprendizaje u organización, entre otras competencias (Gessa, 2011).

El tercer polo que se ha considerado en la experiencia docente que investigamos es el que tiene que ver con la realidad virtual y con el potencial de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC): sabemos que no se puede obviar el papel didáctico que estas son susceptibles de desempeñar, siendo que tratamos con una generación acostumbrada a servirse de ellas en sus hábitos cotidianos para relacionarse, comunicarse, informarse, etc.; pero tampoco puede subestimarse su potencialidad para el investigador en ciencias sociales, como instrumento de recogida y sistematización de datos procedentes de las acciones pedagógicas, entre otras utilidades. Así, a la par que la irrupción de la formación universitaria en línea, el contexto formativo mixto (realidad virtual en contextos de enseñanza-aprendizaje presencial) representa una opción que está extendiéndose y ha llegado a sustituir al contexto puramente presencial: en cualquier caso y dadas las circunstancias, ello adquiere pleno sentido solo si va de la mano del uso eficaz de las TIC al servicio prioritario de la educación.

Todo ello se torna especialmente relevante en el contexto de los grados de Magisterio, como fomento del intercambio de estrategias y propuestas metodológicas innovadoras o cambiantes que primen la autenticidad (Gibbs, 2006; Boud, 2006; Monereo, 2009) y que permitan a los futuros maestros y maestras trascender las propuestas editoriales en la configuración de sus ideales docentes o magistrales (Gómez Devís, 2014).

## II. Objetivos y metodología

La investigación que presentamos nace de una pregunta investigadora básica: ¿valora y aprovecha el alumnado la retroalimentación recibida en sus tareas de escritura durante su aprendizaje lingüístico? Así pues, el primer objetivo de nuestro estudio fue comprobar cómo determinadas dinámicas de la evaluación orientada al aprendizaje (EOA) sitúan al estudiante en una percepción positiva en cuanto a la adquisición de las competencias implicadas en la asignatura. Respecto a la segunda parte, el objetivo se concretó en encontrar evidencias del supuesto aprovechamiento, por parte de los autores de las tareas, de los comentarios docentes acerca de ellas.

En el conjunto de ambos objetivos subyacen dos hipótesis, que quedaron formuladas de la siguiente manera: los alumnos o alumnas que valoran o aprovechan mejor el *feedback* son quienes mayor interés hayan mostrado por él *a priori*; asimismo, contar con una rúbrica de evaluación favorece la recepción efectiva y comprensión del comentario de retroalimentación.

Dos fueron los grupos participantes; en total, 91 alumnos (47 en grupo que hemos llamado A y 44 en grupo B) que en su mayoría cursaban primero de Magisterio, bien en la especialidad de Educación Infantil, bien en la de Educación Primaria. La experiencia tuvo lugar en la asignatura de Lengua Española para Maestros, durante los meses de septiembre de 2014 y enero de 2015.

Se trató de un contexto mixto, donde la presencialidad va acompañada de una realidad formativa virtual, normalmente basada en la plataforma de la institución; en nuestro caso, y hasta el curso 2014-2015, la Universitat de València ponía a disposición de profesores y estudiantes un entorno común llamado Aula Virtual.

La metodología de investigación, desde los presupuestos de la investigación-acción en los dos grupos descritos, combinó el estudio estadístico de una encuesta de percepción con la observación y el análisis de contenido cualitativo de las respuestas a los mensajes de retroalimentación y de las tutorías realizadas al respecto.

Se compararon los dos grupos con el siguiente cruce de variables: el conocimiento de la rúbrica de evaluación, la proporción de comentarios insertos o no en el texto original y la entrega en fase voluntaria o el apuramiento del plazo. El grupo A contó con rúbrica y además fue animado a entregar antes del plazo límite para recibir el *feedback* antes.

Además, analizamos más a fondo la conveniencia de la confluencia de las variables descritas con el formato digital y la comunicación virtual, mediante la



activación de paneles de revisión a lo largo del texto y el comentario final con la estructura de la rúbrica.

La descripción de la metodología en investigación-acción no puede obviar los pasos seguidos en la dimensión de la «acción» educativa. Así pues, pasamos a exponer las características de cada variable a la que hemos aludido: la rúbrica que se les facilitó a los estudiantes del grupo A en una de las actividades de escritura que se realizó en parejas fue la siguiente:

#### **Dominio de las técnicas de exposición (50 %)**

- Se evaluará la presencia de características lingüísticas propias de la tipología expositiva, la capacidad de organizar el contenido, de explicar los fenómenos descritos de manera clara y precisa, adecuada al nivel de los destinatarios, de ejemplificar, de expresar la objetividad, etc.
- Recordad que no se admitirá ni una sola línea plagiada.

#### **Redacción (50 %)\***

##### **Adecuación**

- Se valorará el empleo del registro estándar y la adecuación del léxico a la tipología expositiva.
- Se evaluará el dominio de la puntuación, especialmente de las comas.

##### **Cohesión gramatical**

- Se evaluará el dominio de la expresión lingüística y de las relaciones sintácticas, el respeto de las concordancias, regímenes preposicionales y conjugaciones verbales, la corrección y variedad de los conectores, etc.

##### **Coherencia semántica**

- Se tendrá en cuenta el orden en la presentación de las ideas, la veracidad y pertinencia de estas, la ligazón de sentido entre los párrafos, la progresión de los razonamientos, la utilización de los vocablos con propiedad, la variedad y riqueza léxicas, el uso justificado de los marcadores, etc.

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\*Para evaluar esta parte se exigirá plena corrección ortográfica (revisad especialmente lo que Word no detecta).  
(Fuente: archivo docente)

Al poner las calificaciones de la actividad en la aplicación del Aula Virtual, el espacio para comentarios no admite muchos caracteres, por lo que el mensaje de retroalimentación fue proporcionado en dos fases. En su cuenta de la intranet todos los estudiantes, junto a su nota, recibían el mismo mensaje: «Te envío el comentario de retroalimentación por correo electrónico, para poder detenerme más en su detalle y que te sea útil». El comentario al que se hace referencia sí era personalizado y cada uno trataba cuestiones específicas de los puntos fuertes

y débiles del texto concreto entregado por cada pareja. Mostramos a continuación un ejemplo, en versión previa al envío por correo electrónico mediante el servidor del Aula Virtual:

Hola, os envío por aquí mis comentarios al texto expositivo II.

*Advertencia:* este servidor desformatea el texto sin remedio, por lo que las cursivas no aparecen (ni colores, párrafos o sangrías); pero lo que más os liará será que sustituye las comillas por signos de interrogación (ánimo con el descifrado: cuando encontréis ? en un lugar sin sentido probablemente serán comillas). Ya imagináis cuán contenta me pone esto.

Total (s/10): 4,5

*Técnicas de exposición (s/5): 4,5*

*Comentarios:* Se explican los fenómenos descritos de manera ordenada, clara y precisa.

Hay apartados diferenciados y habéis intentado adaptar el nivel de complejidad al destinatario.

Hay ejemplos adecuados, pero también inadecuados o cuya función no se entiende bien (como el último de Mafalda o el que incluye un taco).

La incorporación de esquemas e imágenes ilustrativas ayuda a que los conceptos expuestos queden más claros.

Se respeta en todo momento la objetividad, con recursos diferentes, aunque mejorables (leed abajo lo de la adecuación).

El tema del texto no corresponde con lo que se pedía (variedad lingüística): habéis añadido cuestiones que no son pertinentes. ¿No os resultaba sospechoso explicarles a los niños qué ha de tener en cuenta la escuela y qué modelo de lengua ha de mostrar un profesor en clase? Ese segundo punto del bloque II tiene sentido para maestros (futuros o en activo), por eso solo os pedí el texto expositivo sobre la primera parte (variedades de la lengua). Releed el enunciado de la práctica...

*Redacción (s/5): 0*

[jóven / mio / cuando tienen / artículo]<sup>1</sup>

*Comentarios:* No se puntúa por no presentar plena corrección ortográfica (he encontrado problemas de acentuación, principalmente; buscadlos y los comentamos en tutoría presencial o virtual). Además, no entiendo por qué habéis puesto el corrector en catalán: no solo no se os aplica el corrector del castellano, sino que además se os corrigen automáticamente algunas palabras, como profeSSor, familia, Andalucía o diacrónica.

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1. La información entre corchetes la custodiaba la profesora, esperando que fueran los propios estudiantes quienes se encargaran de encontrar y corregir las faltas de ortografía. Se insta explícitamente a los destinatarios no solo a que lo hagan, sino también a que lo compartan y discutan con la docente.

Uno de los pasos más importantes de la tarea era que revisarais cuidadosamente el texto, incluso comentando entre vosotros lo que no vierais claro. En algún momento parece que no lo hayáis hecho: además de las faltas que he mencionado (más las que os animo a buscar), si hubierais revisado a conciencia al ver, por ejemplo, «pordría», ¿no os habríais dado cuenta de que le sobra una letra?

Me sabe fatal, porque habíais captado perfectamente el objetivo primero de la tarea (adaptar para niños de Primaria), pero el segundo objetivo, el de escribir, revisar y volver a revisar, no. Debo respetar los criterios, donde se advertía claramente. Espero que al menos mantengáis la motivación para seguir mejorando. Yo sí lo creo posible, pero no bajéis la guardia.

Adecuación correcta al registro estándar, excepto por lo de la ortografía, así como algún resquicio de coloquialidad (por ejemplo, usar la 2.<sup>a</sup> p. para generalizar: donde decís «perteneczas» o «forma de expresarte con personas de tu entorno con las que tienes una mayor confianza»: podríais haber empleado el impersonal o la 1.<sup>a</sup> p. pl.).

Uso aceptable de los signos de puntuación, excepto algunos errores de comas, sobre todo en incisos como «Como todos sabemos una lengua»: ¿qué sería lo correcto?

Cohesión gramatical relativamente conseguida, excepto en algunas cuestiones de concordancia («personas que tiene un bajo nivel»).

Alguna incoherencia semántica (por ejemplo, las referencias bibl. no son tales (eso sería si estuvieran bien referenciadas y si el documento contuviera citas; por ello, podríais haberlo titulado «Para saber más» / «Webs interesantes»/....

En general, las ideas están ordenadas y con progresión, uso justificado de los marcadores y párrafos ligados; pero ojo con la propiedad («No nos referiremos de la misma manera hacia el professor que hacia un amigo»: será 'no nos dirigiremos').

Recordad usar Ctrl+B para encontrar rápido en vuestro documento las expresiones que os comento; viéndolas en su contexto podréis reflexionar sobre cuál es su problema. Ante cualquier duda, no dudéis en pedirme aclaración. Espero que mis comentarios os hayan servido para seguir mejorando: aparte de la utilidad para vuestra carrera académica y profesional, a efectos de nota en esta asignatura recordad que lo que más peso tiene es el examen (lo demás es evaluación continua...), así que ánimo y a bordarlo. A por el *cum laude*.

Saludos,  
Elia

(Fuente: archivo docente)

Como se advertía, el mensaje que finalmente recibía el alumnado presentaba un formato plano que obstaculizaba considerablemente la comprensión, sobre todo teniendo en cuenta que cuestiones de las que trataba el contenido tenían que ver precisamente con aspectos de formato. Así visualizaba el receptor el mismo mensaje copiado arriba (mostramos un fragmento en la figura 1):

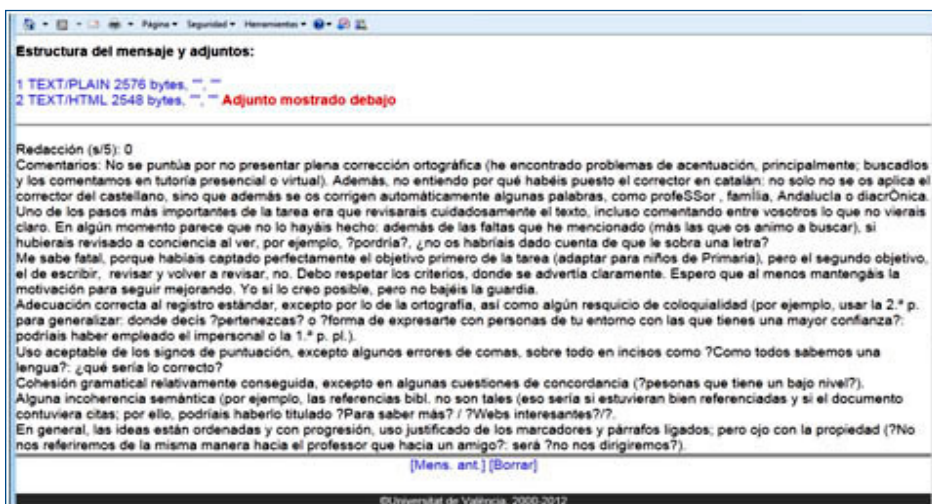


Figura 1. Visualización del mensaje de retroalimentación enviado a través del Aula Virtual. (Fuente: archivo docente).

Como se aprecia en la figura 1, a la no activación del formato en el servidor del correo de la UV se une el hecho de que al enviar el mensaje desde el Aula Virtual (donde el profesor tiene acceso al listado de alumnos y a la posibilidad de enviarles un mensaje electrónico) había caracteres que no se reconocían. Además, el servidor de mensajería utilizado tampoco permitía adjuntar archivos.

La alternativa de retroalimentación que se usó consistió en la activación de paneles de revisión o pequeños mensajes mediante herramientas de comentario sobre el texto original del estudiante (figura 2). El documento revisado se enviaba en archivo adjunto como respuesta a una petición explícita del mismo por correo electrónico.

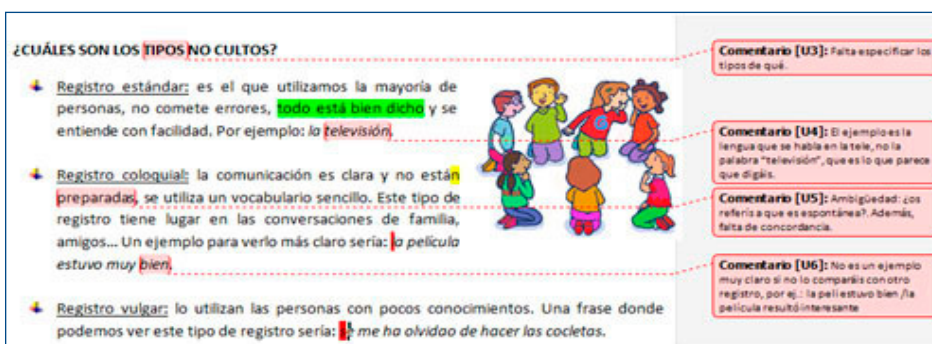


Figura 2. Fragmento de documento de dos alumnas con comentarios de la profesora. (Fuente: archivo docente).

Resulta preferible pedirles el texto en formatos compatibles con procesadores de textos, porque permite al docente subrayar de diversos colores, visualizar los comentarios más claramente y, sobre todo, escribir el comentario final en el cuerpo del documento con todas las posibilidades de formato (figura 3). Sin embargo, si alguno envía el trabajo en pdf también es posible escribir comentarios mediante Adobe Acrobat (figura 4).

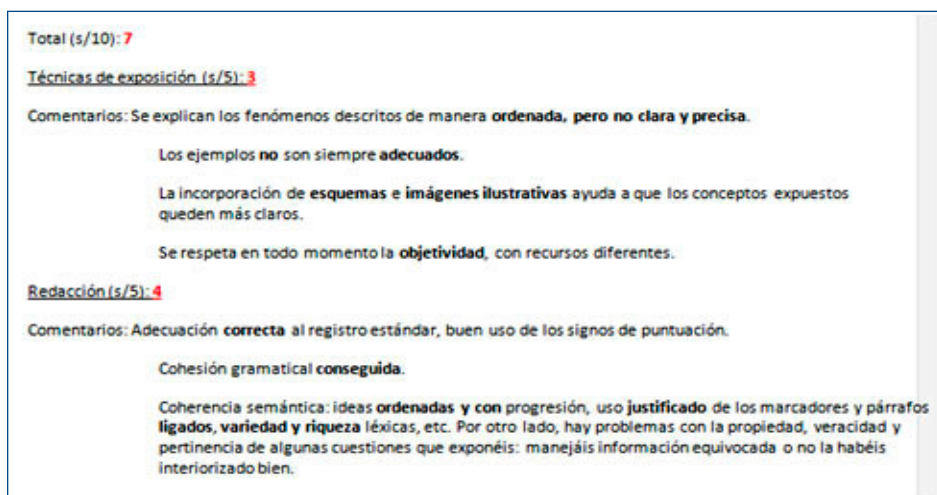


Figura 3. Ejemplo de comentario final en el documento original de unos alumnos (.docx). (Fuente: archivo docente).

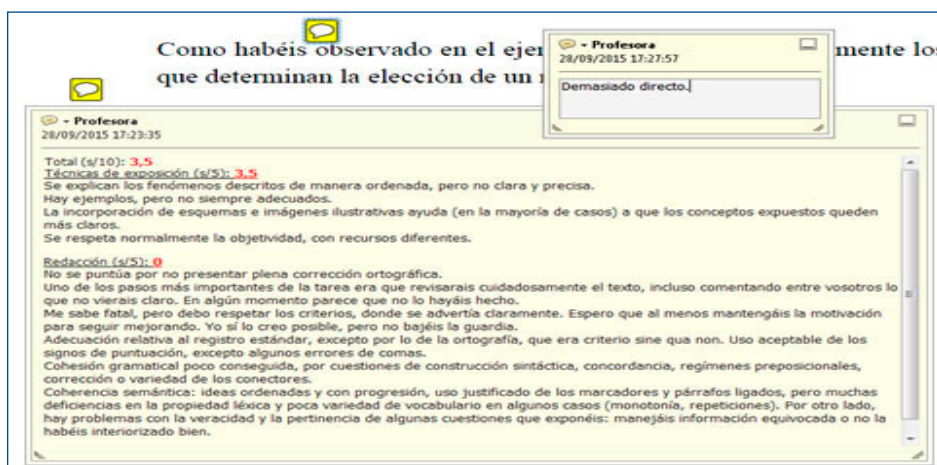


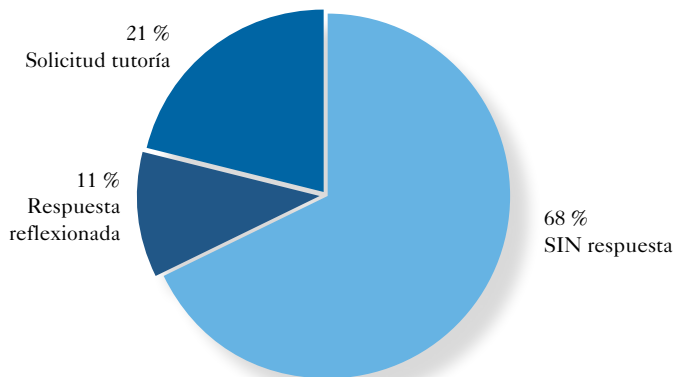
Figura 4. Ejemplo de comentario final en el documento original de unas alumnas (.pdf). (Fuente: archivo docente modificado para imprimir pantalla).

### III. Resultados

Como se ha dicho, el grupo A no solo contó con la rúbrica, sino que además fue animado a entregar una de las tareas antes del plazo límite, con el aliciente de poder recibir el *feedback* más rápidamente: casi un 60 % de los estudiantes matriculados en el grupo A efectivamente así lo hizo, frente a una sola estudiante del grupo B, donde se dio la misma posibilidad, pero sin insistir.

En primer lugar, tras la observación y análisis de las reacciones de los estudiantes y aunque muchos lo agradecieron, varios fueron los inconvenientes del primer tipo de retroalimentación. Los podemos agrupar en tres factores:

1. Dificultad para mantener la atención del receptor: el texto de los comentarios resultó demasiado largo.
2. El mensaje resultó confuso por cuestiones tipográficas. Al enviar el mensaje desde el Aula Virtual, se obviaron ciertos recursos de estructuración de la información, como los títulos y sangrías, y algunos caracteres fueron sustituidos por otros, además de que no conseguimos insertar ningún tipo de cursiva, de negritas, colores de carácter o resaltado que permitieran destacar.
3. Relativa incomodidad de tener que buscar, en el texto original, el contexto ampliado de los errores transcritos: pocos revisaron detalladamente su producción contrastándola con los comentarios del docente.



**Gráfico 1.** Reacción tras la retroalimentación mediante mensaje de correo electrónico. (Fuente: elaboración propia).

El gráfico 1 representa la reacción de los estudiantes tras el análisis de contenido de las respuestas recibidas en uno de los envíos de retroalimentación mediante mensaje de correo electrónico. Como se observa, más de dos tercios

de los mensajes del docente (casi 68 %) quedaron sin respuesta. Es decir, solo 32,1 % respondieron al mensaje, dos tercios de los cuales manifestaron su interés por concertar tutoría, pero no mostraron haber sacado jugo a los comentarios. En definitiva, solo un 10,7 % del total redactó una respuesta reflexionada a las preguntas que se les planteaba. Un ejemplo es el que puede leerse a continuación<sup>2</sup>:

[...] *He revisado todos los errores* (2) que mencionaste en tu corrección. Te escribo para contestarte a las cuestiones referentes.

En primer lugar, el extranjerismo crudo que debería haber escrito en cursiva es la palabra «link». [...] (Alumna 1, gr. A)

Algunos, a pesar de encontrar el error, no estaban seguros del problema:

Muchas *gracias* (1) por el correo.

Después de *revisarlo* (2), aún me quedan algunas *dudas* (3):

- La bibliografía la tengo que ordenar alfabéticamente, pero en el caso que se repita el autor, ¿por qué otro criterio me tengo que guiar a la hora de ordenar? Ejemplo: Lázaro Carreter, F. (1998). «Enseñantes»/ Lázaro Carreter, F. (1999). «Telefonía sin tildes». ¿Cuál iría primero? En cuanto a este apartado, si pongo la fecha de recuperación ¿hace falta poner la de modificación?
- También me has dicho que tengo algún error en la separación de palabras, ¿se trata de «A parte, la corrección de la profesora es imprescindible...»? ¿Ese «a parte» iría junto o separado?
- He repasado las faltas de acentuación y no he encontrado los errores .
- Por último, también he cometido algún error de comas «Un ejemplo de solecismo de construcción es, el comienzo incorrecto...» ¿en esta frase sería correcta la posición de la coma?

*Muchas gracias* (1). (Alumna 2, gr. A)

No puede saberse en qué medida exacta el resto intentó entender la causa de los problemas que se comentaban en el mensaje. Un alumno en concreto lo manifestó de esta manera:

Dra. Elia:

He recibido tu correo y te *agradezco* (1) profundamente la valoración y los consejos que me has dado para mejorar, pero *son muchos* (4) y la verdad es que *me*

---

2. Se respeta la transcripción de cada estudiante. Empero, la numeración y las cursivas son más; respecto a las cursivas, el servidor de correo de la Universitat de València no admite formato por defecto, cosa que además para este sistema de retroalimentación, como veremos, supuso un problema. Las expresiones resaltadas destacan las cuestiones comentadas más abajo: agradecimiento (1), constatación de autorrevisión (2), mantenimiento de las dudas (3), sensación de agobio o brumamiento (4), petición de ayuda o tutoría (5).

*he agobiado* (4) un poco *intentando mirarlos todos* (2). Me gustaría concertar una *tutoría* (5) contigo para que me realizaras unas cuantas aclaraciones, de las que estoy seguro que en persona se resuelven mucho más fácil y rápidamente que sobre la teoría del papel. [...] me *ayudaría* (5) muchísimo, tanto para tu asignatura como para los trabajos del futuro. [...] (Alumno 3, gr. A)

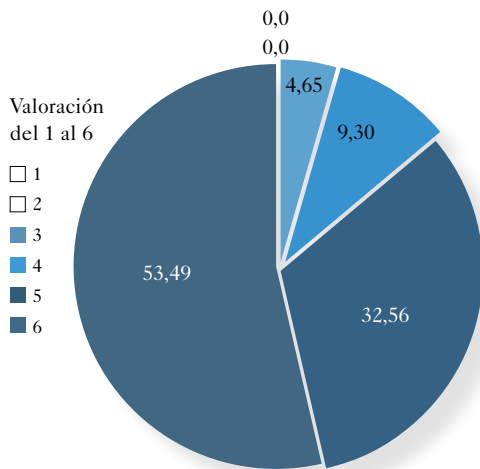
El análisis de todos los mensajes recibidos y la observación en el aula y durante las tutorías presenciales nos lleva a considerar cinco ideas que resumen los resultados de esta fase:

1. Agradecimiento: todos los mensajes de reacción a la retroalimentación, escritos u orales –durante las clases o en tutorías individualizadas–, incluían un agradecimiento a la profesora que se basaba, normalmente de manera explícita, en la sorpresa por la exhaustividad de los comentarios.
2. Constatación de autorrevisión: los comentarios de retroalimentación planteaban preguntas de reflexión al autor del texto, y algunos en efecto se preocuparon por darles respuesta y comunicarlas a la profesora.
3. Mantenimiento de las dudas: a pesar de las explicaciones gramaticales, ortográficas, etc., proporcionadas a raíz de ciertas sugerencias o errores, hubo aspectos que no quedaron claros al receptor del mensaje.
4. Sensación de agobio o brumamiento: la longitud y exhaustividad del mensaje no fue bien recibida por todos los alumnos.
5. Petición de ayuda o tutoría: algunos necesitaron aclarar presencialmente algunas cuestiones. Es decir, se interesaron por la retroalimentación, pero nos consta que no lograron comprender a fondo el mensaje escrito o no supieron aprovecharlo.

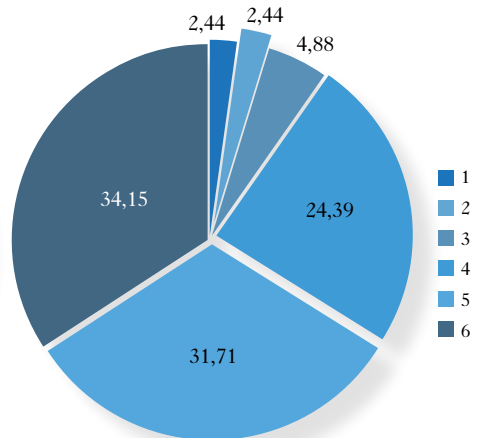
En una segunda fase de la investigación se analizaron los datos recogidos a través de una encuesta virtual, en la que los alumnos y alumnas valoraron la retroalimentación proporcionada por la profesora en una escala del 1 al 6 (nada útil / muy útil). Se recogieron un total de 84 respuestas, 43 correspondientes al grupo A y 41 al grupo B: si tenemos en cuenta el número de participantes, los datos pueden considerarse plenamente representativos de los grupos, dado que solo hubo 7 alumnos que no quisieron o pudieron rellenar la encuesta (4 en el grupo A y 3 en el B; cabe puntualizar que parte de ellos tampoco llegó a participar plenamente en la experiencia).

El dato más destacable en los resultados correspondientes al grupo A es que más de la mitad de los alumnos que respondieron al cuestionario valoraron la utilidad de la retroalimentación con la máxima puntuación y absolutamente nadie puntuó con 2 o 1 (gráfico 2; se muestran los datos en porcentajes). También en el segundo grupo la valoración resultó positiva (gráfico 3).





**Gráfico 2.** Percepción de utilidad del *feedback*. Grupo A. (Fuente: elaboración propia).



**Gráfico 3.** Percepción de utilidad del *feedback*. Grupo B. (Fuente: elaboración propia).

Sin embargo, si lo comparamos con los resultados del primero, aparte de la relativa coincidencia en las puntuaciones 3 y 5, observamos un reparto más equilibrado del resto de valoraciones, una tendencia a puntuaciones más bajas, así como la aparición de un pequeño porcentaje de estudiantes que valoran negativamente la retroalimentación recibida.

La diferencia entre los promedios de ambos grupos fue de medio punto (5,35 vs. 4,83). La aparición de datos extremos en el grupo B podría justificar la conveniencia de calcular la media recortada. Resulta significativo que la media recortada al 2 % suba una décima aproximadamente no solo en el grupo B, sino también en el A, resultando un promedio global (media ponderada) de 5,2:

$$A: M_{\text{rec}(2\%)} = 5,44$$

$$B: M_{\text{rec}(2\%)} = 4,95$$

La diferencia entre los grupos se aprecia claramente si consideramos los cuartiles y, en concreto, la mediana: 6 en A vs. 5 en B (tabla 1).

**Tabla 1.** Cuartiles grupos A/B.

	Q1	Q2	Q3
A	5	6	6
B	4	5	6

Fuente: elaboración propia.

## IV. Discusión

Los tres factores expuestos –los que afectaban al mantenimiento de la atención, al formato del texto del mensaje y a la incomodidad de contrastar la información– evidencian un hecho preocupante: no todos sacaron provecho del comentario de retroalimentación del primer tipo. De hecho, el porcentaje de estudiantes que evidenciaron el aprovechamiento lo valoramos como excesivamente bajo, sobre todo si consideramos el esfuerzo y tiempo dedicados por parte del docente.

En cuanto al sistema de comentarios en paneles de revisión virtuales, se muestra como conveniente el mantenimiento de un comentario final que englobe todos los apartados valorados, porque aporta visión global y pondera los errores o sugerencias. Constatamos ocho hechos al respecto, que serían inviábiles sin el uso del TIC: a) el comentario redactado resulta mucho más breve, dado que se anclan sobre el contexto original los comentarios puntuales; b) estos últimos, independientes unos de otros en el panel de revisiones del documento, son bien recibidos por el destinatario: los estudiantes, pertenecientes a una generación «tuit», están habituados a recibir información fragmentada y componer el «todo» en su mente; c) a pesar de la referida brevedad, el sistema permite profundizar en los problemas que cada estudiante presenta según apartados; d) puede resultar rápido para el docente si prepara plantillas o respuestas modelo con cada tipo de problema o consejo; e) es posible «rayar» el texto como lo haríamos en papel, con la ventaja de que el original corregido puede devolverse y conservarse al mismo tiempo, sin necesidad de escanearlo o fotocopiarlo; f) podemos archivar fácilmente las conversaciones con cada alumno o alumna para realizar seguimiento –quedan superadas las limitaciones de tiempo y espacio–; g) permite búsquedas rápidas; h) facilita la recogida de datos para sistematizarlos o analizarlos de cara a posibles investigaciones en las áreas de educación.

Con todo, podemos afirmar que el análisis de la reacción de los alumnos al *feedback* de texto plano enviado por correo electrónico muestra la conveniencia de cambiar el sistema de comentario, con la necesidad de acortar los mensajes y anclarlos a su contexto. La activación de paneles de revisión en los documentos se plantea como una solución bien recibida por los aprendices, receptivos, por otro lado, a novedades tecnológicas.

Respecto a los resultados de la encuesta, se advierten medias claramente más altas en el grupo A, con una distancia de entre medio punto y un punto respecto del grupo B, dependiendo del sistema de medición estadístico; en todo caso, la diferencia es considerable y confirma las dos hipótesis de partida:

Los estudiantes que han contado con los criterios de evaluación tanto para realizar la actividad de escritura como para revisarla tras el comentario de retroalimentación (grupo A) perciben este como más útil.

El grupo de estudiantes que en su mayoría mostró interés por obtener *feedback* inmediato (grupo A) también fue el grupo que mejor valoró la utilidad de esta retroalimentación.

## V. Consideraciones finales

Tras una tarea de escritura, cuando el *feedback* proporcionado fue exhaustivo, todos los estudiantes lo agradecieron de un modo u otro; algunos explícitamente, respondiendo al mensaje con mayor o menor sorpresa. Sin embargo, encontramos dos matices en cuanto a las dos modalidades seguidas: cuando el comentario se hizo «citando» el fragmento, el estudiante rara vez lo buscó para aprehender el contexto y recordar el error; de los pocos de quienes hubo constancia que sí lo hicieron, la mayoría manifestó confusión y duda.

La valoración cuantitativa de los estudiantes, altamente positiva, indica que agradecen que el profesor o profesora se interese por sus errores individuales y se los comente personalmente. Es decir, la retroalimentación –en general– es bien recibida y considerada útil *a priori*.

La comparación de las puntuaciones obtenidas en cada grupo devuelve una diferencia de entre medio punto y un punto, dependiendo del sistema de medición estadístico. Estos resultados, a grandes rasgos, recomiendan el uso explícito de rúbrica porque favorece la asimilación del contenido de los comentarios –aparte de que, obviamente, también sirve de guía en la realización de toda actividad–. Asimismo, el contraste entre los grupos indica que es fundamental crear en el estudiante la expectativa y exigirle que muestre interés por el *feedback* a través de algún tipo de esfuerzo simbólico hacia el que conviene incentivar con ahínco.

Por último, concluimos como preferible la retroalimentación a través de mensaje adjunto con paneles de revisión sobre el texto original del alumno o alumna. Algunos de los aspectos que la hacen recomendable son que permite aclaraciones breves sobre el contexto sin perder exhaustividad, que el formato digital reduce el esfuerzo si se usan rúbricas y plantillas, facilita la recogida, archivado, sistematización y búsqueda de datos, tanto de cara a la investigación como a la docencia, para el propio seguimiento del aprendizaje individual de cada estudiante.

Con el paso a Moodle para la plataforma virtual de la Universitat de València a partir del curso 2015-2016, se abren nuevas posibilidades que pueden fa-

cilitar la gestión de la retroalimentación de tipo adjunto con paneles por parte del docente.

En definitiva, podemos afirmar que la clave no es darles retroalimentación, sino que, para asegurar una recepción provechosa, es necesario motivarles para desear ese *feedback*.

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# The influence of socio-economic background, personal effort and motivation on English proficiency

Amaia PRIETO ARRATIBEL / M<sup>a</sup> Camino BUENO-ALASTUEY  
Universidad Pública de Navarra/Public University of Navarre

**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of three factors –socio-economic background, individual effort, and motivation– in English proficiency, and the possible relation between individual effort and family background, and between motivation and family background. The instrument used to collect the data was a questionnaire completed by 159 students from three high schools in Spain. The answers to the questionnaire were correlated with those students' grades in the subject English using SPSS. Results indicated that, from the three factors analyzed, motivation influenced students' proficiency the most and that motivation correlated with mother's occupation and higher amounts of input outside classes. From these findings, it can be concluded that English proficiency can be improved by increasing motivation, which in turn, can be increased by teachers providing more input and more enjoyable ways of getting input outside class such as listening to music or watching films in English.

**Keywords:** socio-economic background; personal effort; language input; motivation; English proficiency.

**Resumen:** El objetivo de este estudio fue estudiar la influencia de tres factores –contexto socio-económico, el esfuerzo individual y la motivación– en el nivel de competencia en inglés, y la posible relación entre esfuerzo personal y contexto familiar, y entre motivación y contexto familiar. El instrumento utilizado fue un cuestionario completado por 159 estudiantes. Sus respuestas se correlacionaron con sus notas en inglés usando el programa SPSS. Los resultados del análisis indican que, de los tres factores, la motivación es la que más influye en el nivel de competencia en inglés, y que correlaciona con la ocupación materna y un mayor nivel de *input* fuera de clase. De nuestros resultados se puede concluir que la competencia en inglés se puede mejorar aumentando la motivación, que a su vez, se puede incrementar aportando más *input* y maneras más entretenidas de conseguir dicho *input* fuera de clase como por ejemplo escuchar música o ver películas en inglés.

**Palabras clave:** contexto socio económico; esfuerzo personal; *input* lingüístico; motivación; competencia en inglés.

## 1. Introduction

Students with the same amount of years of instructed learning tend to reach varying degrees of proficiency, and thus, research has explored the existence of other factors which exert an influence on the varying degrees of English proficiency. Previous investigations have already indicated that, among others, there are three factors –students’ socio-economic background, individual effort and motivation– which influence academic outcomes, including English proficiency.

From the three factors mentioned, the relationship between students’ background and their school achievement is the one that has been explored the most, and different authors have shown social class affects significantly and persistently students’ school achievement (Requena, Salazar & Radl, 2012).

The effect of motivation on English proficiency has also been explored and it has been shown to be one of the key factors contributing to ESL proficiency (Dörnyei, 1998), as more motivated students get higher grades and perform better (Barrio Espinosa, 2015).

Finally, although there has been little research on the influence of the third factor considered, students’ personal effort, a relation between the amount of effort students exert and their family background has been suggested (Kuehn & Landeras, 2012), and as this effect might also affect English proficiency, this relation should be explored further.

Considering the three factors of our research have been shown to influence academic performance and English proficiency, our research focuses on which of those three factors exerts the most influence on English proficiency and on studying the possible relations between family background and the other two factors, which is another unexplored area of research.

In this paper, we will present previous research on the topic. Then, we will explain the method and the measures used. Afterwards, we will present the results together with the discussion. And finally, we will give some pedagogical recommendations in order to improve students’ motivation, and some suggestions for further research on the topic.

### 1.1. *Literature review*

School systems appeared in the Modern age, that is, in the XIX<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, enlightened philosophers believed that people could comprehend and control the universe through reason and empirical investigations. As a result, those enlightened thinkers wanted to create a better and more rational world (Ritzer, 2011). These philosophers believed in the power of education to



transform society into a better world. But, from the beginning, school systems were class-based. Compulsory education was divided into a double network; worker class children had access to a primary education that only allowed them to join the work force, whereas high class children had access to a primary education that would lead them to secondary and higher education (Perez-Agote, 2012). Consequently, school systems reproduced social inequalities from the very beginning, cutting short all the pedagogical optimism of the time.

After the Second World War, comprehensive schools were introduced. Their purpose was to avoid the division that class-based schooling had created, and to establish equal education opportunities for students. This system was based on meritocracy, students' personal achievement and effort were supposed to be more important than their social origin. Comprehensive school systems were supposed to reduce social inequality. On the one hand, those systems compelled schools to give a homogeneous education to all the population for a longer time, and on the other, they postponed the time in which students had to decide which track to follow, thus reducing families' influence in students' educational decisions as the older students were, the more autonomous they would be (Fernández Enguita & Levin, 1997 as quoted in Martínez García, 2007). Still, some authors believed that comprehensive school systems didn't have any real impact in reducing social inequality (Merino, Sala & Troiano, 2012).

Moreover, research on the topic stated that schools still reproduced socioeconomic, gender and ethnic inequalities (Feitó, 2003; Martínez García, 2007; Bernardi & Requena, 2010; Fernández Enguita, Mena Martínez & Riviere Gómez, 2010). For example, Feitó (2003) stated that although working class schooling had increased in Spain in the 80s and 90s, inequality remained stable. He analyzed the data from the census of the years 1981 and 1991 and saw that only 14% of manual labourers' children finished higher education, compared to 70% of professional workers' children.

Bernardi and Requena (2010) analyzed the Spanish Labour Force survey data of the years 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008, and concluded that social class influenced students' probability to complete Compulsory Education, as well as their probability for choosing the vocational training track. They also found that social class influenced students' probability for retaking the last school year of Compulsory Education (CSE) after having failed.

Bernardi and Requena (2010) reported that service class (professional, senior administrative, and senior managerial employees) children had the highest rates of CSE completion (75.7%), whereas unskilled workers children rates were much lower (38.1%). Differences could also be seen when retaking a school year

after failing it at CSE. While 90.7% of service class children retook the year, only 69.7% of unskilled workers' children did. It could be assumed, then, that social class of origin influences both education achievement and decisions.

Causes for dropping out of school were investigated recently by Fernandez Enguita et al. (2010). They concluded that one of the main reasons for dropping out of school was students' social class of origin because among students with similar grades, the decision of dropping out was more frequent among working class children than among middle class children.

**Table 1.** School failure signs depending on parents' occupation

	Parents' higher occupation			
	White collar / qualified	White collar / No qualified	Manual / qualified	Manual / No qualified
Has retaken a school year	18,4	30,1	37,6	36,2
Doesn't aspire to Upper Secondary Education	6,9	12,8	23,5	23,1
Scoring below a standard deviation	10,4	16,6	27,6	28,8
High risk of school failure	22,7	35,6	46,3	44,8

Source: PISA 2003.

**Table 2.** School failure signs depending on parents' level of studies

	Parents' higher level of studies						
	None	Primary	Secondary	Vocational Training	Upper Secondary	Univ. (3)	Univ. (5)
Has retaken a school year	48,2	37,8	25,5	24,1	29,5	27,7	16,3
Doesn't aspire to Upper Secondary Education	39,8	23,8	13,3	13,0	13,1	8,2	5,1
Scoring below a standard deviation	43,0	26,7	15,8	17,3	17,8	14,5	9,7
High risk of school failure	62,9	46,2	31,8	31,0	35,5	33,1	20,2

Source: PISA 2003.

As Tables 1 and 2 from Fernandez Enguita et al. (2010) show, there is a strong connection between parents' occupation and level of studies, and their children school failure rates. The amount of children who had retaken some school year was nearly double (36,2% vs. 18,4%) for unskilled workers' children than for white collar workers' children, and also for all other indicators of high risk of school failure. The same happened with parents' education, the higher the level of studies of parents, the lower all the indicators of risk of school failure were. So taking into account all these data, we can conclude that social class significantly influences students' achievement in school.

Rodriguez Izquierdo (2012) introduced a new factor which helped explain school success further showing that parents' positive attitudes towards school predicted academic success independently from socioeconomic level. However, whether social background has any influence on students achievement in the subject of English is not clear.

Gradman and Hanania (1991) investigated the influence of several language learning factors in ESL proficiency, including socio-cultural background variables. These authors concluded that the variables which proved to contribute most to English learning were all related to a higher amount of language input: exposure to the language through extensive reading outside class, exposure to native teachers, the use of English as the language of instruction, and participation in intensive English programs. On the contrary, socio-cultural background variables didn't seem to have a strong influence.

Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that Gradman and Hanania (1991) conducted their study at the University of Indiana, and consequently, we could assume the participants in their study would probably have had similar social background, and, thus, differences due to that would not be relevant. Furthermore, all those students were already at university and considering the high risk of failure of lower socio-economic background children, we could assume most of the participants did not belong to those groups. Consequently, social class seems to have a bigger influence in Compulsory Education than at University.

Another factor which might have a strong influence in English proficiency is personal effort, and even though it could be conjectured that students who exert more personal effort (by reading in English at home, or by simply studying more) will get a better achievement grade in English, theoretical and empirical research on the topic has been scarce due to the difficulty of measuring effort (Kuehn & Landeras, 2012). Nevertheless, some papers have shown the importance of the family in students' amount of effort, for

example Kuehn and Landeras (2012) found that «an improvement in parental education from not having completed compulsory education to holding a university degree is associated to around 15% more effort by the student (approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes of additional weekly homework)» (p. 21). Hewitt (2006) conducted an empirical study with 42 kids in Andalusia on the influence of parental encouragement in ESL performance. She took into account two variables: parental knowledge of English and the amount of times they helped their children in English homework. She concluded that both variables influenced children written and listening performance in ESL. Consequently, the amount of effort that a student performs also seems to be influenced by family background.

Research on motivation (Dörnyei, 1998) has shown it to be one of the key factors in ESL proficiency. Gardner (2007) conducted an empirical research with Spanish students, and concluded that «the more highly motivated students have higher grades than the less motivated ones» (p. 16). Liuolienè and Metiuniené (2006, as quoted in García Sanchez & Cruz Vargas, 2013) observed that the more highly motivated students were more autonomous in their learning and worked more independently than the less motivated ones.

One study by Bernaus, Wilson and Gardner (2009) concluded that teachers' motivation plays an important role in the process of language learning. Motivated teachers will use more motivating strategies in class, and that will influence directly students' motivation and achievement. Uribe, Gutiérrez and Madrid (2008, as quoted in García Sanchez & Cruz Vargas, 2013) showed that Spanish students had positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language. Those attitudes seemed to be affected by gender, English grades, private classes, social class and the year in which students had started to learn English. Again, the influence of students' social class and family background appeared.

Considering that all the research described points out to the importance of family background, individual effort measures and motivation for EFL learning, it seems worth exploring which of these factors has more influence in English achievement. Consequently, the main objective of this paper is to try to answer the following four research questions:

1. Which of the following three variables has more influence in English proficiency: socio-economic background, individual effort, or motivation?
2. Is there a relation between individual effort and family background?
3. Is there any connection between motivation and family background?
4. Is there a connection between individual effort and motivation?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Context

In the year 1979 the General Law of Education (LGE) introduced comprehensive schools in Spain. It established that education was compulsory from the age of 6 until the age of 14. Twenty years later, the General Organic Law of the Education System (LOGSE) expanded compulsory education to the age of 16.

This is the system currently in force in Spain. Until the age of 12, students study Primary Education. At the age of 12, they begin Compulsory Second Education (CSE). Students finish their CSE degree at the age of 16. When they finish CSE, those students who want to continue studying can choose between two different tracks; they can either go to vocational training school or go to upper secondary education, which will lead them to University.

The present study took place in three different Public High Schools in the north of Spain, in a province divided in three different parts according to the language spoken. The parts are called the Basque speaking area, the mixed region and the Spanish speaking area. Spanish is the official language in the entire province, whereas Basque is only co-official in the Basque speaking area. This linguistic division also has an effect on education and several teaching models can be found according to the language of instruction. In the Basque speaking area, where students are supposed to know both languages, the A model (Spanish is the language of instruction and Basque a subject); the D model (Basque is the language of instruction and Spanish a subject); and the B model (the languages of instruction are Basque and Spanish) are currently in force. In the mixed region, where students have the right to be educated in Basque if they ask for it, the A model, the D model and the G model (Spanish is the language of instruction and Basque is not taught as a subject) are currently in force. Finally, in the Spanish speaking area, only the models A and G are economically supported by the government.

The city where this study took place is located in the mixed region. High School 1 and High School 2 are located in the same neighbourhood, whereas High School 3 is located in a second neighbourhood. While High School 1 instructs in the D model (Basque is the language of instruction in this model), High School 2 and 3 do it in the A model (Spanish is the language of instruction and Basque only a subject).

## 2.2. *Participants*

The participants of the study were students from the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Compulsory Education. Students were between 15 and 17 years old, which means some of them were retaking the school year. The distribution of participants in the different settings can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Participants

	Participants
High School 1	61 students
High School 2	63 students
High School 3	35 students
<b>Total</b>	<b>159 students</b>

## 2.3. *Instruments*

A questionnaire (see Appendix I) was created to study our research questions. The questionnaire was anonymous, and it was divided into three sections: personal data, personal effort and motivation.

In order to analyze students' socioeconomic background, a modified version of the questionnaire used in Gil Flores (2011) was employed. The variables taken into account were 18 and included information about parents' nationality, level of studies, occupation and habits. To classify parents' occupation, the classification used by the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE) was used (for more information see Appendix II).

To analyze students' personal effort, seven variables were taken into account in the questionnaire. First of all, students were asked for the amount of time they spent studying English at home on their own or through private lessons. Apart from that, it was also considered important knowing how much English input they received outside the classroom. Although watching movies, reading magazines or travelling abroad could be regarded as leisure rather than as studying, they were also taken into account because they also serve as input.

Finally, to analyze students' motivation, a modified version of Gardner's (1985) AMTB questionnaire (used with Croatian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese and Romanian students) was used. In order to make the questionnaire shorter, all the items related to Instrumental Orientation and Parental Encouragement were selected, but only some of the items that define Motivation.

In Gardner's test, there were four items included in Instrumental Orientation, which stressed the utilitarian value of learning English. Parental Encouragement was analyzed through eight items and it referred to the extent students felt their parents support them with English. Finally, Motivation was made up of motivational intensity; desire to learn English, and attitudes toward learning English. As we said, not all the items of this last variable, Motivation, were selected. Only four items from each of the three aspects included in Motivation were chosen –from each aspect two positively keyed and two negatively keyed– trying to respect the original proportions. Motivational Intensity measured students' motivation through their assignments, future plans to learn English and so on. Desire to learn English took into account the students' desire to learn English. And finally, Attitudes towards learning English stressed students' feelings toward the language; some items expressed positive feelings and other negative feelings.

#### 2.4. *Procedure*

The questionnaires were worded in the L1 of the students, so in Basque and Spanish, because we wanted students to clearly understand the meaning of each question. Firstly, the objectives of the project were explained to the students and then they were given the questionnaire. Students filled the questionnaire individually. Both the teacher and the researcher were in the classroom in order to clarify any doubt the students might have.

#### 2.5. *Data and data analysis*

The data were obtained from the questionnaires and were analysed using SPSS. The Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to observe the relationship among the different variables and students' grades in English. Significance level was set at the 0.05 level and at the 0.01 level. The level of correlation was considered weak (between ,10 and ,29), or moderate (between ,30 and ,49).

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. *Correlation between socio-economic, personal effort and motivation variables and students' grades in English.*

As can be seen in Table 4, only three socio-economic variables showed weak correlations with students' grades: having parents who are fond of reading (V15), amount of books and father's level of studies. The first two correlations could be easily explained as students whose parents read regularly will more likely

read themselves, and it has been widely demonstrated that children who read perform better in school (Cullinan, 1998). The father’s level of studies showed a weak correlation, and thus we can see that the level of studies influences, though weakly, performance. However, all other socio-economic factors showed no correlation, and thus, it could then be concluded that, in general, students’ family background doesn’t affect their performance in English.

**Table 4.** Pearson correlation coefficient of those variables that proved to be significantly correlated with students’ grades in English ordered from most significant to least significant within the three set of variables

Variables	V26: Grades	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig.
<b>Socio-economic variables:</b>		
V15: Reading (parents)	,224	,006
V13: Books	,191	,020
V3: Father’s level of studies	,165	,044
<b>Personal effort variables:</b>		
V20: Music	,232	,004
V25: Private lessons	,196	,016
V21: Movies	,182	,025
V23: Reading	,164	,045
<b>Motivational variables:</b>		
V39: My parents think I should devote more time to studying English.	-,393	,000
V27: I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see and hear.	,390	,000
V37: I plan to learn as much English as possible.	,341	,000
V30: I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.	,265	,001
V45: My parents have stressed the importance English will have for me when I leave the university.	,226	,006
V36: I wish I were fluent in English.	,206	,012
V34: I haven’t any great wish to learn more than the basics of English.	-,207	,011
V40: My parents encourage me to practice my English as much as possible.	,189	,021



More personal effort variables than socio-economic variables correlated with English proficiency. From the seven variables considered, four correlated, though weakly. Listening to music in English outside the classroom (V20) proved to have the highest correlation, even though it was a weak correlation. Other variables had lower but still significant correlations: watching movies in English (V21), reading in English (V23), and attending private lessons (V25). All of these variables represented a higher English input outside the classroom. The amount of time students spent studying English at home didn't correlate with their grades. Consequently, homework doesn't seem to have a distinctive effect in students' qualifications.

Finally, most correlations were established between students' motivation and their English proficiency. A third of all the motivation variables significantly correlated weakly or moderately with higher grades in English. Three of the variables showed a moderate correlation with English grades: parents encouragement (V39), persistence in trying to understand (V27) and personal motivation (V37). The role of parents encouragement is stressed in these findings, as it is the variable which correlated the highest with grades. It can be concluded that in general, students who perceived English as important, and showed a greater interest in its learning scored better in the classroom.

Taking into account these results, and to answer our first research question about which of the three variables analyzed influences English Proficiency the most, it could be concluded that motivation seems to influence the most English proficiency, followed by personal effort, and socio-economic background, which contrary to previous research on school achievement (Fernandez Enguita et al., 2010) seems to influence English grades the least. The lack of correlation between English level of proficiency and socio-economic variables supports previous research (Gradman and Hanania, 1991).

The influence of the amount of input that students receive outside the classroom (through music, movies or private classes) should not be undervalued, it is interesting to note that according to our results, teachers and parents encouragement can play an important role in their students' English proficiency. Teachers can barely influence their students' socio-economic background, but they can clearly influence their motivation and, thus, their grades. This opens up tons of possibilities for teachers in order to stimulate their students' desire to learn English, and it moves us away from socio-economic determinism.

As no correlation was found between personal effort and family background, the answer to our second research question should be there is no relation between family background and personal effort. A promising finding as personal effort has more influence on English grades than family background.

3.2. *Correlation between socio-economic variables and motivation*

As can be seen in Table 5, one socio-economic variable, students' mother's occupation (V4) proved to have a weak correlation with a third of the motivational variables.

**Table 5.** Pearson coefficient correlation for those motivational variables that proved to be significantly correlated with students' mothers' occupation

Variables	V4: Mother's Occupation	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig.
V47: Studying English is important because other people will respect me more if I know English.	-,257**	,001
V44: My parents feel that it is very important for me to learn English.	-,236**	,003
V28: English is a very important part of the school programme.	-,235**	,003
V43: My parents feel that I should continue studying English all my life.	-,218**	,007
V41: My parents are very interested in everything I do in my English classes.	-,212**	,008
V40: My parents encourage me to practice my English as much as possible.	-,204*	,011
V46: My parents try to help me to learn English.	-,177*	,029
V30: I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.	,158*	,049

Most of the variables that showed a correlation were related to parental encouragement. Hence, it can be concluded that the mother's occupation influenced students perception of English. Parental encouragement is the factor which shows the strongest correlation to mother's occupation so depending on the students' mother occupation, parental encouragement is higher.

In general, mothers whose jobs required more qualification tended to encourage their children more to learn English. At the same time, their children also tended to perceive English as an important subject. Considering parental encouragement exerts a very strong influence on academic achievement (Rodríguez Izquierdo, 2012), and also correlated moderately with English grades, this result should be taken into consideration.

The fact that father's occupation did not correlate with parental encouragement could reflect that nowadays mothers are still more involved in their children education. It can be seen that parental involvement is important for children to be motivated, because it also influences the way in which students perceive English.

As it can be seen in Figure 1, to the question «English is a very important part of the school programme» directors and managers' (1) children scored high (4,66). Children whose mothers were manual workers (7), worked in elementary occupations (9) or were «not paid» domestic workers (10) scored below 4, with the exception of equipment and facilities operators' children (8) that scored 5. This sharp peak is not an exception but it is due to the fact that there was only one student whose mother worked as equipment operator.

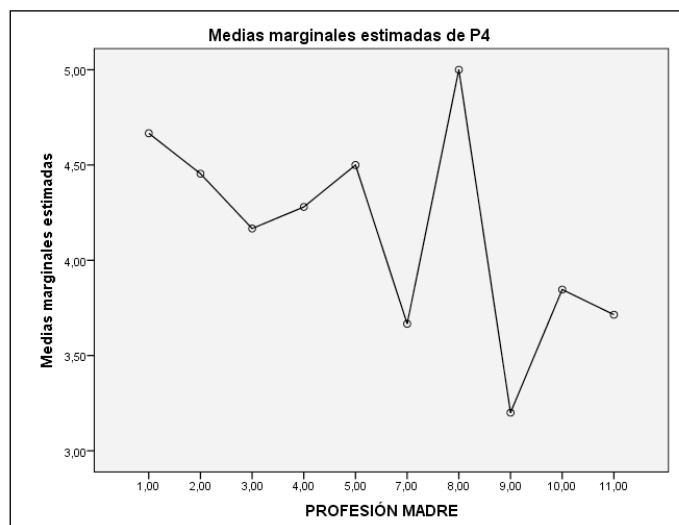


Figure 1. Correlation between mother's occupation and importance given to English at home.

### 3.3. Correlation between personal effort and motivation

Four of the personal effort variables significantly correlated with seventeen motivational variables too (see Table 6). Listening to music in English correlated with 11 of the 24 motivational variables; watching movies in English correlated with 8 of the 24 motivational variables; watching TV shows in English correlated with 14 of the 24 motivational variables; and reading in English outside the classroom correlated with 10 of the 24 motivational variables.

**Table 6.** Significant correlations of motivation variables with personal effort variables

Motivation	Music	Movies	TV show	Reading
V27: I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see and hear.	,378	,279	,329	,258
V28: English is a very important part of the school programme.	,188		,285	,192
V29: I would like to learn as much English as possible.	,294		,261	,261
V31: Learning English is a waste of time.	-,276			
V32: To be honest, I really have no desire to learn English.	-,266	-,210	-,299	
V34: I haven't any great wish to learn more than the basics of English.	-,208		-,203	-,224
V36: I wish I were fluent in English.	,292	,203	,231	,206
V37: I plan to learn as much English as possible.	,462	,331	,397	,277
V38: I think that learning English is dull.			-,188	
V39: My parents think I should devote more time to studying English.				,165
V43: My parents feel that I should continue studying English all my life.	-,210		,243	
V44: My parents feel that it is very important for me to learn English.			,249	
V46: My parents try to help me to learn English.		-,183		
V47: Studying English is important because other people will respect me more if I know English.		,226	,179	
V48: Studying English language is important because it will be useful in getting a good job.			,162	,232
V49: Studying English is important because it will make me more educated.	-,173	,225	,239	,165
V50: Studying English is important because I will need it for my career.	-,176	,280	,287	,243

Students who received a higher input of English through media showed a greater interest in learning as much English as they could. They also showed a greater instrumental orientation, especially in the case of students who watched movies and TV shows. Our findings could be explained by the fact that the American and British film and music industry, and the culture related to it, is very appealing for teenagers. Learning a language is not just learning a system of symbols, it also means learning a culture. And the English speaking countries' culture is nowadays widely displayed in the media (music, movies, magazines and so on). Hence, the culture and the ways of living American and English media show motivate students to learn the language of the culture they are seeing or listening to through the screen. In the same way, as the media show language in its context, it could be said that students who watch TV shows or read in English are more capable of realizing the instrumental value of the language. And when students know something will be useful for them, they will be more motivated to learn it. Thus, the use of media resources could be very useful in order to increase students' motivation inside the classroom. Still, it cannot be established if motivation was higher because they listened to music in English, watched movies and TV shows and read in English at home; or alternatively, as a consequence of their higher motivation, they listened to music, watched movies and TV shows and read in English at home. Nevertheless, as we will see in the next section, research has shown that overall the use of new technologies in the EFL classroom increases students' motivation.

According to our results, no significant correlations have been found between students' personal effort variables and family background variables. On the contrary, there was a relation between motivation and family background (mother's occupation influenced motivation), as well as multiple correlations between motivation and the amount of input that students received outside the classroom.

#### 4. Pedagogical recommendations

As we have concluded, it seems that motivation influences the most students' English proficiency. And it appeared that listening to music and watching movies and TV shows in English influences students' motivation. Consequently, it could be interesting to use those kinds of materials inside the classroom. Watching movies and videos or listening to songs not only has a motivating effect on students but it is also the only means from which students can receive a significant exposure to English outside the classroom in EFL contexts. Movies or music can help students' English learning because they help to bring the real use of the language into the classroom (Genc Ilter, 2009).

Many papers have shown how the use of new technologies in the EFL classroom can be motivating. Madrid et al. (1993) conducted a research to observe the sources of EFL students' motivation. For this purpose, they passed a questionnaire to 13, 15, 16, 17 and 18 years old EFL students. Classroom methodology was one of the variables studied. The questionnaires showed that «participants present a clear inclination towards all the activities implying a more active usage of language» (Madrid et al. 1993, p. 30) and that most of the times, watching videos was one of the activities that students liked the most.

One of the biases in EFL teaching is the lack of «real» communicative situations in which students would be able to see the actual use of the language. Teachers could counteract it by introducing different videos, songs, movie segments (or full movies), radio programs, etc. Kelsen (2009) argued that English popular culture could be motivating. She conducted a research using YouTube as a supplementary material in EFL classes, and showed that it helped to motivate students. Teachers should be careful when choosing these materials, as they should be relevant to the lesson. For example, if students read a text in the classroom about some historical topic, then, the teacher could select a video about that same topic, thus complementing the text. Or if a specific grammar point is being worked, the teacher could select some movie fragments in which characters put that particular structure in use.

There are already some blogs created by teachers that try to teach students different grammar structures through different movie segments. Following these activities, students will be able to see the language in use while they improve their listening skills. Teachers could also complement these activities with different speaking or writing activities by i.e. making students reflect about what is going on in the scenes.

Full movies could also be very good materials for arising students motivation and awareness of the language. To start with, movies should not be only used for entertainment. Teachers should try to make the most of each movie conducting different and varied activities. For example, theme-based discussions could be a very interesting and complete activity; «a theme-based discussion allows students to explore relevant issues raised from a variety of perspectives, develop critical thinking skills, elicit responses, converse freely on many of the aspects of the film they have viewed, while freeing them from overly restrictive learning habits that focus exclusively on grammar and vocabulary» (King, 2002, p. 512).

Integrating authentic materials in a meaningful way inside the classroom could raise students' motivation and make students realize that languages are alive, that they actually serve for communicating. These materials will allow students to see the language in use.

## 5. Limitations and future directions

One limitation of the current study is the use of students' grades in English as the criteria for English proficiency. A test could be passed to all the students in future studies to test students' level of English with the same measure. The students in our sample had been evaluated by different teachers in different high schools. This means that teachers could have followed different evaluation criteria when evaluating their students and therefore, these differences could have resulted in misleading results.

Another limitation was not choosing high schools with very different socio-economic contexts. Although the high schools that we have chosen differ from each other, it could be argued that they are quite similar for a study of this kind. If we want the analysis of the influence of students' socio-economic background in their English proficiency to be reliable we should have taken a bigger sample from a broader range of high schools, comparing high schools from more neighbourhoods, but also private or state-subsidised high schools.

The results of this study should be cautiously interpreted, as only correlational conclusions may be reached. The Pearson coefficient correlation shows there is a relation between two variables or more, but it doesn't establish a cause-effect relation. Hence, future studies could analyse the result with more complex and accurate statistical methods.

## 6. Conclusions

From our results, it can be drawn that among students' socio-economic background, personal effort and motivation, the last one influences the most English proficiency, followed by personal effort, whereas socio-economic background influences English proficiency the least.

According to our results, no significant correlations were found between students' personal effort variables and family background variables. On the contrary, there was a relation between motivation and family background (mother's occupation influenced motivation). And there were also multiple correlations between motivation and the amount of input that students received outside the classroom.

Given our results, we would like to stress the great possibility that teachers have to make a difference. If motivation is that important, and if more motivated students will get better grades whatever their socio-economic situation is, teachers will have the chance to influence their students' achievement if they know how to motivate them. Bernaus et al. (2009) already stated that teachers'

motivation and the use of motivating strategies will be determinant for motivating students and for their English proficiency and our findings strongly support their hypothesis.

Overall, our research indicates once more the great influence of motivation in EFL contexts. More motivated students will score better. In addition, our findings show that there is a strong relation between students' motivation and media resources. The culture portrayed in American or English media motivates students to learn English. Something teachers should take into account in order to increase students' motivation inside the classroom, as their role as teachers would be fundamental in influencing students' motivation and thus their grades.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix I Questionnaire

#### Datos personales

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1. Edad:

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2. Sexo: hombre     mujer

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3. Nacionalidad del padre:

---

4. Nacionalidad de la madre:

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5. Nivel de estudios del padre:

a) Sin estudios

b) Primarios

c) Secundarios

d) Bachillerato y/o Formación Profesional

e) Universitarios

f) Otros

---

6. Nivel de estudios de la madre:

a) Sin estudios

b) Primarios

c) Secundarios

d) Bachillerato y/o Formación Profesional

e) Universitarios

f) Otros

---

7. Profesión del padre:

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8. Profesión de la madre:

---

9. Número de miembros en el hogar (tú incluido/a):

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#### Vivienda familiar

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10. ¿Tienes los siguientes objetos en casa?

– Ordenador  Sí  No

– Internet  Sí  No

– TV Digital, por cable/satélite  Sí  No

– Mesa de estudio  Sí  No

– Material de consulta y apoyo escolar (enciclopedias...)  Sí  No

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11. Números de libros en el hogar:

0-10 libros     11-25 libros     26-100 libros     101-200 libros

Más de 200 libros

**Hábitos familiares**

12. Tus padres leen el periódico habitualmente	Sí <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
13. ¿Son aficionados a la lectura?	Sí <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
14. ¿Asisten a actividades culturales? (cine, teatro, conciertos...)	Sí <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
15. ¿Participan en alguna actividad cultural?	Sí <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		
16. ¿Saben inglés?	Mucho <input type="checkbox"/>	Algo <input type="checkbox"/>	Poco <input type="checkbox"/>	Nada <input type="checkbox"/>

**Estudio**

17. ¿Cuánto tiempo dedicas al estudio del inglés a lo largo de la semana?	1 hora <input type="checkbox"/>	2 horas <input type="checkbox"/>	3 horas <input type="checkbox"/>	4 horas o más <input type="checkbox"/>	Otro: _____		
18. ¿Escuchas música en inglés?	Muy a menudo <input type="checkbox"/>	A menudo <input type="checkbox"/>	A veces <input type="checkbox"/>	Poco <input type="checkbox"/>	Nunca <input type="checkbox"/>		
19. ¿Ves películas en inglés?	Muy a menudo <input type="checkbox"/>	A menudo <input type="checkbox"/>	A veces <input type="checkbox"/>	Poco <input type="checkbox"/>	Nunca <input type="checkbox"/>		
Si ves películas en inglés, ¿usas subtítulos?	En inglés <input type="checkbox"/>	En castellano <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>				
20. ¿Ves series o programas de televisión en inglés?	Muy a menudo <input type="checkbox"/>	A menudo <input type="checkbox"/>	A veces <input type="checkbox"/>	Poco <input type="checkbox"/>	Nunca <input type="checkbox"/>		
Si ves series en inglés, ¿usas subtítulos?	En inglés <input type="checkbox"/>	En castellano <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>				
21. ¿Lees en inglés? (libros, revistas, periódico...)	Muy a menudo <input type="checkbox"/>	A menudo <input type="checkbox"/>	A veces <input type="checkbox"/>	Poco <input type="checkbox"/>	Nunca <input type="checkbox"/>		
22. ¿Has estado alguna vez en un país de habla inglesa?	Sí <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>					
Si has respondido afirmativamente, ¿por cuánto tiempo?	1 semana <input type="checkbox"/>	2 semanas <input type="checkbox"/>	1 mes <input type="checkbox"/>	2 meses <input type="checkbox"/>	Otros: _____		
¿Cuántas veces?	1 vez <input type="checkbox"/>	2 veces <input type="checkbox"/>	3 veces <input type="checkbox"/>	4 veces o más <input type="checkbox"/>			
¿Hiciste uso de la lengua inglesa?	Sí <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>					
23. ¿Acudes a clases de inglés fuera del horario escolar?	Sí <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>					
Si has respondido afirmativamente, ¿cuántas horas a la semana?	1 hora <input type="checkbox"/>	2 horas <input type="checkbox"/>	3 horas <input type="checkbox"/>	4 horas o más <input type="checkbox"/>			
24. ¿Qué nota has obtenido este último trimestre en la materia de inglés?	Suspense <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>	7 <input type="checkbox"/>	8 <input type="checkbox"/>	9 <input type="checkbox"/>	10 <input type="checkbox"/>

**Motivación**

[Marca del 1 al 5 atendiendo a cuan identificado/a te sientes con la oración (1 si no te sientes nada identificado/a; 5 si te sientes muy identificado/a)]

Pregunta	1	2	3	4	5
1. Siempre intento entender todo el inglés que leo y escucho.					
2. Mis padres piensan que debería dedicar más tiempo al estudio del inglés.					
3. Aprender inglés es importante porque otras personas me respetarán más si sé inglés.					
4. El inglés es una asignatura muy importante.					
5. Cuanto más inglés aprenda, mejor.					
6. Llevo el estudio del inglés al día.					
7. Mis padres me animan a que practique el inglés lo máximo posible.					
8. Mis padres se interesan mucho por todo lo que hago en la clase de inglés.					
9. El aprendizaje del inglés es importante ya que me permitirá conseguir un mejor trabajo.					
10. Aprender inglés es una pérdida de tiempo.					
11. Mis padres me animan a que pregunte al profesor en caso de tener algún problema con el inglés.					
12. Sinceramente, no me interesa aprender inglés.					
13. Cuando el profesor/a de inglés me entrega la tarea corregida, no la reviso.					
14. Solo me interesa obtener unos conocimientos básicos de la lengua inglesa.					
15. Estudiar inglés es importante porque ello hará que sea una persona más instruida.					
16. Mis padres creen que debería seguir estudiando inglés a lo largo de mi toda vida.					
17. Suelo dejar la elaboración de la tarea de inglés para el final.					
18. Mis padres creen que es muy importante que estudie inglés.					
19. Estudiar inglés es importante porque me será necesario en mi profesión.					

Pregunta	1	2	3	4	5
20. Me gustaría poder hablar inglés de manera fluida.					
21. Mis padres han recalcado la importancia que tendrá el inglés para mí cuando deje el instituto.					
22. Planeo estudiar todo el inglés que me sea posible.					
23. Mis padres intentan ayudarme con el estudio del inglés.					
24. Pienso que estudiar inglés es inútil.					

## Appendix II INE Classification

Occupations
1. Directors and managers.
2. Scientific and intellectual professionals and technicians.
3. Technicians; lower grade professionals.
4. Accountants, administrative and other office workers.
5. Service workers: Catering, personal care, protection and sellers.
6. Skilled workers in the farming, livestock, forest and fishing sectors.
7. Manual workers and skilled workers in the industry.
8. Equipment and facilities operators and assembly operators.
9. Elementary occupations.
10. Domestic workers (not paid)
11. Unemployed

# Action research in the communicative language classroom: using alternative assessment techniques with efl secondary-school students

Lucía FRAGA VIÑAS / María BOBADILLA PÉREZ

Universidade da Coruña  
mbobadilla@udc.es

**Abstract:** The Council of Europe, through the Common European Framework of Reference for Language, Teaching and Assessment (CEFR), has been promoting communicative competence since 2001. This boost has introduced some changes in the teaching-learning process of English as a Foreign Language in Spain: the methodological use of the communicative approach in the classrooms, the practice of the four skills in the class, and the theoretical implications that Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory has in the planning and design of classroom activities. But, in spite of that, academic results are still not very remarkable and the rates of academic failure are not decreasing since English is still a challenging subject for many Secondary School students. In addition, test evaluation is still the predominant assessment method in most of the schools. The current case study intends to provide the educational community with some results obtained from the implementation of some alternative assessment and evaluation methods in an actual high-school in Spain.

**Keywords:** EFL; Secondary Education; alternative assessment; Action Research Project.

**Resumen:** El Consejo de Europa, a través del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas: Aprendizaje, Enseñanza y Evaluación (MCER), impulsa desde 2001 la competencia comunicativa. Dicho impulso ha introducido cambios en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje dentro del aula de inglés como lengua extranjera: el uso metodológico del enfoque comunicativo, la práctica de las cuatro destrezas y las implicaciones que la teoría de las Inteligencias Múltiples de Gardner ha tenido en la planificación y diseño de actividades. Sin embargo, a pesar de ello, no se han producido resultados académicos significativos y los índices de fracaso no se han reducido, dado que el inglés sigue siendo una materia complicada para gran parte del alumnado de Educación Secundaria. Asimismo, la evaluación de pruebas sigue siendo el método de evaluación predominante en la mayoría de las escuelas. El presente estudio de caso pretende compartir los resultados obtenidos con la puesta en práctica en un instituto de España de varios métodos de evaluación alternativos con la comunidad educativa.

**Palabras clave:** Inglés como Lengua Extranjera; ILE; Educación Secundaria; evaluación alternativa; proyecto de investigación-acción en el aula.

## I. Introduction

One of the major reasons motivating the change of the teaching-learning process of Foreign Languages in the last decades in Spain is the establishment of the European Framework of Reference for Languages, as it has greatly influenced not only our linguistic policies but also our teaching practices. With its emphasis on the development of a plurilingual competence, classroom practices focus more and more everyday on the practice of communicative task and projects and, to some extent, less on linguistic activities. But despite these changes test evaluation, which measures the grammar competence and the memory ability of the students to memorize vocabulary, is still the common practice in many educational institutions. This type of education results in the students' lack of motivation and high rates of academic failure, therefore the effectiveness of this kind of evaluation has been questioned in recent years.

In view of this, the current article presents the results and conclusions obtained from the implementation of alternative assessment and evaluation methods. This case study was carried out in a high-school in Galicia, Spain, with the purpose of exploring the impact that implementing different alternative methods and techniques in the classroom could have in the students' academic results. The study was implemented in two classes of 4<sup>th</sup> year of Compulsory Secondary Education with 43 students aged between 15 and 16, who had a low-intermediate level in English proficiency. The results of the analysis show that the implementation of such alternative methods not only increases the motivation of the student in the language classroom, but also has a positive impact on academic success.

Prior to the discussion of our study, this article briefly considers relevant theoretical notions on evaluation and assessment which are important in our research. Then the methodology and research questions are presented, to be followed by the analysis of the data collected in order to discuss the results which were obtained.

## II. Assessment and evaluation

Before presenting the alternative modes in assessment proposed in our project, it is necessary to establish the fundamental difference between assessment and evaluation. For the purpose of this research, we should also define as well what we mean by traditional and alternative assessment.

Very often teachers are not consistent in the terminology they employ to describe the different methods and techniques used in the foreign language class in

order to observe and gather information regarding the achievement of the learning outcomes. In the last decades the focus of this part of the teaching and learning process has changed very much, and particularly since the Common European Framework for Languages has become central in the design of foreign language teaching syllabuses in all our educational institutions. According to McLaren, Madrid and Bueno, the difference between both terms lays mainly on the focus of observation: «Assessment is a general term we use to refer to the set of procedures which are put into practice when gathering information about student's communicative competence or student's language performance achievement» (2005:606). Traditional *testing* is of course one of these practices. When assessing the communicative competence, it can be done throughout the year with *formative* or *continuous assessment*, or at the conclusion of the teaching and learning process, with the *final or summative assessment*. The main aim of assessment is to collect data. Evaluation, in contrast, is a more general concept for it «considers the teaching and learning program as a whole, and seeks to obtain feedback that can serve different purposes for the different agents in education» (2005:609). The Common European Framework similarly follows such distinction in its chapter 9:

Assessment is used in this chapter in the sense of the assessment of the proficiency of the language user. All language tests are a form of assessment, but there are also many forms of assessment (e.g. checklists used in continuous assessment; informal teacher observation) which would not be described as tests. Evaluation is a term which is again broader than assessment. All assessment is a form of evaluation, but in a language programme a number of things are evaluated other than learner proficiency. These may include the effectiveness of particular methods or materials, the kind and quality of discourse actually produced in the programme, learner/teacher satisfaction, teaching effectiveness, etc. This chapter is concerned with assessment, and not with broader issues of programme evaluation. (CEFRL, 2001:177)

In the same line, for the purpose of this research, we are going to focus in assessment by describing the implementation of the different activities designed and used in order to collect information regarding the achievement of the learning outcomes of the students' communicative competence.

### III. Traditional and alternative assessment

Another key distinction crucial in this study is the one between alternative and traditional assessment. We should highlight at this point that such distinction is not clear-cut and, in fact, what traditional and alternative assessment and



evaluation mean may differ from one author to the other. For the purpose of this study, traditional evaluation encompasses, traditional assessment tools such as «multiple-choice test, true/false test, short answers and essays» (Dikli, 2003:13) and the use of summative assessment as the main evaluation system. Alternative assessment consists of what the students can do instead of what they are able to recall or to reproduce. (Abbas, 2012: 27)

Despite the fact that it is a common concept in the current educational community, a concrete and indisputable definition which captures all the essence of what alternative method of assessment implicates has not been given yet. Willa Louw (2003) considers it as an amalgam of cognitive, demonstrative and affective methods carried out to evaluate the students. This means that not only the knowledge or the performance of the skills are observed in authentic tasks but also the attitudes and values of the students. As a result, alternative assessment is closely linked to formative assessment because the students' development of the communicative skills must be considered progressively through different methods and techniques. Alternative methods should allow the teacher to assess the students' progress in a non-threatening environment, doing «real tasks» and not just traditional tests, selecting carefully activities suitable for all the different types of learners that are found in the class. Furthermore, alternative assessment must involve the student in his or her learning-process, participating in his or her own evaluation, in his or her peers' assessment and in the teacher's assessment too. (Elliot, 1995)

The list of methods and techniques which alternative assessment encompasses is colossal and endless. Broadly discussed and praised has been the use of portfolio (Nigel Miller, 2012) or the projects among other methods. As for the techniques, they are individual tasks which the teacher may implement in order to assess the students every day in the class. Howard Gardner's (1989)<sup>1</sup> multiple intelligences theory was also considered. From the performance of a text to assess the reading comprehension suitable for a kinesthetic learner to the creation of a comic strip for the assessment of the listening comprehension suitable for a visual-spatial learner, the techniques used should be very diverse in order to assess the different skills through exercises suitable for each of the multiple

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1. Gardner defines intelligence as the «capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting» (1989). After a research based on biological and cultural principles, he developed a list of the following intelligences: (1) logical-mathematical intelligence; (2) linguistic intelligence; (3) spatial intelligence; (4) musical intelligence; (5) bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; (6) interpersonal intelligence; and (7) intrapersonal intelligence.

intelligences. Noticeably a qualitative feedback must be given to the students with the help of rubrics, progressive assessment charts and reports.

In the last decades the teaching and learning of Foreign Languages in Spain follows and applies principles from the Communicative or the Task based teaching approaches; therefore, no longer should the focus of assessment be the collection of data regarding the students' learning outcomes in the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, but the level of proficiency in the four communicative skills and their ability to use the language to perform real tasks. These changes imply a modification in the perspective the students are assessed, from a structural traditional way to a more comprehensive evaluation where other elements are also considered.

#### IV. Different alternative assessment methods

Alternative assessment encompasses a colossal and endless list of methods and techniques. It is essential to clarify that most of alternative methods are grounded on formative assessment. Some authors state that alternative assessment must be carried out continuously in the class because classroom-based assessment informs immediately teachers and students, as well as parents, of student performance on an ongoing basis (Janisch, Liu & Akrofi, 2007). Learning a foreign language implies to be able to produce and to know the language all the time and not just in a concrete exam. For this reason, students must be assessed in their day a day, in order to properly measure how they use the language in performance and authentic tasks: «*authentic assessment aims to relate the instruction to the real-world experience of the learners*» (2003:14). Along the same lines, Wangsatorntanakhun (1997, in Dikli, 2003) states the term, performance-based assessment, embraces both alternative and authentic assessment.

Before detailing any kind of method, it is crucial to reflect on some aspects which should be taken into consideration to increase the efficiency of alternative evaluation. In that sense, Stephen Elliot (1995) stated the following criteria, which were taken into account in the planning design of our research:

- Selecting assessment tasks that are clearly aligned or connected to what has been taught.
- Sharing the scoring criteria for the assessment task with students prior to working on the task.
- Providing students with clear statements of standards and/or several models of acceptable performances before they attempt a task.
- Encouraging students to complete self-assessments of their performances.
- Interpreting students' performances by comparing them to standards that are developmentally appropriate, as well as to other students' performances.

Some discussions about alternative methods of assessment are currently quite popular within the educational community such as the already common practice of the portfolio or the oral presentations; however their presence in the Spanish secondary educational centres still remains very scarce in comparison to traditional assessment methods.

## V. Action research project in a secondary school classroom in Galicia

The following section describes the case study carried out, the research questions, the methodology and activities applied, the data collection and analysis and the conclusions obtained.

### 1. *Research questions*

The case studied intended to answer the following questions:

- Is it possible to detect student's difficulties through alternative techniques and methods during the normal class?
- Can alternative techniques and methods improve the student's results?
- Is it possible to increase student's motivation through alternative tasks?

### 2. *Case study*

As it has been mentioned before, the case study was accomplished in a high school from A Coruña (Spain) in two classes from the same level with 20 and 23 students respectively. A great amount of data was collected from all the students through writing samples, recordings and observation. In order to preserve student's privacy, they will be referred in this article by a key code which is formed by the letter A or B according to the classroom and his or her number in the classroom list.

### 3. *Alternative activities designed*

#### a) *Project based learning: «Creating a marketing campaign»*

It aimed to assess several elements: the writing skill of the students, the vocabulary learned and the use of the second conditional as the main grammar point as well as the students individual and group work. This mini-project was

especially suitable for the logical, interpersonal, existential and linguistic-verbal intelligences and wanted to teach the students about the work world. The main task was to design a marketing campaign of a product. For this purpose, students had to choose the product and the name, the type of loan they needed, the location of the shop and the promotion campaign through adverts, free samples, etc. Everything had a stipulated cost and they all had a budget they could not exceed. After designing the marketing campaign, they had to write a short text which summarized it.

b) *«Put the words in the correct place»*

This activity was used as a warm-up and introduction of the grammar point and some new vocabulary. The activity consisted of ordering sentences with words that had been misplaced. In this case, instead of using the traditional worksheet or book exercise, the teacher wrote the words in different cards, papers or cardboards. Then, he or she only needed to distribute them among different students who had to stand up and show the word to the rest of the class. Then, the teacher asked one student to give directions to their classmates to form a correct sentence.

c) *«TV contest»*

A «TV contest» was also performed in the classroom, which benefited logical, kinesthetic and verbal intelligences. A power point presentation with the famous «*Who wants to be a millionaire*» template was used while the teacher could observe what each student had learned. Some catchy questions which placed the students in tough situations were used to assess their speaking skill and served personal and existential intelligences. The recordings collected allowed the teacher to assess their spontaneous speaking and to check the use of vocabulary and grammar studied in the unit.

d) *One-word summary*

The activity consisted of a reading exercise related with the topic of the unit: money. The four different texts selected dealt with famous people that teenage liked so they would be more interesting to them. Following the text, there were two words linked to the field of money. Students had to write a sentence explaining the relationship between those words and the text they had just read.

#### 4. *Data collection*

During the implementation of the different activities different methods and techniques were used to collect all the necessary data: observation, analysis of writing samples and audio records. The classroom observation process was kept for its future deeper analysis with the help of a classroom assessment chart. Different aspects observed during the implementation were written down for each of the students in order to draw conclusions regarding their participation, attitude, team work, general achievement and specific problems observed in each task. Furthermore, students were recorded during their speaking performances. The recordings were later transcribed for their analysis. All the data collected were studied and also contrasted with the English teacher and the marks the students had achieved in the previous school term.

#### 5. *Analysis and findings*

The results obtained were very encouraging, both in terms of academic results and attitude and motivation the students showed. In regards to the students' enthusiasm during all the lessons, the results were significantly good. According to the observation carried out in both classes previous to the implementation of this study, students were not very motivated, most of them were distracted and bored during the classes, they did not participate regularly and they used to work individually. However, during the implementation, students showed to be very interested in the activities proposed, most of the students participated actively during all the lessons and they were paying particular attention to the tasks proposed.

All the observation data collected during the lessons in the progressive assessment chart used endorsed the general impressions above mentioned. For instance, it was interesting to see how during the TV contest students were paying full attention to the procedure or how motivated they were. They showed a very healthy competitive spirit and team work skills. The activity was performed in two big teams and in two turns. When one team was participating, the other team was paying attention in complete silence. Team members participated individually as each of them should answer to one question and as a team as they counted on three life savings to support a team member in case he or she needed.

As for the marketing campaign mini-project presented, following Project Based Learning principles, groups were totally absorbed in their products and campaigns as it was checked during the whole monitoring and observation pro-

cess. Group members were debating and discussing about the best choices they could make according to the type of the product, they public they wanted to sell it to, etc. Most of the groups were speaking in English about the difficulty that designing a campaign implies and the great number of aspects that should be taken into account. All the groups respected the budget limitations; they did not want to just choose the cheapest options but the best so they adjusted the budget deciding the aspects they could do some shortcuts in. Such projects contribute not only to the development of the communicative competence, but also play an important role in the context of interdisciplinary learning.

The outcomes in terms of linguistic results were also very encouraging. The writing samples and collected recordings showed the effectiveness the task proposed had in the students' grammar and vocabulary acquisition. The students easily assimilated and produced the structure of the second conditional and they also learned some vocabulary related to the field of money, such as «bankrupt» or «hire» and they could use them in their writings:

*If I had to design the promotion strategy, I would hire Lewis Hamilton  
If I were bankrupt...*

The reading comprehension activity allowed the teacher to check the general understanding of the text as well as the students' ability to infer the meaning of a word from the context. For instance, the following writing sample was written by one student who had to relate the word «wealthy» to a text about Forbes richest singers under 30.

*«Wealthy» is related to the text because it speaks about the fortune of big artists.*

As the example probes, students were able to understand an authentic piece of news and show his/her understanding of the use of the given word. The following example also illustrates both the assimilation of the word «capital» and the comprehension of the text read about how Mark Zuckerberg started Facebook.

*«he didn't have enough money to create Facebook and he started from his dormitory with so little capital»*

Furthermore, the samples collected also helped in the detection of some students who had specific learning problems. For instance, it was observed that two students had difficulties with irregular verbs when they wrote their sentences using the second conditional. During the monitorization process of the one-word summary, it was also noted that five students had problems to

understand the text mainly because they had an important lack of vocabulary, even simple and basic words were unknown by them. However, some of the students who generally have had problems with the English subject, had great results in the performance of the different activities because of the motivational factor; they remarked that working in groups had helped them, as well as the fact that the tasks proposed included themes they were interested in.

The contest proved to be an excellent tool to assess the assimilation of vocabulary and the structure of the main grammar point, which was grasped by most of the students. It was also interesting to observe the logic reasoning of the students to find the right answer. It was interesting even to see that this type of activity also encouraged self-assessment on the part of the student; for example, one of the quiz questions, «Whatever you do, don't \_\_\_\_\_ any money to Nick», prompted the following discussion, which showed student's process of self-correction:

*Student: I think the right answer is the A [lend].*

*Teacher: Why?*

*Student: «lend» and borrow mean «prestar y dejar prestado»... I [am] not sure which one is «prestar» and which one is «dejar prestado»...but[it] is borrow from Nick or lend to Nick, righ?...Yes, I say lend»*

The most impressive and encouraging findings were those resulted from the global comparison in the achievement of the learning outcomes between the traditional assessment practiced during the previous term and the actual term with an alternative methodology. In group A, 9 students had failed the subject in the second term. The difficulties which 8 out of these 9 students had were also detected with the alternative methods. After the implementation of our activities, from these 8 learners, 5 obtained great results showing an improvement. As for the rest of the students in the class, they showed the same or better results. The results were also quite significant in group B, where only one student had failed the subject in the previous term, but five only scored 5 points in their final mark. In this case, the analysis showed that seven students had difficulties with some of the skills or content covered, and we could see that all of them improved their results with the alternative activities.

## VI. Conclusions

The research suggests that the use of alternative assessment techniques improves the students' academic results and their motivation and attitude towards the classes and the subject. In regards to attitude, practically all the students had

a very positive one towards the activities presented. Even those students who were chattier performed pretty well and could accomplish their tasks properly. Through the observation process, it was observed that students tried to give their best to solve the tasks, showing a great interest and motivation. Obviously, some of the activities worked better than others, but all of them had a general positive result. The activities which required movement were definitely very efficient; it helped students to wake up and activated their brains at the same time they were introduced to new vocabulary and grammar structures.

Collaborative work was also a success. Students helped each other and those with more difficulties improved their academic results. It was also favorable for shy students, who gained confidence by working in small groups or getting the chance to prepare their speech previously with their groups. The observation of the students in the class, in a non-threatening and relaxing environment, definitely helped the learning, improved the results of the students and made them enjoy the lessons.

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# Mobile Learning in the Foreign Language Classroom

Gloria LUQUE-AGULLÓ / Natividad MARTOS-VALLEJO

University of Jaén  
gluquejaen.es

**Abstract:** This paper deals with Mobile learning (m-learning) and how it can be used to teach a second or foreign language in the classroom. First, a review of the use of technology in the classroom is considered. Second, m-learning is defined in connection with diverse educational theories such as behaviourism and constructivism. Third, an exhaustive listing of those features, functionalities and affordances intended specifically to teach a foreign language is provided. Fourth, these characteristics and possible uses are implemented through a lesson plan for Baccalaureate students in which there is an educational use of social networks and mobile devices. Fifth and last, we state some attitudes towards mobile devices across schools and institutions which are holding back their implementation in language classrooms, concluding on a positive note: these new technologies can actually improve language learning.

**Keywords:** m-learning; mobile devices; foreign language learning; lesson plan.

**Resumen:** Este trabajo estudia el uso del aprendizaje mediante dispositivos móviles en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera. Primero se realiza una revisión del uso de la tecnología en el aula. Segundo, se define el aprendizaje móvil respecto a las diversas teorías educativas desarrolladas hasta la fecha, como el conductismo y el constructivismo. Tercero, se especifican los rasgos, recursos y funcionalidades que los dispositivos móviles ofrecen para la enseñanza de la lengua extranjera. A continuación se describe el posible desarrollo de las diferentes destrezas y componentes lingüísticos a través de estas funcionalidades. Por último, se ofrece una unidad didáctica que ejemplifica el uso de dispositivos móviles integrándolo en la enseñanza en el aula, concluyendo con una revisión de los posibles riesgos que pueden presentarse por un uso indebido y sus ventajas, presentes y futuras.

**Palabras clave:** aprendizaje mediante dispositivos móviles; aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras, unidad didáctica.

## I. Introduction

The advances in technology in recent years, the invention of the Internet and the advent of personal computers have been signaled as the reasons of the introduction of new technologies in today's classrooms. Either in Primary, Secondary or in Higher Education, Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) is being promoted by the European Commission, which is funding many programs researching learning outcomes enhanced with the use of one or several technologies (for a detailed report, see de la Fuente Valentín, Carrasco, Konya and Burgos, 2013).

Notwithstanding the educational level, the use of technology in second language learning and teaching is far from new, particularly in the Foreign Language (FL) classroom. Multiple devices such as photographs, radio cassettes and televisions have been used to access language materials. In the 1950s, the Audiolingual approach brought the application of language laboratories to the educational field. A decade later, computers began to be used in the classroom for language teaching and learning; hence these laboratories were replaced by drill-based computer-assisted instruction or web-based instruction. Afterwards, computer-assisted language learning emerged (CALL). The advent of Internet in the 1990s led to the development of computer-mediated communication. In the 21st century, «other technologies that hold the capacity for language learning include PDAs, multimedia cellular phones, MP3 players, DVD players, and digital dictionaries» (Zhao 2005: 447) are also being introduced. Thus, the first decade of this century has introduced *Mobile Assisted Language Learning* (MALL or m-learning for short) as a new pedagogical application for language learning and teaching.

With mobile devices it is also possible to access the World Wide Web and develop all the activities exploited for Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). These devices are a portable technology that can help students at any moment and at any point, and involve many possibilities that are in the process of being discovered by educators and learners.

Several discussions have been raised about whether or not to use mobile devices in the classroom, hence, the discussion between 'formal' and 'informal' learning has also been revived. In fact, «since 2009, mobiles adoption is expected to occur, but the goal does not seem to be achieved» (de la Fuente Valentín et al., 2013:58). Regardless of how teaching and learning approaches are evolving, m-learning is currently gaining some importance and, even if it is still in «its infancy», (Kukulska-Hulme and Shield, 2008: 283) it shows a very fast development.

## II. Mobile learning: towards a definition

M-learning is thought to be the predecessor of what is known as electronic learning (henceforth e-learning), and CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), leading to MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning). For some researchers (see Kress and Pachler, 2007), the most important thing is how the learner builds knowledge, whereas for some others the key aspect lies in the process of transmission of the information; i.e. the mobile device. Does m-learning deserve its own literature or should it be included within previous learning methodologies? That is to say, is it really a new kind of learning or does it just make reference to the tool that we use to learn?

Pachler et al. (2010: 4-5) assert that «there exist a lack of clarity about what best be understood by this term», but most definitions of m-learning include the use of portable devices, a reference to electronic learning and the mobility of learners (Keegan, 2005; Quinn, 2000; O'Malley et al., 2003), being the third feature the most commonly stated. In general, m-learning involves «environmental learning based on mobility of technology, mobility of learners and mobility of learning that augment the higher educational landscape» (El-Hussein and Cronje, 2010:17). According to Ally (2009:1), it offers the possibility of «accessing information and learning materials from anywhere and at anytime [...]. Learners will not have to wait for a certain time to learn or go to a certain place to learn». Finally, O'Malley et al. (2003: 6) define m-learning as «any sort of learning that happens when the learner is not at a fixed, predetermined location, or when the learner takes advantage of the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies».

Thus, mobile learning differs from computer-assisted language learning because it uses portable devices, emphasizing the interaction and spontaneity of access (Kukulka-Hulme and Shield, 2008). However, a clearer definition involves establishing its main features, which refer to the contexts and type of interaction these devices involve (Traxler, 2005). In detail, m-learning can be:

- Spontaneous, as it can occur at any time without any previous arrangement.
- Private, in the sense it is personalized.
- Portable, because it can start in a place and finish in another one.
- Situated in a real-world context. Learners can take mobile devices into authentic learning settings or 'context-aware' environments, such as especially equipped museums.
- Informal, in the sense it may occur outside the classroom.

- Bite-sized, because learners can study or practice manageable chunks of information at any place on their own time. In fact m-learning deals with shorter but more direct learning periods regarding the time and duration of the study process.
- Light-weight, contrarily to most textbooks and reference manuals. The learner can select, insert and adapt all his/her learning materials.
- Context aware, both in the sense that it offers current real-world information and digital augmentation.
- Connected, being online and interactive. In fact, collaboration and communication are deemed essential.
- Personalized, as the learning process is adaptable to diverse learners' cognitive styles.
- Creative, as it enables creating and sharing diverse contents and materials.
- Ubiquitous, that is to say, mobile devices are everywhere, so even though sometimes they might be disruptive, they have infiltrated in all levels of society, and within diverse cultures and backgrounds, subsequently expanding human beings' learning possibilities.

However, m-learning is not primarily concerned with the use of technology, but with the process of *how to learn*, as it entails a constructivist framework which involves the construction of knowledge and the development of problem-solving techniques, strategies and skills in an autonomous way through the use of portable devices (Brazuelo Grund and Gallego Gil, 2011). In this sense, mobile devices constitute a means towards an end, not the end itself: they may enrich the learning experience but they are not considered as the focus of learning.

### III. Educational theories underlying m-learning

As previously stated, m-learning does not constitute a new learning theory, although it might foster, favor and improve the learning process. In fact, it shares some characteristics of certain educational theories; particularly, behaviorism and constructivism (Aliende Povedano and de Oro Martínez 2009). Behaviorism is based on the ideas of Pavlov (classical conditioning) and Skinner (operant conditioning). «It was postulated that all human behavior could be explained in terms of the way in which simple Stimulus-Response (S-R) connections were built up» (Williams and Burden 1999: 8). In this sense, through mobile devices rapid feedback or positive or negative reinforcement can be facilitated. The majority of the applications available through mobile devices follow the S-R

paradigm; particularly those dealing with second language learning or English Learning (Corbeil and Valdes-Corbeil 2007).

The second approach which entails connections with m-learning is constructivism. Within this theory learning is an activity process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based on their current and past knowledge (Bruner 1966). Mobile devices also foster *collaborative* learning (see Richards and Rodgers 2001:192) in the *constructive* sense as a:

Group learning activity organized so that the learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others.

Furthermore, through mobile devices computer-mediated *communication* is enhanced via social networking sites or different educational platforms or environments. The construction of knowledge is carried out in a collaborative *virtual* atmosphere where participants are not physically present. Mobile devices also foster *situated* and *meaningful* learning since learners can take their handheld computers into authentic learning environments such as a museum or a zoo. An additional outcome of m-learning is that it promotes *lifelong learning*. In this sense, it fulfills all the requisites established in the constructivist framework, maximizing the different competences and learning outcomes ascertained in official documents (Royal Decree 1467/2007) and the Common European Framework for Languages (Council of Europe 2001:101-108).

As a conclusion, m-learning has its foundations in these theories, but it also shows multiple connections with other methodologies, ideas and paradigms. However, it is not, as stated above, a new learning theory or a teaching method, although it might facilitate both, learning and teaching.

#### IV. Mobile learning in the classroom: possibilities

Within educational m-learning, there is a two-fold distinction. Academically speaking, two important stages are recognized: the secondary school phase and the university phase. In each of these phases, we might use mobile devices for different purposes.

In Secondary education portable devices tend to be used to keep in touch with the family, other students and it is a means to be informed of the timetable, the subjects and the daily chores. When being at the university, students tend to use it more as a tool to improve the learning experience, that is, collaborative

learning through social networking sites, guides of subjects, contact between them and their professors... In addition, these mobile devices help students to manage their data, their fees, and their enrolment phases. In the end, it represents a way to be informed of the situation of the university and their situation within the university system.

Regardless of the stage in which m-learning is employed, mobile devices show a wide range of learning possibilities (Kolb, 2008; Brazuelo Grund and Gallego Gil, 2011; Mosavi Miangah and Nezarat, 2012) which can integrate the use of older and newer technologies for developing certain language skills in second/foreign language learning. Specifically, mobile devices may promote vocabulary learning, listening comprehension, grammar learning, pronunciation and reading comprehension, although writing and speaking can also be integrated.

Most of the activities carried out to foster vocabulary acquisition are based on sending e-mails or SMS to students in relation to the topics which have been covered in class. Learners can be given already-designed vocabulary practices based on activities done in the lessons as well. Vocabulary can be also accompanied with pictures in order to understand better the new items. Additionally, online dictionaries accessed through mobile devices might help improve vocabulary and pronunciation since students can hear words which are unfamiliar and correct their pronunciation. On the other hand, mobile devices include recorders which learners might use to record their voices, listen to themselves and compare them with the version provided. Applications (apps) specially designed for specific lexical areas can also be used (Reinders, 2010). For instance, there are free applications to make flashcards for mobile phones. These flashcards can be stored, shared and revised somewhere else.

Regarding listening comprehension, mobile devices offer multimedia systems for learning through listening exercises. Students can access different websites in order to listen to podcasts, videos, news, etc. They can also use the Voice Memo Recorder feature to record language from media outlets. Students can record those ads and analyze the kind of language they hear. They can also save classroom listenings in their telephone memory and reproduce them as many times as they need.

Grammar issues can be learnt through different specifically designed applications installed on mobile devices. These programmes, which are quite interactive, can include multiple-choice activities, cloze tests, true or false, fill in the blanks, quizzes, games, etc., and they are usually designed to provide immediate feedback, a fact learners tend to appreciate.

Reading comprehension might be done through either applications or via SMS. In both cases, however, the reading activity might be followed by exerci-

ses in order to evaluate the students' comprehension skills. These activities are useful for learning vocabulary as well. Classroom readings can also be saved in the telephone memory to be read outside the classroom.

Regarding the writing skill, social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and MySpace seem to be quite useful since most of the interaction takes place in writing. These sites can be accessed through mobile devices. Additionally, Blogs can be used both by students to practice writing and by teachers to provide feedback. Another way to practice the writing skill is to use the Notes feature to collect everyday language. Students could take notes and write down the English words, sentences or expressions they hear outside the classroom (Reinders, 2010). The Text Messaging feature may also offer possibilities for involving students in circular writing or tandem learning.

The speaking skill can also be fostered through the use of the mobile phone for a language exchange. Two students who want to learn each other's native language are in contact through mobile phones and talk in the target language. They can also dramatize conversations outside the classroom, record them and self-assess their pronunciation. Role-plays are another possible activity. «Phlogging» may also enhance speaking, as it involves calling a number and leaving a message on a website, which later transcribes the recordings.

To conclude, mobile phones allow working with the different areas of language, both in isolation and also in an integrated way, depending on the design of the activities and the functionality used.

Table 1 shows a list of these functionalities and their possible use for language learning. All the sections show the potential activities to be developed and their connection with the different language skills.

## V. Mobile Learning and its implementation in the EFL classroom

M-learning is broadening its educational scope and a number of initiatives are being developed for their use in the classroom. There exists a new scheme called 'BYOD or BYOT' (Bring Your Own Device or Bring Your Own Technology). It is aimed to encourage students to take their mobile devices with them and use them during the lessons (Camacho and Lara 2011: 38). Students can access and save valuable information from the Internet, communicate with other learners, and engage and share learning experiences. Certain schools in the U.S.A. and in The Netherlands have already adopted this approach.

Additionally, in countries such as Korea, textbooks are estimated to disappear in between 2014 and 2015 since they are being replaced by tablets and

smartphones (Camacho and Lara 2011; Cortina-Pérez et al., 2014). «Mobiles allow very simple tools to be easily integrated into classroom activities with no need for involvement of IT or support staff» (Johnson et al. 2011: 13).

However, the introduction of this new methodology requires that teachers and educators adapt the contents methodologically and pedagogically. Although m-learning shows a very high potential for learning (see Table 1), there is still a long way towards introducing systematically these devices for classroom learning.

**Table 1.** Functionalities of mobile devices for developing the language skills

<b>1. Use of audio to reproduce and record sounds</b>	Listening to the radio, Listening to explanations, tales, stories, concerts, simultaneous reading and listening of texts. Revising exams, gathering opinions from the members of the community, taking audio notes from the lessons in class, recording the teacher's explanation, poems, plays, musical compositions, creating oral summaries of the lessons. Practicing oral expression through tales, poems, debates, creating a radio programme, creating a collection of natural sounds of the atmosphere around the student, making oral reports on works to do in the lessons.
<b>2. Use of camera</b>	Taking pictures or videos to make a slide-based presentation with PowerPoint afterwards, taking pictures on curricular and extra-curricular activities, recording experiments, create a photomontage based on previously read texts, making screenshots to make reports, recording specific aspects of the learning process of a student to gather feedback, taking pictures of an explanation on the blackboard, creating documentaries, carrying out photo contests.
<b>3. Use of SMS (Short Message Service)</b>	Sending marks to the students, reporting the family about their child's absence and proper or improper behavior, informing about the absence of a teacher, informing students about the presence of learning materials in the virtual platforms, notifying students about dates of exams, enrolment dates, fees, tutorials.
<b>4. Usage of office tools</b>	Mobile devices are smaller computers. They will allow students to access their learning materials in different formats such as Word, PDF, Powerpoint, Excel... They can download, edit and store information. Furthermore, they can access dictionaries, encyclopedias, novels...
<b>5. Use of mobile Internet</b>	The possibility to access the World Wide Web through cell phones will allow the students to make treasure hunts, webquests, access wikis, blogs, look for information of web browsers in order to solve doubts...
<b>6. Participation in Social Networking Sites</b>	These virtual platforms are quite widespread, especially among teenagers. Twitter, Facebook or Tuenti foster interaction, collaboration and creativity. Thanks to these sites, students can create content and not only be passive receptors of information.
<b>7. Use of Apps</b>	These applications became popular a couple of years ago. Both Apple and Android allow downloading several educational apps from which users can learn about different areas or fields. Among the most popular apps we can find games, which favor curiosity, experimentation and motivation or GPS (Global Positioning System), particularly relevant to carry out activities dealing with augmented reality or situated learning.



Johnson et al. (2011: 5) echoes that «resistance to the use of mobiles in the classroom continues to impede their adoption in many schools, but a growing number of institutions are finding ways to take advantage of a technology that nearly all students, faculty and staff carry». A great majority of teachers and parents still consider mobile devices as distractions and think that there is no place for them in the school. It is still assumed that these technologies might make the work of teachers more difficult, foster inappropriate behaviors and might not be adequate for disabled students (Camacho and Lara 2011). In other words, as Brazuelo Grund & Gallego Gil (2011) ascertain, three are the barriers that make difficult the integration of mobile devices in the schools. Firstly, educational authorities have legislated against the use of these devices in the classroom. Secondly, students are not aware of cell phones as an educational tool. Thirdly, teachers do not know how mobile devices can be used in the teaching process and consider them as a boisterous ‘weapon’ that has no place in the classroom. Cyberbullying, sexting or addiction are some of the reasons resistance to portable technology is still commonplace.

Using mobile devices requires a shift in the current educational environment, not only because of these new technologies but also because «the learning process is evolving to a new one, which is autonomous, anytime and anywhere» (Camacho and Lara 2011: 58).

In this paper we show several lessons integrating the use of mobile phones for learning activities. It is addressed to the upper levels of Secondary Education or Baccalaureate, because restrictions on mobile phone use tend to recede in the case of older learners.

## VI. A short lesson plan implementing the use of mobile devices

As previously stated, this lesson plan has been designed for students of Second Year of Non Compulsory Secondary Education. Mobile devices will be used in order to develop certain activities. Other technologies such as computers and web-based activities are at the centre of this lesson plan as well.

A detailed list of objectives and contents following official documents are shown in Appendix I (Table 3). The lesson plan is called «TXT ME THROUGH TWITTER! G2G!». In brief, students are expected to learn about reported speech, how to express opinions, understand and write short sms messages and learn English net acronyms. However, this lesson plan also requires the use of social networks such as *Twitter* or *Tuenti* and mobile devices, both inside and outside of the classroom. In order to show the progression, five sessions have been developed and are shown in abridged tables below. Materials for carrying out the different activities can be found in appendixes. On grounds of space, evaluation will not be included.

**Table 2.** Abridged summary of lesson plan in five sessions

Session 1	1. Warm-up. Students will be given a piece of paper with different abbreviations and net acronyms (Appendix 2). Students will have to guess what these letters stand for. Their contributions will be written on the blackboard and they will be asked certain questions. (Whole Class –WC-; 10')
	2. Reading. Students read the text (see Appendix 3) and answer comprehension questions. (Individual –I-; 15')
	3. Vocabulary. Students have to match net acronyms with their translation in real English (see Appendix 4). (Pair Work –PW-; 10')
	4. Vocabulary. Students have to give a meaning to several <i>smileys</i> (Appendix 5). (I; 5')
	5. Writing. Students have to write a sms, whatsapp or e-mail using the conventions they have just learnt. Previously, the teacher might have already created a group of the class in the WhatsApp application so that everybody can send their texts. (I; 10')
Session 2	1. Warm-up. Reading. The Guardian Text Poetry Contest. Students receive through sms, whatsapp or e-mail three different poems in texting language. They have to decode them and create one (see Appendix 6). (PW; 10')
	2. Discussion. Students have to record a conversation between them sharing their views on certain topics such as the use of mobile phones nowadays and whether they think texting is good or bad for the language. They have to use certain expressions to introduce their comments. They will listen to it later and with the help of the teacher they will check their pronunciation. (PW; 15')
	3. Grammar. Reported speech. Students look at different sentences and try to discover the transformation they suffer. (PW; 5')
	4. Grammar. The teacher explains reported statements. (WC; 10')
	5. Grammar. Students rewrite several sentences into reported speech. (I; 10')
Session 3	1. Warm-up. Pronunciation. Silent Syllables. Students will be asked to download into their mobile devices a digital dictionary. They have to look up different words and listen to their pronunciation carefully. (I; 5')
	2. Listening. Students have to listen carefully to a video in which David Crystal talks about texting and its consequences for the English Language <sup>1</sup> . (WC; 10')
	3. While-listening and Reading. Students have to choose the correct answer between the different options provided. The video can be played again while students complete the exercise. Later, it will be corrected orally by the whole class. (I; 5')
	4. Post-listening and Reading. Students answer questions about the video. (PW; 10')
	5. Grammar. Reported speech. Students will be offered a series of sentences. They have to guess the transformation of the sentences. (PW; 5')
	6. Grammar. The teacher explains reported commands, questions and suggestions. (WC; 10')
	7. Grammar. Students rewrite some sentences into direct speech. (I; 5')

1. David Crystal in It's Only a Theory. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7WSzxQ0nX4> (N.A.).

	1. Warm-up. Speaking and Vocabulary. Students have to fill in a mind map (Appendix 7) giving contributions on the possible uses of Twitter in the classroom. Classroom discussion will follow. (PW; 10')
Session 4	2. Jigsaw Reading and Speaking. The class is divided into several groups. Each group is in charge of reading one of the rules for using Twitter (see Appendix 8). Later, other groups will be formed so that everyone understands all the rules of Twitter. Once it has been done, each rule will be explained briefly by one member of the group. (GW; 30')
	3. Listening. Students have to listen to certain videos to be able to create a Twitter account and tweet <sup>2</sup> . (WC, I; 10')
Session 5	1. Final task: Students have to create a knowledge pill, that is, a video of 1 minute explaining one of the rules of using Twitter <sup>3</sup> . Later, they will upload it to their Twitter accounts so that the rest of the classmates can watch them. (GW; 55')

Each of the sessions (see Table 2), except the final one, begins with a warm-up activity intended to motivate students, bring forward their background knowledge and check how much they know about the different topics introduced. All the sessions deal with the issue of mobile devices. Session one deals with net acronyms, abbreviations and smileys (Appendix II). After a brief warm up, it introduces a reading with the subsequent comprehension activities (Appendix III). Then, vocabulary exercises connected to the topic of the reading are carried out (Appendix IV, V), and finally a very short writing using the conventions/vocabulary learnt is completed. Session 2 starts with a warm up dealing with sending short sms messages (Appendix VI). Then, a discussion on the use of mobile devices is recorded and revised. The following activities deal with reported speech. Discovering the rules, listening to the teacher's explanation and carrying out some practice activities. Session 3 is introduced with the use of a digital dictionary which students have downloaded in their mobile devices. After listening to the pronunciation of several words, they must identify silent syllables. The second activity is a listening by David Crystal discussing the use of texting. Several comprehension activities, including multiple choice and comprehension questions, are then carried out. The following activities reinforce reported speech, first inductively, then teacher-directed, then oriented towards practice and production. Session 4 is introduced with a mind map students should complete (Appendix VII). It deals with Twitter and its possible uses in the classroom. The session continues with a

2. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3o9FmlgfZXU>>, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhjaJ1123BA>>.

3. Twitter in Simple English. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3o9FmlgfZXU>> (Retrieved 2nd November).

Jigsaw reading dealing with the same topic (Appendix VIII), the use of Twitter. Then, several videos on how to create a Twitter account are watched using their mobile devices. Session five involves creating a short video in groups explaining one of the rules of this social network and uploading it in their Twitter accounts to be shared by the whole classroom.

As illustrated above, this lesson plan shown constitutes an attempt to illustrate the pedagogical use of mobile phones/devices in the classroom. However, it represents an example or unstructured guide, in the sense that different teachers, classroom contexts and learners will in the end determine both the selection and organization of contents and activities. Our aim in showing this sequence has been to exemplify how m-learning can be actually developed for a Baccalaureate classroom.

## VIII. Conclusions

Despite the fact that educational policies have improved the equipment and infrastructures in schools, the subsequent educational changes arising from those policies have not yet been implemented in an extensive way. Namely, integration of IST tools (information and communication technologies) should not «simply reproduce what they [teachers] did previously without these tools» (Cortina-Pérez et al., 2014: 234): a methodological shift is required. In fact, there is still a long way to cover in order to achieve the implementation of mobile learning and mobile devices within second language classrooms. Part of the problem may be due to generational differences between digital natives (students) and digital immigrants (teachers), being the later those that are in charge of the ‘development of the digital competence of the former’ (Cortina-Pérez et al. 2014: 233).

Although educational practice should not be determined by technology, the ubiquity of mobile learning has inevitably changed learning (and teaching?) styles. Moreover, given the use that younger generations make of mobile devices, educators need to do something more than «just watch it [mobile learning] happen» (Kukulka-Hulme, 2009:158). In the era of digital natives it is essential to try to use whenever possible these tools with the purposes of adapting to the students’ new ways of approaching the world and process information, making them feel integrated, motivated and working collaboratively. Mobile devices may foster cooperation, autonomous and informal learning and increase critical thinking. In particular, regarding second language learning, they can be used to help learners develop the skills, both receptively and productively, and reinforce other linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

The school and the teachers involved need to consider effective ways of using these new technologies and overcome problems related to their cost, availability, restricted School Board Policies and discipline issues such as sexting, cyberbullying, addiction, technophobia or overload of information and cheating, because advantages surpass possible drawbacks.

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## Appendix I

Table 3. Contents and objectives developed in the lesson plan

Didactic Objectives	Stage Objectives	Foreign Language Objectives	Contents
To use mobile devices in the classroom in order to develop certain activities related to the topics treated in the lessons	b, d, f, g, h, k (LOE 2/2006) (RD 1467/07) a, b (D 416/08)	1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 (RD 1467/07)	Listening, speaking and interacting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening and understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Extracting the gist and some specific information from debates and brainstorming dealing with the texting language and the use of Twitter.</li> <li>■ Being able to understand interpersonal exchanges regarding the use of mobile phones nowadays and the way languages evolve.</li> <li>■ Being able to understand a video regarding texting and the English language.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Speaking and interacting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Planning oral contributions to make a discussion and offer an opinion on the role of mobile devices nowadays, and the possible uses of Twitter in the classroom.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
To familiarise with the language of texting and be able to reproduce it			Reading and writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding written texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Skimming and scanning different reading texts and text-types</li> <li>■ Reading different types of texts related to net acronyms, abbreviations and Twitter, making use of the appropriate reading strategies and appreciating the reading practice as a means to obtain information, extend one's knowledge and find some fun.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Producing written texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Being able to reproduce text messages using the traits and conventions studied.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
To extract general and specific information from a written and audiovisual text			Linguistic awareness and reflection upon the language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linguistic Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Functions: Expressing an opinion</li> <li>– Grammar: Reported Speech</li> <li>– Vocabulary: Texting language: net acronyms, abbreviations, emoticons and smileys</li> <li>– Phonetics: Silent Syllables</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reflection upon one's learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recognising linguistic varieties: differences between formal and informal language; oral and written modes, etc.</li> <li>■ Taking profit of the different learning opportunities they may encounter in and outside the classroom, making use of the new technologies of the information and communication; particularly mobile devices.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
To interact orally with other classmates, sharing views regarding the use and effects of mobile phones nowadays			Sociocultural aspects and intercultural awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the kind of linguistic variety which fits the situational context, the interlocutors, the communicative intention, the channel, etc.</li> <li>• Becoming interested in establishing communicative exchanges and gaining cultural knowledge of those countries where the foreign language is spoken.</li> </ul>
To be able to identify and use reported speech			
To be able to express an opinion			
To use properly social networking sites			
To develop cooperative strategies to reach a common goal: the knowledge pill			

## Appendix II

### Warm-Up

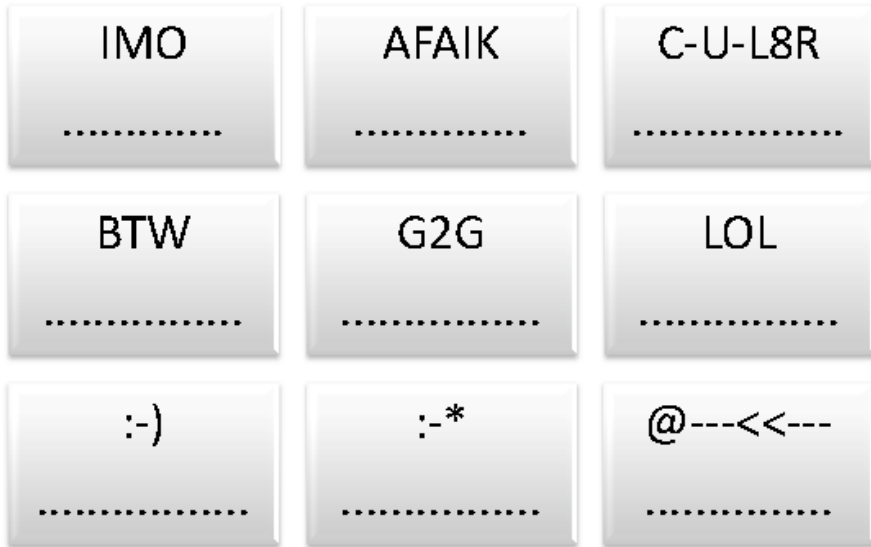


Figure 1. Net acronyms and smileys.

1. *What do these letters stand for? Try and Guess what they mean*
2. *Have you ever encountered these words? If so, where?*
3. *Do you have an idea of what they are?*
4. *Do you know what net acronyms/emoticons/smiley are?*
5. *Do you know what «slang» language is?*



## Appendix III

Read the following text<sup>4</sup> individually. Then, answer the questions:

### IN AN ONLINE CHAT ROOM KEEP IT SHORT AND SWEET

U may have noticed some odd phrases slipping into ur kids' e-mails. Like when the mention that ur life sux, then quickly add JK, for just kidding. U know they really luv u, even though u r an annoying POS (parent over shoulder) with a total SOHF (sense of humor failure) who doesn't have a clue what u r saying b/cuz u seem to be writing in code. FWIW (for what it's worth), a new idiom has been born. Across the land, every night, teenagers are yakking online in chat rooms with friends and Net acquaintances.

It's fast: Try talking to six people at once. It's brief: three or four words per exchange. It takes wit, concentration and nimble fingers. And it requires tremendous linguistic economy. There's neither time nor space for exposition.

The solution is to abbreviate, contract and condense. Why consume precious keystrokes telling six friends you have to go smack your little brother when BRB (be right back) will do? Want to enter and ongoing conversation? Just type PMFJI (pardon me for jumping in).

Interested in whom you're talking to? Type A/S/L, the nearly universal request to know your correspondent's age, sex and location.

If something cracks you up, say you're OFT (on the floor) or LOL (laughing out loud), or combine the two: ROTFL (rolling on the floor laughing).

And when your POS finally makes you get back to your geometry, it's a snap to type GTG (got to go) or TTYL (talk to you later). C?

Don't think this new lingo is limited to teens. Plenty of adults talk the talk or type the type, all day at work.

The new argot is the result of computer services that allow users to compile «buddy lists» of friends and family, and construct an exclusive chat network that can be accessed at any time. America Online's Instant Messenger system is the biggest. It has estimated 75 million users sending more than 700 million real-time messages a day and has given the verb, IMing, to the phenomenon.

But the language is also used in the more public chat venues, where the talk scrolls by like endless movie credits.

While many adults argue that they regularly use the argot for business and pleasure and that a lot of the terms have been rattling around the Net for years, it seems best suited to the rapid-fire lifestyle of youth.

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4. Knox County School. 2013. <<http://knoxschools.org/modules/groups/homepagefiles/cms/443879/File/policymanual/policy%20manual/j/JCBEA.pdf>>.

«They want to write as fast as possible, and they want to get their ideas across as quickly as they can», says Jane Mount, co-founder of Manhattan-based Bolt, one of the country's leading Net sited for teens.

Capital letters get left in the dust, except when expressing emotion. «It takes more time to hold down 'shift' and use capitals», Mount says. «Punctuation is going, too».

Many scholars see it as an old phenomenon that can be traced back to rsvp, byod, tyi, and even the hallowed complimentary close in 19<sup>th</sup> century letters, yr mst ob svt (your most obedient servant).

«It's natural», says Robert Kraut, professor of social psychology and human-computer interaction at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University.

Plus, it carries a certain hip exclusivity and can serve as effective code against a prying POS. Donna Jo Napoli, chairman of the linguistics department at Swarthmore College, outside Philadelphia, says, «It shows how up you are, how cool you are: Do you know the latest that people are doing? You feel kind of proud of yourself when you recognize it».

There's already at least one dictionary for netacronyms, Tribal Voice, a Californian company with its own instant messaging company system and 6 million users, started it last October with 800 entries. You can find it, and add to it, at [www.chatdictionary.com](http://www.chatdictionary.com). At last count, it was nearly 1,400 entries and growing.

Well, G2G, C-U-L8R.



## Appendix V

Give a meaning to the following smileys:

**Table 5.** Symbols for smileys and their meaning

Smiley	Meaning
;~)	
:~0	
^	
:~*	
((~):**	
^ 5	
%~)	

## Appendix VI

*The Guardian Text Poetry Contest* (sent via mobile phone):

*Message 1*

Jus left th clinic  
bstrong cheri  
arm ok no panic  
need u promis me  
2 keep kissin  
me left breast  
cos baby nxt week  
me right'll b missin

*Message 2*

I felt my picture on th ground wher u walk  
so that somday if th sun was jst right  
& the rain didn't wash me awa  
u might c me out of th corner of yr I & pic me up

*Message 3*

**Move**

Bed, u have seen some action,  
doors, some slam.  
Landlord, u may remove every chip, suff, stain:  
who knows what reflections  
old mirrors project in the dark

*Melissa Terras*

- *Are you able to decipher it?*
- *Would you be able to create one? Try!*

*It's high time we used our smartphones! Use them for the sake of this activity.  
Any other use of mobile devices will be punished.*

## Appendix VII

Please, fill in the following mind map with the uses you can think of for using Twitter:

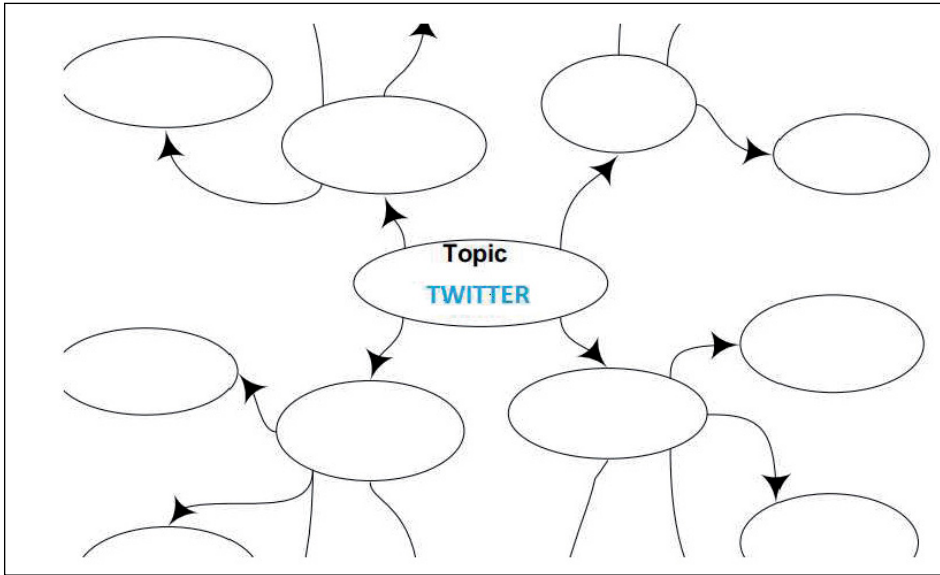


Figure 2. Mind map of ideas about twitter.

## Appendix VIII

### Jigsaw Reading: *Twitter Etiquette: the rules*<sup>5</sup>

From making yourself a Twitter chameleon to keeping it short and sweet, brush up on your Twitter etiquette with these social media dos and don'ts.

Make yourself a Twitter chameleon, says Katy Cowan. When I first signed up to Twitter I was one of those people who thought: what's the big deal? But within days of working it all out, it became very apparent that Twitter was a very powerful force in its own right. It gives us the ability to chat and tweet to thousands of other people, whether that's to talk about the weather or use it for more meaningful exchanges.

Astonishingly, it does all of the above in just 140 characters per tweet. I'm not sure even Twitter's creators could have anticipated its success. What's even more fascinating is that humans have developed an entire culture and a set of values for the platform. There's a whole new society in the Twittersphere and with that comes all the usual behaviour. Some would argue there's a class system, bringing with it a snobbery among certain users.

So if you're new to Twitter, or you'd like to brush up on your tweeting skills, we suggest the following Twitter etiquette rules. These unwritten guidelines will help you to avoid making any faux-pas and ensure your «Twitter-quette» is spot on.

- **Don't just lurk**

So you've signed up for an account, you haven't yet tweeted anything but you're hoping people will follow. If you don't have anything interesting to say, how can you expect people to notice you? Start getting active on Twitter and engage with people.

- **Short and sweet**

Twitter allows you to post tweets that are no more than 140 characters long. It aims to keep things simple. Try to keep your tweets that way – be clear and concise. Equally, don't overuse the @ reply function. Get your message across without waffling.

- **Watch what you tweet**

Everyone can see what you tweet, including your boss, work colleagues, family and friends. Be careful about what you post or you could lose friends, fall out with your family and maybe lose your job.

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5. *The Guardian*. Twitter Etiquette: The Rules. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2011/dec/15/twitter-rules-etiquette>> (Retrieved 2nd March 2013).

- **Don't go overboard**

If you're tweeting all the time, people will get turned off and stop following you. You wouldn't constantly talk at a party or social occasion, not giving anyone else a chance to have their say, so why do it on Twitter? Try to listen to what others are saying as well and go for quality rather than quantity.

- **Follow me. Follow you**

Don't go mad and follow everyone you possibly can. Try to keep a balance between the number of followers you have. If you follow 1,000 people but only have 50 followers, people might think you're a spambot and will probably avoid you like the plague.

- **Accept the good, the bad and the ugly**

Twitter is a public social network, so it's inevitable that people will say whatever they like, whenever they like. Accept that not everyone will like you or your tweets and you will receive some negativity from time to time. You can't control Twitter in this respect, just like you can't control people.

- **Spring cleaning can be good**

Every now and again, go through the people you follow and review whether they are useful or interesting to you. It does not harm to stop following people – they won't take it personally.

- **Don't be selfish**

Tweeting constantly about yourself and your business is just going to alienate your followers. If anything, it looks like spam and can come across as selfish. Tweet about others you like and use the retweet (RT) function liberally to re-post their articles and reports. Help others to grow their businesses and raise their profiles. Twitter supports the new business world of sharing and collaboration, so keep that in mind when tweeting.

- **Be generous**

Use opportunities like #FollowFriday (#FF) to be generous to your followers and those you are keen to connect with. It's an effective way of suggesting interesting Twitter users to others while gaining you brownie points in the twittersphere.

- **Don't drink and tweet**

Twitter is so easily accessible, it's no wonder many of us have tweeted when under the influence of alcohol. Not a great idea. Particularly as you're tweeting to the world and your tweets could be embarrassing.

- **Keep certain things private**

DMs or direct messages are perfect to retain a little discretion on Twitter. They're great for those more personal tweets, ones that you'd rather the entire world didn't see.



- **What's rude in real life is rude on Twitter**

Passive-aggressiveness has no place in the real world and the same applies on Twitter. Rude, sarcastic or underhanded tweets should be avoided at all costs. If you've got a problem with someone, don't whinge about it on Twitter. If someone has a problem with you, block them and move on with your life.

- **Ignore the snobbery**

This fascinating sub-culture has its own society and class system, meaning there are some real snobs lurking out there. Accept that some people will stop following you if they think your tweets aren't good enough. Ignore the snobbery – it's nothing to take personally.

- **Being vague is wise**

If you're going to a party, it's best not to tweet about its time, location and dress code. Equally, be careful about revealing your location too often on Twitter. Twitter is public, which means everyone can see. We're not saying the implications could be sinister – we're just saying to be careful what you tweet.

- **Celebrities are not your friends**

Never address celebrities you are following as though they're your personal friend. You might think Simon Pegg or Nick Frost are your best buddies because you started following their careers in the early days of Spaced many moons ago. That doesn't mean they'll know or care about you. Don't be deluded (the same applies with Bill Bailey or Stephen Fry).

- **Symbols, smiles and kisses**

Not everyone will appreciate a kiss or smiley face at the end of each tweet, while others would expect no less. Think of the context and the person you are tweeting to. Make yourself a Twitter chameleon and adopt your tweets accordingly.

- **Corporate stuff and nonsense**

Leave your suit and tie at home. Twitter emulates the new business world – one that is completely transforming before our eyes thanks to the net generation, a generation of people who have grown up with the internet and demand transparency, fun and openness in everything they do. If you try to be all corporate and professional in the traditional sense –especially in your down time– you'll just come across as stuffy, dull and old-fashioned. Show your personality, have fun and engage. Keep things professional only in the sense of respecting others and following these etiquette rules.

# El cómic *online* como recurso didáctico en el aula

## Webs y aplicaciones para móviles

Juan Lucas ONIEVA LÓPEZ

Universidad de Málaga  
juanlucas98@gmail.com

**Resumen:** La necesidad de motivar el alumnado para que este se implique aún más en su formación ha obligado a muchos docentes a buscar nuevos recursos y a seguir formándose. Tal y como evidencian gran número de investigaciones que citamos en nuestro artículo, muchos de ellos han encontrado en el cómic un excelente medio a través del cual el alumnado puede estudiar e investigar diferentes materias escolares. Teniendo en cuenta que las técnicas de información y comunicación van a ser cada vez más utilizadas en las aulas como herramienta didáctica, hemos tratado de proporcionar una gran variedad de webs y aplicaciones con las que crear cómics de forma virtual. Además, utilizando como ejemplo propuestas de docentes que emplean el cómic en el aula de forma efectiva, destacamos también diferentes instrumentos de evaluación.

**Palabras clave:** cómic; recursos educativos; tecnología de la información; tecnología educacional; medios electrónicos.

**Abstract:** The students' need for being motivated to improve their implication in their own formation has obliged many teachers to look for new resources and a continue formation. As can be inherited from the high number of studies quoted in this article, many of them have considered the comic as an excellent way for the students to study and research about different scholar topics. Regarding that the use of the information and communication tools are going to be improved in the future as a didactic resource, we have tried to propose a wide range of webs and mobile applications that makes an effective use of the comic in the classroom. In addition, we have highlighted a number of tools referred to the evaluation.

**Keywords:** Comics; educational resources; information technology; educational technology; electronic media.

## Introducción

El cómic está cobrando cada vez un mayor protagonismo en la cultura de la imagen en la que vivimos. Desde sus comienzos fue considerado un subproducto popular para entretener, así como para motivar a los jóvenes a que accediesen a través de él a una literatura de mayor seriedad (Del Rey, 2013). Scott McCloud, una de las figuras más representativas de este medio, señala que gran parte del desprestigio que ha sufrido el cómic como forma artística se debe a que se ha confundido entre «el cómic como recipiente» y el «cómic como vehículo». Es decir, se ha valorado por los críticos únicamente como recipiente de ideas e imágenes de sus creadores, cuando también destaca por su directa relación comunicativa con el lector. Además, el hecho de que en nuestra cultura lo escrito sea mejor considerado que lo visual ha propiciado que se considere al cómic una lectura fácil y carente de imaginación, frente otro tipo de literatura. Pero dicha marginalidad no ha logrado restarle méritos a la calidad estético-narrativa del cómic, que ha creado su propio espacio de expresión cultural, consolidándose como un reflejo de nuestra realidad contemporánea (Merino, 2010). El cómic ha ido adquiriendo, sobre todo en las últimas dos décadas, un mayor grado de notoriedad para la crítica, y el número de lectores adultos ha aumentado exponencialmente, de manera que ha ido superando los prejuicios que lo asociaban a que su contenido era irrelevante, cómico y que únicamente servía para entretener a niños y jóvenes.

Actualmente es considerado un arte, al igual que el cine o la literatura, abarcando propuestas tradicionales o bien de tipo experimental. En España, desde 2007, al igual que en otros muchos países se otorga anualmente el Premio Nacional del Cómic, una forma de dotar a este medio cultural y de comunicación del prestigio que se merece. La industria de los videojuegos es la que más está promocionando al cómic, ya que mueve al año y en todo el mundo casi cien mil millones de dólares (más que el cine) y con cerca de dos mil millones de usuarios. Esta es una muestra más del valor que va adquiriendo el cómic en nuestra cultura. Un ejemplo de ello es la serie televisiva de gran éxito mundial, *The Walking Dead*, y su versión en videojuegos, basada en el cómic homónimo de Robert Kirkman. Otras series televisivas actuales basadas en cómics son: *Daredevil*, *Powers*, *Agent Carter*, *iZombie*, *Constantine*, *The Flash*, *Arrow*, *Shield* y *Gotham*. También, la gran mayoría de personajes de cómics, sobre todo los de la editorial Marvel (Spiderman, Hulk, Lego, X-men, Batman, etc.), están siendo protagonistas de películas y videojuegos constantemente y con gran aceptación.

Como medio de comunicación, el cómic está caracterizado por su expresividad y, gracias a él, se pueden narrar historias utilizando a la vez imágenes y tex-

tos. Para que el acto comunicativo sea efectivo es necesario conocer la estructura temporal del relato, y cómo convertir cualquier argumento al lenguaje del cómic (Segovia, 2012). Además, está representado por un sistema de códigos extenso y capaz de transmitir un gran flujo de información, y posibilita la representación de una gran diversidad de situaciones (reales o ficticias) de forma efectiva y concisa. Por ello, para utilizar el cómic como medio de comunicación, es necesario saber utilizar sus convenciones, ampliamente establecidas y reconocidas (Cuñarro y Finol, 2013). El cómic también destaca por su versatilidad y permite desde edades muy tempranas que los niños/niñas y jóvenes expresen e interpreten diferentes narraciones basadas en el dibujo y la escritura, sin necesidad de instrumentos sofisticados para su producción. De esta manera, se logra «ayudar a los jóvenes estudiantes a mejorar su educación visual como punto de apoyo hacia un mejor aprendizaje global» (Del Rey, 2013:191). Para que haya una adecuada comunicación entre el autor y el lector es importante dominar las características técnicas de este medio, profundizando tanto en sus códigos visuales (encuadres, planos, secuenciaciones, signos cinéticos, etc.), como en los verbales (cartuchos, verbos, bocadillos, etc.). Partiendo de este conocimiento, los autores y creadores pueden lograr que sus obras sean fácilmente interpretadas por otros.

La utilización de las nuevas tecnologías en las aulas es una realidad, tal y como se ha publicado recientemente en el informe Horizon Report (2014) que, con el objetivo de identificar y descubrir tecnologías emergentes que pudieran tener un impacto significativo en el aprendizaje, ha previsto que tendrán una repercusión importante en las aulas los dispositivos móviles (smartphones y phablets) así como las tablets. De igual forma, anunció que para los próximos 5 años se hará un mayor uso en los centros educativos del Mobile Learning, los libros electrónicos, el aprendizaje basado en videojuegos, la Gamificación, la Realidad Aumentada y la impresión en 3D. Teniendo en cuenta el advenimiento de estas nuevas tecnologías en las aulas y el gran potencial didáctico del cómic, creemos necesario conocer y analizar las diferentes aplicaciones móviles, programas informáticos y páginas webs que, basándose en su creación, existen actualmente tanto para ordenadores como para otros dispositivos móviles con sistema Android, Apple o Linux.

En el presente artículo examinaremos las características del cómic y sus beneficios, tanto para el lector como para el autor. Destacaremos su potencial como recurso didáctico y ofreceremos ejemplos que motiven su utilización en el aula con diferentes materias. Posteriormente, ofrecemos una lista de webs, programas y aplicaciones móviles para diferentes sistemas operativos con las que se pueden crear cómics de forma *online*, sin necesidad de dibujarlos sobre el papel. De esta manera, los alumnos podrán centrarse más en la funcionalidad del cómic

que en sus habilidades plásticas. Teniendo en cuenta que los estudiantes no van a ser evaluados por la calidad de sus dibujos, hemos creído necesario tratar el tema de la evaluación en un último apartado.

## I. Características y convenciones del cómic

El cómic, como medio de comunicación con múltiples posibilidades, es definido por McCloud como aquellas «ilustraciones y otro tipo de imágenes yuxtapuestas en secuencia deliberada, con el propósito de transmitir información y obtener una respuesta estética del lector» (2007:9). Se trata pues de un objeto «estético, sensible, concreto, bello, subjetivo, perceptible por los sentidos y descifrado por nuestra mente» (Ortega, 2014:1). Además, puede ser interpretado de manera diferente por cada persona, aunque su comprensión es casi universal. Y es que la participación emocional de cada lector implica que este se relacione de una manera diferente con el concepto de espacialidad del cómic.

Para clasificar sus diferentes convenciones semióticas, Gasca y Rubern (1994) emplean un criterio de carácter funcional y las agrupan en tres apartados: el iconográfico (encuadres, perspectivas ópticas, estereotipos, gestuario, acciones arquetípicas, símbolos cinéticos, metáforas, etc.); el de expresión literaria (cartuchos con textos, onomatopeyas, voz en *off*, idiomas crípticos, etc.); y el de las técnicas narrativas (montaje de viñetas, acciones paralelas, *flash-back*, zoom, paso del tiempo, etc.). Según Flores (2007), el cómic también puede dividirse fundamentalmente en tres lenguajes: el visual, el verbal y los signos convencionales. En el caso del lenguaje visual, este se caracteriza por el plano o delimitación espacial de la imagen, la angulación, el color (para reforzar caracteres y provocar sentimientos), y la gestualidad (para expresar emociones y actitudes). El lenguaje verbal, que es la integración de los códigos verbales e icónicos, conforman la voz en *off*, el globo y el bocadillo. Y finalmente, los signos convencionales, que pueden ser metáforas visuales, signos de apoyo (interrogación significa duda, o una bombilla una idea), o códigos cinéticos (que crean la ilusión de movimiento gracias al uso de líneas, curvas y rayas). Para Cuñarro y Finol (2013), el lenguaje de los cómics se divide en cuatro códigos: el lingüístico, el icónico, el cromático y el gráfico. El lingüístico se interpreta como cualquier otra narración; el icónico y el cromático poseen una serie de convenciones propias para establecer significaciones profundas a través de una imagen; y el gráfico, convención que el cómic retoma de otras formas y técnicas artísticas. En resumen, podemos evidenciar cómo a través de los autores citados en este párrafo, el cómic posee una estructura universal junto con unos componentes muy similares, siendo tomados gran parte de ellos de otros medios artísticos y lingüísticos.

Cuando los autores del cómic utilizan elementos expresivos y técnicos de otras artes como la fotografía, el cine o la pintura, lo que hacen es transformarlos y otorgarles dimensiones semióticas, nutriendo así al cómic de argumentos estéticos (Cuñarro y Finol, 2013; Ortega, 2014). Gran parte de los elementos que conforman el cómic han sido heredados de diferentes medios de comunicación, disciplinas artísticas y tradiciones culturales. Por ejemplo, las convenciones iconográficas se han derivado de las artes plásticas, y tanto la tradición narrativa del cuento como de la novela han dotado de recursos al cómic. Pero la relación más estrecha es la que existe entre el cine y el cómic ya que, por ejemplo, las viñetas y sus perspectivas son muy similares a los encuadres que se realizan con las cámaras. Aunque se diferencian en que «lo que el espacio es para los cómics lo es el tiempo para las películas» (McCloud, 1995: 7).

A pesar de que el cómic se ha nutrido de otras artes, su lenguaje es muy rico y original. Por ejemplo, las metáforas visuales e idiogramas, que son iconizaciones de expresiones verbales del lenguaje coloquial, singularizan este medio junto con muchas otras convenciones de acuñación específica (Gasca y Rubern, 1994). Y, aunque su lenguaje es universal, es necesario que el lector y el autor conozcan y comprendan la sintaxis visual-verbal de este medio, debiendo estar familiarizados con sus códigos y técnicas para su correcta interpretación.

Para que el cómic continúe singularizándose del resto de las artes y sea valorado tal y como se merece, McCloud (2001) propone que se potencie en los siguientes aspectos:

1. Como literatura. Los cómics pueden producir un corpus digno de estudio y representar fielmente la vida, la época y las perspectivas del autor.
2. Como arte. Sus diferentes formas artísticas deben ser reconocidas al igual que la pintura o la escultura.
3. Los derechos de autor. Los artistas de cómics deben ostentar un mayor control sobre sus creaciones, para su consecuente beneficio económico.
4. Renovación de la industria. Debería reinventarse el negocio del cómic para beneficiar tanto al productor como al consumidor.
5. Imagen pública. Reconocer su potencial artístico y didáctico.
6. Apoyo institucional. Las instituciones correspondientes deben superar los prejuicios populares y tratar al cómic con total justicia.
7. Equilibrio entre sexos. Atraer a jóvenes de ambos sexos, para lo que es necesario apoyar a las autoras.
8. Representar a las minorías. Debe apoyarse el cómic, indiferentemente del origen racial y clasista de sus autores, evitando fomentar únicamente, y como ha ocurrido hasta ahora, el trabajo artístico de varones blancos de clase media-alta.

9. Diversidad de género. Trabajar todo tipo de géneros con el cómic, no solo el fantástico con héroes y heroínas adolescentes.
10. Producción digital. Fomentar y hacer partícipes a jóvenes creadores y aficionados de la existencia de herramientas digitales para su creación.
11. Distribución digital. Promover no solo su distribución en papel sino también en formato digital para una mayor difusión.
12. Cómic digitales. Estudiar y valorar la evolución del cómic en el entorno digital a través de diferentes plataformas, programas y aplicaciones.

Basándonos en las tres últimas reivindicaciones de McCloud, en nuestro artículo vamos a estudiar la creación de cómics *online* aportando información específica y práctica al respecto.

### 1. *Beneficios y aportaciones del cómic*

Cualquier medio de expresión artística suele aportar beneficios (no solo económicos) tanto al creador de la obra como al receptor, y en el caso del cómic ocurre lo mismo. A continuación vamos a destacar algunos de sus más importantes beneficios.

Desde la perspectiva del autor, el cómic es un instrumento perfecto para aprender las características de la competencia narrativa, sobre todo en educación primaria (Segovia, 2012). Además, fomenta la creatividad y la imaginación de sus autores, al mismo tiempo que hace reflexionar a los lectores. Para que cumpla su objetivo, y las imágenes y el texto sean interpretados correctamente, es necesario que el autor adquiera aquellos conocimientos y destrezas básicas para expresarse con códigos con los que integrar imágenes y palabras, por lo que necesitará de una adecuada alfabetización en el lenguaje icónico. Además de desarrollar la competencia narrativa, logra promover los siguientes tres aprendizajes: la creación de un contenido argumental, la adecuación del discurso al lenguaje verbocónico, y asociar el cómic con los nuevos medios de comunicación. Además, si se trabaja de forma colaborativa, mejora las relaciones sociales entre los jóvenes (Silva, Hurtado, y Tique, 2013).

Respecto al lector, el cómic favorece la lectura crítica cuando se analizan sus clichés sociales y patrones de conducta, mejorando así el conocimiento de sus mecanismos (Guzmán, 2011). Las diferentes secuencias textuales logran desarrollar aquellas habilidades de lectura y escritura que se deben conocer y dominar (Alonso, 2010), puesto que cada tipo de secuencia se caracteriza por unos rasgos particulares de carácter funcional, textual y lingüístico. También, el cómic logra desarrollar destrezas de comprensión lectora, a pesar de que la presencia

del texto no define al cómic como medio, ya que el proceso de comprensión de este va más allá de la comprensión de las palabras y expresiones.

De todo lo expuesto, la función principal por la que destaca el cómic es que es una excelente herramienta motivadora que ayuda a desarrollar las capacidades interpretativas de los jóvenes, al mismo tiempo que despierta el interés por el aprendizaje y la investigación. Y es que su carácter icónico, como convención y codificación, está dotado de un gran poder de entretenimiento, tanto para el lector como para el creador, ya que implica un proceso de representación, desciframiento y de relación entre el significante y lo explícito (Ortega, 2014; Silva, Hurtado y Tique, 2013).

## II. El cómic como recurso didáctico

Como hemos citado anteriormente, el cómic ha sido considerado hasta hace poco un medio de comunicación trivial y humorístico. Cuando se ha pretendido utilizar en el aula era únicamente como entretenimiento o para hacer más atractivas las actividades o ejercicios en los libros, desprestigiándolo así como cultura. Pero el cómic surge como instrumento de entretenimiento y diversión, «con una función distractiva casi exclusiva. Pero las necesidades sociales [...] y de prestigio social obligan a una derivación progresiva hacia el campo instructivo» (Rodríguez, 1988:44). Gracias a ese cambio en los últimos años, al cómic se le han reconocido múltiples posibilidades. Por ejemplo, ha pasado a ser «un instrumento didáctico y de formación (o deformación) cultural, así como de recreación en un contexto social determinado» (Ortega, 2014:34). Además, aquellas actividades basadas en cómics pueden abarcar tanto la expresión como la comprensión escrita y visual, contribuyendo así al desarrollo de destrezas interculturales (Del Rey, 2013). Como actividad o ejercicio, tiene una fuerte función motivadora y crea interés en el alumnado, «disminuyendo la ansiedad al tratar ciertos temas» (Altarriba, 2003:9). Esa complementariedad entre la palabra y la imagen puede ayudar a paliar las dificultades del léxico, gracias a una puesta en escena muy ilustrativa de lo que ocurre en cada viñeta.

Otros de los máximos representantes del cómic en la actualidad, Eisner, expone en su obra, *El cómic y el arte secuencial*, dos de sus funciones básicas, el entretenimiento y la enseñanza:

Ejemplo de ello es el procedimiento para abrir una caja fuerte en una historia policíaca o el montaje de las partes de una nave en una aventura espacial. En realidad, esa parte técnica consta de una serie de imágenes con un mensaje instructivo y enmarcado en el interior de una historia de entretenimiento. En el caso de



un cómic puramente instructivo o en el del montaje o funcionamiento de un aparato, los detalles de la información suelen sazonarse con humor (exageración) para atraer la atención del lector, transmitir una información pertinente y establecer analogías visuales y situaciones reconocibles de la vida cotidiana. Así se produce el «entretenimiento» en una obra «técnica». Will Eisner (2007:14)

Como recurso didáctico, el cómic puede utilizarse como medio para el aprendizaje de valores y creencias, siendo una excelente herramienta para todo aquel que quiera reflexionar sobre sí mismo y la sociedad que le rodea. Por su carácter lúdico, puede ayudar a los jóvenes a canalizar y exteriorizar de forma libre sus emociones y sentimientos, para así ser personas sensibles y con la capacidad de ampliar la visión del mundo (Delgado-Ortega, 2006).

Como podemos comprobar, las posibilidades del cómic en el aula son muchas, aunque para que el alumnado se beneficie de este dependerá en gran parte del interés del profesorado en hacer un buen uso de este medio en el aula. Por ejemplo, el cómic puede ser el pretexto adecuado para que los alumnos puedan comunicar de forma sincera y libre sus ideas, sueños, miedos, alegrías y demás emociones, pudiendo defender su postura frente a otros de forma creativa (Silva, Hurtado y Tique, 2013). Los cómics, también favorecen el trabajo de investigación (Guzmán, 2011) al mismo tiempo que es fuente de motivación, ya que implica al estudiante en la elaboración de material significativo y creativo a través del dibujo y la escritura. Pero para aprovechar la adquisición de las habilidades comunicativas que promueve el cómic, es necesario que el docente sepa buscar y apreciar el valor individual de cada estudiante, evitando evaluar sus trabajos por la calidad del dibujo, y debiendo tener en cuenta aspectos que muestren la adquisición de aprendizajes, habilidades y competencias. Como ejemplo, algunos criterios a tener en cuenta pudieran ser: el contenido, la redacción y la secuenciación lógica (Verdejo y Medina, 2008).

A pesar de todos los beneficios que aporta, el cómic no ha acabado de encontrar su lugar en el aula, más allá de su mero aprovechamiento para fines estéticos. No está siendo utilizado como referente cultural, ni tampoco se profundiza en sus características y en los géneros que abarca (Del Rey, 2013). Y es que el cómic, para su adecuada utilización, necesita de una seria planificación didáctica donde se recojan cuáles son sus objetivos. Además, es necesario ayudar al alumnado a reflexionar sobre los diferentes códigos, y así valorar sus intenciones comunicativas y su impacto en los lectores. A pesar de que para trabajar de forma efectiva con el cómic en el aula es necesaria una detallada planificación previa a su utilización, puede resultar un recurso muy valioso para trabajar diferentes temas, siempre que se estructure secuencialmente el trabajo (Berenguel, 2011). Al

igual que otros recursos, el cómic también puede servir para fomentar el trabajo colaborativo y que los jóvenes mejoren «sus relaciones sociales con sus compañeros y con los adultos más cercanos» (Silva, Hurtado y Tique, 2013:91).

Además de fomentar en los estudiantes las capacidades y aptitudes ya mencionadas, al ser el cómic un medio eminentemente creativo, los alumnos logran desarrollar también los siguientes seis beneficios que son esenciales para su adecuado crecimiento y desarrollo personal.

1. El desarrollo de habilidades sociales, al reivindicar el alumno a través de sus creaciones sus derechos y libertades, mostrando sus sentimientos y opiniones libremente, al mismo tiempo que respeta los de los demás.
2. La autoestima, aprendiendo a valorar su trabajo de la misma manera que lo hace consigo mismo, aceptando sus limitaciones y potenciando sus habilidades.
3. La confianza en sí mismo, tomando conciencia de forma intuitiva de sus posibilidades para así afrontar y superar futuros conflictos.
4. El trabajo en equipo, ya que coordinados y con el apoyo de un docente podrá llevarse a cabo un proyecto común, siendo todos y cada uno de los participantes responsables del resultado final. No se trata de la suma de aportaciones individuales, sino de trabajar en grupo aspectos como la complementariedad, la coordinación, la comunicación, la confianza y el compromiso.
5. La creatividad, como la habilidad para crear algo nuevo.
6. La motivación, como elemento previo a la acción que logra que esta se realice con interés y diligencia.

Valorarlos no resulta sencillo, sobre todo si carecemos de información previa de cada elemento citado en cada estudiante, aunque pueden ser medibles a través de diferentes instrumentos, junto con la autoevaluación del alumnado.

En resumen, el cómic ayuda a desarrollar en sus autores la competencia comunicativa, una mayor autonomía, una actitud más crítica ante la vida y una visión más práctica y real del mundo. Al mismo tiempo, se les ayuda a comprender sus emociones y a focalizar sus deseos, utilizando diferentes recursos para afrontar problemas y dificultades (Ferland, 2011).

### 1. *Ejemplos de cómics como propuesta en el aula*

El cómic está siendo utilizado por docentes como herramienta didáctica en diferentes países del mundo, para impartir asignaturas y materias y así ayudar a el alumnado en su formación. Un ejemplo de ello es el libro y cómic de Dan Greenberg, *Comic-strip math. Problem solving*, que se utiliza para aprender matemáti-

cas de forma divertida y efectiva. En cuanto a experiencias, Fernández y Ramiro (2014) han logrado que con el cómic sus alumnos aprendan el valor de los derechos humanos. Segovia (2012), lo utiliza para que sus estudiantes de primaria adquieran la competencia narrativa, y Darici (2014), trata de potenciar su uso a través de la Realidad Aumentada. De igual manera, el cómic es empleado en el aula de E/LE para mejorar el aprendizaje de los idiomas (Del Rey, 2013), por ejemplo empleando la web *grammarmancomic*, que aporta tirillas con múltiples posibilidades para aprender la gramática del inglés. El cómic también se utiliza como alternativa para la aceleración de conocimientos (Silvia, et al, 2013), o para autorregular los errores de las evaluaciones escritas (Cadavid y Parra, 2011). Inclusive, para ayudar a estudiantes con problemas psicológicos, mentales o con dificultades de carácter comunicativo. Como podemos comprobar, el cómic puede emplearse en múltiples situaciones con diferentes objetivos, así como temas, asignaturas y situaciones diversas se quieran tratar en el aula. De esta manera se ayuda a que el alumnado desarrolle diferentes competencias y se le motiva a esforzarse y comprometerse con su aprendizaje.

Otra utilidad interesante del cómic es que sirve como instrumento de evaluación. Los diferentes elementos que lo conforman pueden ser también utilizados por los docentes para que los estudiantes «demuestren sus conocimientos, destrezas y actitudes, bien sea creando diálogos, escenas o una combinación de ambos» (Verdejo y Medina, 2008: 307). Para evaluarlos a través de las tirillas cómicas, es necesario que se tengan en cuenta aspectos tales como: el propósito, identificar los aprendizajes que se han de demostrar, seleccionar o crear la tirilla, establecer los criterios para valorar la ejecución del estudiante, preparar los instrumentos para recoger los datos y evaluarlos, así como comunicar los resultados y revisarlos con los alumnos. De tal manera, que con este trabajo los estudiantes tendrán la oportunidad de mostrar a través de sus creaciones el resultado de sus aprendizajes, no sin antes haber recibido claras instrucciones acerca de lo que deben hacer y cómo se les va a evaluar. Para revisar y calificar el trabajo, Verdejo y Medina (2008) recomiendan que se emplee una lista de cotejo junto con una escala de categorías o matriz de valoración.

Aunque utilizar las tirillas como instrumento de evaluación conlleva como aspecto negativo que no es fácil que el docente encuentre un cómic que corresponda al tema de estudio, hay motivos más que suficientes para fomentar su uso en el aula. Por ejemplo, el cómic se puede utilizar con estudiantes de todas las edades, tiene un formato familiar, atractivo, y puede usarse con diferentes temas y asignaturas. Asimismo, posibilita que los alumnos muestren su creatividad y permite la integración de diversos conocimientos y destrezas, sirviendo de estímulo visual, familiar y atractivo.

A continuación, expondremos 12 ideas que hemos recopilado de diferentes publicaciones y que pudieran servir de ejemplo para crear y utilizar cómics como recurso educativo:

1. A través de la Realidad Aumentada (RA), podemos crear un cómic otorgándole una nueva dimensión. Según Darici (2014), esta experiencia entre cómics y *transmedia* puede coexistir gracias a las características de ambos lenguajes narrativos. Actualmente, hay programas que pueden ayudarnos a realizar un trabajo de bastante calidad. *Aurasma* es una aplicación móvil multiplataforma que permite crear de forma sencilla y rápida escenarios de RA a partir de cualquier fotografía. *SketchUp* es un programa dirigido al diseño gráfico y al modelado en tres dimensiones, pero que actualmente no solo es utilizado por profesionales sino también por estudiantes y profesores en diferentes centros educativos de todo el mundo. *Augment* es otra aplicación que permite crear entornos aumentados a partir de un marcador del que se despliega un elemento virtual en 3D. *Aumentaty Author*, *BuildAR*, *Colar Mix*, *Chromville*, y *LearnAR*, son otros programas y aplicaciones que pueden utilizarse para recrear imágenes de realidad aumentada y utilizarlas en cómics.

2. Manuales de instrucciones. Los estudiantes pueden crearlos especificando paso a paso el procedimiento a seguir para, por ejemplo: utilizar un programa informático, realizar una compra *online*, ir a un lugar, acceder a material en internet o prevenir situaciones conflictivas. También puede utilizarse en clase de química o de educación física para describir los pasos a llevar a cabo en una prueba. La web *wittycomics* es muy útil para esta actividad aunque muy limitada en cuanto a personajes.

3. Recrear la biografía de un personaje histórico. Muy útil en asignaturas de literatura, historia, filosofía o historia del arte, donde podemos documentar sus vidas a través de sus descubrimientos, creaciones o sucesos. La web *toondoo* ofrece una gran variedad de personajes de diferentes razas.

4. Ilustrar noticias y acontecimientos actuales o históricos. Para temas relacionados con el lenguaje o la historia ayuda a promover una lectura crítica. Una web recomendable sería también *toondoo*.

5. Inventar entrevistas entre dos personajes. Puede utilizarse para explicar cómo se sintieron dos individuos en diferentes situaciones históricas o literarias. Por ejemplo, dos personajes de una novela, dos autores del siglo de oro, o bien la relación entre una función y una asíntota para la asignatura de matemáticas. Este tipo de actividades también son muy utilizadas en asignaturas de idiomas, así como en las de historia, filosofía o arte, donde dos personajes pueden ayudar a entender un determinado hecho histórico o un pensamiento.

6. Convertir un texto teatral o una noticia en cómic. Fomentaría la actitud crítica de los estudiantes a través del adecuado análisis de los textos.

7. Explicar un cuento, una fábula o un poema. Se lograría modificar y adaptar su argumento para hacerlo más interesante y comprensible a través del cómic.

8. Completar bocadillos y estructurar historias. Se pueden emplear cómics ya creados para que los estudiantes que estén estudiando un determinado tema puedan ordenarlos y crear sus diálogos. La web *grammarmancomic* puede ser muy útil para esta actividad.

9. Documentar una excursión o un viaje escolar. Los alumnos, con sus fotografías y usando la web *chogger*, pueden compartir y exponer de forma lúdica y didáctica sus experiencias y aprendizajes.

10. Para practicar otro idioma. Se pueden crear cómics en los que a través de conversaciones varios personajes posibiliten al estudiante aprender más vocabulario y a expresarse en diferentes contextos. Pudiendo así utilizar frases humorísticas, expresiones cotidianas o frases hechas. La colección de cómics clásicos de *Digital Comic Museum* es muy recomendada para esta actividad.

11. Crear imágenes para viñetas. Con el programa *Pixton* los estudiantes pueden idear posters, tiras de prensa o imágenes, posibilitando su exportación para ser utilizadas en programas como *Chogger*.

12. La creación de caricaturas. Pueden servir para que los alumnos aprendan a interpretar hipótesis mentales o bien crearlas ellos mismos. Cuando la hipótesis de un espectador coincide con la intención del artista la comunicación puede considerarse exitosa. En cambio, si la imagen es visualmente ambigua será interpretada de múltiples formas, y dicha comunicación será errónea. Con esta técnica visual solamente podemos ver un momento, lo que se define como *proto-cómic*, ya que necesitamos imaginar el instante anterior y posterior para que tenga sentido lo que representa (Ortega, 2014). Gran variedad de caricaturas que pueden servir de ejemplo y que hacen referencia a la educación y a sus problemas podemos encontrarlas en la web *educacionycine.org*.

## 2. *El proceso creativo del cómic*

Crear cómics es una actividad interdisciplinar dotada de grandes dosis de motivación para sus autores, concretamente para los alumnos si fomentamos su uso en el aula. Tomando como ejemplo las recomendaciones de Guzman (2011): nos recomienda que los estudiantes comiencen trabajando en grupo las diferentes tramas o historias para luego transformarlas al lenguaje del cómic. Seguidamente, elaborarían un guión literario y técnico incluyendo textos narrativos, des-

criptivos, así como diálogos, monólogos, soliloquios, e incluso anotaciones, para incorporar onomatopeyas, líneas cinéticas y demás elementos icónicos propios del cómic. Tras esta primera fase, la segunda consistiría en la secuenciación y el montaje de viñetas. Para ello, nuestro autor aconseja que si los alumnos no van a crear sus propios personajes, paisajes u objetos, podrían utilizar aquellas historietas o tirillas cómicas ya creadas por otros alumnos, o bien imágenes de prensa o folletos publicitarios. Nosotros recomendamos la posibilidad de crear las propias viñetas a través de las webs y aplicaciones que más adelante describiremos, así no tendrían que dibujar y se centrarían en el proceso de creación.

Los elementos principales son: la viñeta y el bocadillo. La primera desempeña un papel simbólico en el mensaje natural del cómic, capturando acontecimientos que son parte de la acción; el segundo es un elemento iconográfico preciso a través del cual los personajes pueden expresarse a través de pensamiento y diálogos. El bocadillo se diferencia de los cartuchos porque estos últimos tienen una función más bien aclaratoria o simulan al narrador. También son destacables otros elementos como: la expresión del tiempo y el ritmo, las onomatopeyas, la rotulación, el punto de vista y el encuadre, las metáforas visuales, la plasmación del movimiento y los símbolos cinéticos, los gestos, así como los usos expresivos de viñetas y globos (Del Rey, 2013). En el caso de las onomatopeyas, se trata de adopciones de verbos fono-simbólicos ingleses y de gran expresividad acústica que se utilizan de forma combinada con otras letras o sonidos (crac, boom, ñam, etc.). Además, a diferencia del cómic oriental, el occidental se lee de izquierda a derecha y de arriba abajo.

En cuanto a la gramática del cómic, para su creación hay que tener en cuenta que tanto el código lingüístico (gramática, trama, sintaxis) como el código icónico (imágenes, simetría, perspectiva, líneas), se complementan formando un código de mayor complejidad y universalidad. Desde una perspectiva narratológica, y para su adecuada creación, es necesario conocer cómo se utilizan e interaccionan el código lingüístico, el lenguaje cinematográfico y las figuras retóricas. Teniendo en cuenta que el lenguaje del cómic ha ido evolucionando tomando elementos de otros lenguajes, se ha logrado crear una serie de normas que facilitan la comunicación entre el autor y el lector. Las principales son, según Cuñarro y Finol (2013):

- a) El globo y la didascalía. El primero sirve para representar gráficamente los diálogos o pensamientos de los personajes, dotando así de temporalidad la historia. La didascalía o cartucho, es el espacio rectangular que encapsula el texto dentro de un cómic y suele estar fuera del panel o viñeta para aportar información adicional sobre el contexto, que puede ser de anclaje (si aclara el contenido de la imagen) o de conmutación (si facilita continuidad a la narración).

- b) Las convenciones iconográficas. El cómic retoma técnicas y formas de otras artes y les otorga diversas dimensiones. La metáfora visual es una de las más curiosas convenciones lingüísticas de los cómics, y un ejemplo de ello son: la interrogante (perplejidad), la bombilla (idea), las estrellas (un porrazo), el troco y la sierra (sueño).
- c) Las onomatopeyas. Tienen dos funciones, una acústica y otra visual (zzzzz).
- d) Paneles o viñetas. Durante su lectura están sujetas a la complejidad cónica, la posición y el tamaño. De manera que, cuanto mayor sea el formato y el número de signos icónicos y verbales, más tiempo y atención deberemos prestarle.
- e) Generar movimiento. Con el tiempo se han ido refinando las líneas que dan sensación de movimiento, volviéndose más refinadas y estilizadas, y expresándose de forma clara y sencilla.
- f) La forma humana y el lenguaje corporal. Se han desarrollado diversas técnicas para presentar la gestualidad de los personajes, por ejemplo, utilizando primeros planos para transmitir sentimientos sin tener que utilizar el código lingüístico.
- g) El plano del cómic. Como en el cine, los cómics precisan de planos o encuadres para poder visualizar la acción, crear sensación de movimiento o aquellas perspectivas con las que mirar los objetos.
- h) La perspectiva. Es la profundidad y la posición relativa de los objetos que juegan en el cómic un papel destacado, ya que permiten transferirle una carga emocional a cualquier imagen.
- i) Diagramación y montaje. El montaje de las páginas con las correspondientes viñetas es similar al montaje cinematográfico, ya que el trabajo de edición debe formar un todo armónico entre letra, viñeta e imagen.
- j) Código cromático. Estos son los colores, la iluminación y la textura. En el caso de los dos primeros, suelen estar vinculados a distintas emociones y procesos psicológicos que le otorgan al cómic un enorme potencial semiótico. Y aunque culturalmente hay discrepancias sobre las connotaciones de los colores, no hay tantas en cuanto a sus tonalidades. El cuanto al uso del color, logra atraer la atención y producir una impresión emotiva, facilitando la decodificación del dibujo.
- k) Dimensión narrativa. Es la sucesión de hechos mediante la utilización de códigos icónicos y lingüísticos que generalmente están enmarcados en un periodo de tiempo. Se puede narrar a través de un estilo indirecto (narrador en primera o tercera persona con didascalias), y en estilo directo a través de los globos.

Con todos estos elementos, el autor o creador del cómic, podrá hacer de su obra un medio de comunicación accesible a cualquier lector, siempre y cuando este último sepa interpretar correctamente el lenguaje propio del cómic.

### III. El cómic y las nuevas tecnologías

La concepción que actualmente se tiene de las tecnologías digitales en entornos educativos dista mucho de estar respaldada de forma consensuada por todos los sectores educativos y sociales. Y es que «se tiende a ver las tecnologías de una forma positiva, negativa, utópica o distópica, dependiendo de las connotaciones que le tiñen de un barniz ideológico» (Cuadrado, 2011:6). Para los que conciben la educación como «una práctica no resuelta que está continuamente en acción, ya que somos sujetos en movimiento que cambiamos constantemente y que no nos conformamos con lo que sabemos» (Acaso y Ellsworth, 2011:40), la tecnología es concebida de forma utópica y funcional, gracias a la cual podemos fomentar el conocimiento. Pero con motivo de la fuerte influencia de aquellos pensamientos basados en la enseñanza tradicional, la utilización de los medios digitales en el ámbito educativo sigue provocando tensiones en nuestra cultura (Cuadrado, 2011).

El cómic, no solo es precursor de la multimedia por su naturaleza intrínseca del lenguaje verbo-icónico (Pelliteri, 1998 y Darici, 2014), sino que además tiene la «capacidad para actualizarse continuamente y de que las nuevas tecnologías ensalcen sus potencialidades» (Darici, 2014:306), permitiendo un amplio grado de adaptabilidad de las nuevas tecnologías aplicadas a la literatura. Un ejemplo de ello es la gran variedad de programas, webs y aplicaciones existentes, gracias a las cuales los docentes podrán ayudar a su alumnado a reflexionar en este campo de experimentación tan fértil como es la comunicación *transmedia*, con implicaciones sobre lo visual como herramienta de narración.

Es esencial que el docente esté correctamente formado para que aplique de forma adecuada los diferentes recursos multimedia en su aula. Si bien una de sus principales cualidades es que ha de ser un excelente comunicador, también ha de saber manejar aquellos estímulos que ayuden a los alumnos a ser emocionalmente competentes. De tal manera que, para poder extraer los máximos beneficios de las experiencias e interacciones de los alumnos con las Tic, los docentes deberán ayudarles a gestionar sus emociones a través de las imágenes y los mensajes ajenos, fomentando a través del cómic la producción de nueva in-



formación que incida emocionalmente en los destinatarios (Ferrés i Prats, 2014). La formación técnica del profesorado es muy importante y necesaria, y Ortiz (2014) la divide en tres grupos, en cada uno de los cuales debe estar formado el docente: el primero se basa en los medios tradicionales (retroproyector, audio y proyector de dispositivas); el segundo, en medios más actuales (ordenadores, programas, aplicaciones móviles, internet y plataformas virtuales); y el tercero relaciona la aplicación didáctica con el uso de las Tic (internet, multimedia, materiales para plataformas, diseño y creación de material didáctico, y la creación y adaptación de programas).

### 1. *Páginas webs para la creación de cómics*

Tras una extensa y profunda investigación sobre aquellas aplicaciones, programas informáticos y páginas webs basadas en la creación de cómics y caricaturas de forma *online*, expondremos a continuación una muestra dividida en cuatro grupos. La primera estará compuesta por 14 páginas webs con las que los estudiantes pueden crear sus cómics de forma virtual y que, dependiendo del tema a tratar, serán más recomendables unas que otras. De entre estas, hemos conformado un subgrupo de tres webs por sus similitudes, se trata de Disney, Marvel y Lego. A pesar de que trabajar con estas tres webs limita mucho su utilización porque sus personajes están ya creados y no pueden ser editados, sí que nos servirán para iniciar a los alumnos en la creación de cómics gracias a su sencilla interface y al amplio conocimiento que tienen los jóvenes de estos personajes gracias al cine, los videojuegos o las series de dibujos animados. También hemos seleccionado de entre estas catorce webs un par de ellas que, si bien no tienen como objetivo crear cómics, se suelen utilizar para crear caricaturas y pequeños videos animados, para posteriormente ser exportados y utilizados por los alumnos en sus cómics, y que son *Powtoon* y *Piktochart*. Aunque existen muchas otras similares, estas en concreto tienen un diseño muy similar a los cómics. Y finalmente, ejemplificaremos un grupo de ocho aplicaciones para iPad y otras tantas para dispositivos con sistemas Android.

Las siguientes webs son actualmente las más utilizadas para la creación de cómics *online*, y en la tabla 1 puede verse una muestra de la estética de sus dibujos:

#### 1) Make beliefs comix

<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/>

Web en inglés que ofrece una gran cantidad de opciones, objetos y personajes. Es muy editable y posee una interface sencilla.

2) Toondoo

<http://www.toondoo.com/>

Una de las webs más completas para crear cómics previo registro. Sus posibilidades son múltiples, ya que se pueden seleccionar caras o cuerpos, y el menú facilita la posibilidad de editarlas.

3) Chogger

[www.chogger.com](http://www.chogger.com)

Es un servicio gratuito para la creación de cómics sin necesidad de registrarse. Aunque permite que se inserten imágenes desde el ordenador, Google o simplemente a través de los cómics que nosotros mismos hemos creado en papel, ofrece un grupo de plantillas y paneles por defecto. Su editor de imágenes y personajes hace más creativa su utilización.

4) Comic strip maker

<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/es/make-your-own/comic-strip-maker>

Facilita casi veinte escenarios, cincuenta caras con gestos diferentes, doce globos y cuarenta objetos. Está en inglés, es sencilla de usar y permite descargar, imprimir y enviar las creaciones.

5) Cmx.io

[www.cmx.io](http://www.cmx.io)

Con figuras muy esquemáticas, no se pueden destacar rasgos faciales en sus personajes y utiliza únicamente el blanco y negro. Se trata de una librería escrita en Javascript que permite crear cómics utilizando únicamente HTML.

6) Wittycomics

[www.wittycomics.com/](http://www.wittycomics.com/)

Es gratuito y su uso es sencillo e intuitivo, aunque sus imágenes y personajes por defecto no permiten ser editados. Si el autor se registra puede compartirlo en red y guardar su trabajo. Tampoco permite imprimir el resultado final.

7) Readwritethink

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/comic/>

Es sencilla, con un número escaso de personajes, escenarios y objetos que no pueden ser editados. Utiliza solo el blanco y el negro, pero a pesar de su excesiva sencillez es muy apropiado para iniciar a los niños y jóvenes en la creación de cómics.

8) Pixton

<http://www.pixton.com/es/>

Esta web es de las más completas, aunque también es algo más compleja que el resto. Puede utilizarse con fines educativos o profesionales, aunque en estos casos habría que pagar una cuota. Es posible probarla previo registro y es recomendada para jóvenes que ya han utilizado otras webs más fáciles.

9) Stripgenerator

<http://stripgenerator.com/>

Es sencilla y sus personajes y objetos son en blanco y negro. No se necesita estar registrado para utilizarla y se caracteriza por su particular estilo, similar a los dibujos de la serie *South Park*. Muy fácil de editar aunque no dispone de una gran variedad de figuras y accesorios.

10) Superaction comic maker

<http://www.culturestreet.org.uk/activities/superactioncomicmaker/>

Destaca por su limitado número de personajes (la mayoría héroes) así como de objetos, globos e iconos, los cuales limitan mucho sus posibilidades. Tiene la particularidad de que cada personaje tiene por defecto una gran cantidad de movimientos.

11) Bitstrips

<https://www.bitstrips.com/create/comic/>

Excelente web con múltiples posibilidades para editar personajes de distintas razas, que al mismo tiempo pueden cambiar gestos y movimientos de todo el cuerpo, lo que amplía sus posibilidades expresivas.

Las siguientes tres webs son de importantes compañías internacionales de medios de comunicación que proveen personajes, objetos y otros elementos característicos. Son muy conocidos por los niños y jóvenes, de manera que son muy atractivas para la iniciación en la creación de cómics *online*.

12) Lego

<http://www.lego.com/es-es/city/comic-builder/builder>

13) Disney

<http://www.disney.co.uk/disney-create/comic-creator/>

14) Marvel

[http://marvel.com/games/play/34/create\\_your\\_own\\_comic](http://marvel.com/games/play/34/create_your_own_comic)

Las dos webs que mostramos a continuación, similares en cuanto a posibilidades, se suelen utilizar para editar y crear imágenes, vídeos y presentaciones. Aunque no son específicas para la creación de cómics pueden utilizarse para crear personajes, escenarios, objetos o situaciones, así como caricaturas y otras imágenes con muchas posibilidades artísticas que, posteriormente, se podrían exportar a las webs de cómics, por ejemplo, a *chogger*.

15) Piktochart

<http://piktochart.com/>

16) Powtoon

<http://www.powtoon.com/>

Tabla 1. Ejemplo de estilos



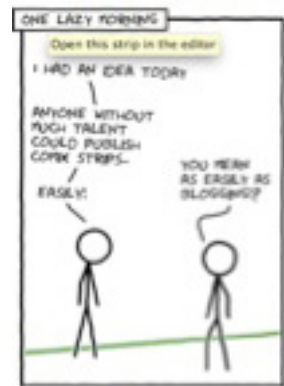
Pixton



Stripgenerator



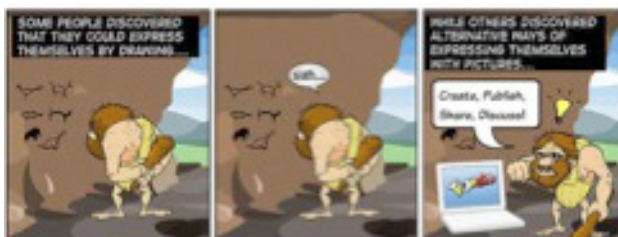
makebeliefscomix



cmx.io



Bitstrips



ToonDoo



Wittycomics

## 2. Aplicaciones para crear cómics con sistemas iOS y Android

Las mejores aplicaciones que existen actualmente para crear cómics en dispositivos iPad son:

**Tabla 2.** Aplicaciones para sistema iOS

Comic Life	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/comic-life/id432537882?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/comic-life/id432537882?mt=8</a>
Strip Designer	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/strip-designer/id314780738?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/strip-designer/id314780738?mt=8</a>
Comic Head	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/comic-head/id480969185?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/comic-head/id480969185?mt=8</a>
Rosie Comics	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rosie-comics-marker/id517529330?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/rosie-comics-marker/id517529330?mt=8</a>
Halftone	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/halftone-2-comic-book-creator/id603139024?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/halftone-2-comic-book-creator/id603139024?mt=8</a>
Artstudio	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/artstudio-paint-and-draw/id354818333?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/artstudio-paint-and-draw/id354818333?mt=8</a>
My Sketch	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/my-sketch-hd-dibujo-lapiz/id448162988?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/my-sketch-hd-dibujo-lapiz/id448162988?mt=8</a>
Comicbook	<a href="https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/comicbook!/id436114747?mt=8">https://itunes.apple.com/es/app/comicbook!/id436114747?mt=8</a>

Para dispositivos con sistemas operativos Android, las aplicaciones más populares son:

**Tabla 3.** Aplicaciones para sistema Android

Bitstrips	<a href="https://appcrawlr.com/android/bitstrips">https://appcrawlr.com/android/bitstrips</a>
Rage comic maker	<a href="https://appcrawlr.com/android/rage-comic-maker">https://appcrawlr.com/android/rage-comic-maker</a>
Comicker	<a href="https://appcrawlr.com/android/comicker-the-real-comic-maker">https://appcrawlr.com/android/comicker-the-real-comic-maker</a>
Comic strip it!	<a href="https://appcrawlr.com/android/comic-strip-it-lite">https://appcrawlr.com/android/comic-strip-it-lite</a>
Rosie comics maker	<a href="https://appcrawlr.com/android/rosie-comic-maker">https://appcrawlr.com/android/rosie-comic-maker</a>
Comic maker	<a href="https://appcrawlr.com/android/comic-maker">https://appcrawlr.com/android/comic-maker</a>
Four panel comic	<a href="https://appcrawlr.com/android/four-panel-comic-maker">https://appcrawlr.com/android/four-panel-comic-maker</a>
Create children book	<a href="https://appcrawlr.com/android/create-children-book">https://appcrawlr.com/android/create-children-book</a>

## IV. La evaluación del cómic

El cómic, como hemos comentado anteriormente, puede ser utilizado como instrumento de evaluación, gracias al cual el alumnado puede mostrar no solo sus conocimientos, sino también su capacidad para relacionar hechos, ser crítico, reflexivo y creativo. Pero en este apartado, analizaremos cómo pueden ser evaluados aquellos cómics que han sido creados por los alumnos, bien en grupo o de forma individual. Teniendo en cuenta que entre las funciones de un docente se encuentran las de guiar, innovar, organizar, estimular, motivar, así como ser modelo, interlocutor y mediador en el aula (Mendoza, 2003), con este tipo de medios los profesionales de la docencia han de aprovechar las cualidades de sus

estudiantes y favorecer su desarrollo integral, evitando inhibirlos, someterlos o normativizarlos en sus creaciones al evaluarlos (Reyzábal, 1993). Emplear el cómic como herramienta didáctica implica la formación de estudiantes bajo una metodología pedagógica constructivista, de manera que «lo que vale para un estudiante no vale para otro» (Trianes, 1995: 20). Por ello, bajo este modelo activo de enseñanza, el aula se convierte en un contexto de diálogo e interacción comunicativa, constructiva y funcional (Encabo, 2007), donde interactúan estudiantes y docentes con múltiples recursos educativos.

Para evaluar los cómics se debe evitar equiparar el concepto y significado de «notas» con «evaluación», «una noción muy popular, simplista y estrecha de lo que constituye realmente el proceso de evaluación» (Verdejo y Medina, 2008:14). De manera que, si valoramos las creaciones de nuestros estudiantes únicamente a través de una simple nota o calificación, se perderá el verdadero significado del valor educativo de dicho trabajo. Por ello, debemos proporcionar a los alumnos criterios e instrumentos que les ayuden a comprender sus errores y superarlos, así como facilitarles qué aspectos de su trabajo han sido exitosos. Algunas de esas herramientas para evaluar el cómic pueden ser listas de cotejo, escalas de categorías, matrices de valoración o tareas de ejecución.

Los elementos que se deberán evaluar los hemos dividido en dos apartados: el primero hace referencia a la información y al proceso de investigación por parte del estudiante; y el segundo a la creación del cómic, en cuanto a si empleó adecuadamente su particular lenguaje. Respecto a la información que se ha trabajado, se recomienda evaluar:

- El contenido: demostrará que ha entendido el tema al integrar datos relevantes y ejemplificar de forma adecuada la información.
- La organización: las ideas han de estar relacionadas de forma lógica y claramente ejemplificadas, así como estructuradas a través de una introducción, un desarrollo y las conclusiones.
- Vocabulario especializado: se usa con propiedad y corrección el vocabulario y el lenguaje técnico, incluyendo definiciones y términos.
- La ortografía: cumple con las normas.

Respecto a la creación artística de los cómics, los estudiantes (individualmente o en grupo) deberán justificar de forma detallada los siguientes elementos:

- Personajes: descripción de los mismos en cuanto al vestuario, carácter, género, raza, tamaño y edad, así como aquellos otros elementos que se consideren necesarios y oportunos. Los colores de la ropa serán de considerable importancia en la historia, por lo que deben elegirse pensando en el resto de personajes, para que así destaquen unos frente a otros.

- Título: deberá estar relacionado con el tema a tratar.
- Argumento: redacción de un texto en el que se desarrolle la historia y se describan las relaciones entre los personajes, en diferentes escenarios y con motivaciones y objetivos diferentes.
- Post-guion: en él se describirán el número de viñetas que se van a emplear, la organización de las mismas, los personajes que aparecerán en cada una de ellas, qué texto o diálogos habrá, y qué tipo de globos se usarán. Así mismo, se expondrá el escenario bajo el cual los personajes interactuarán y con qué perspectivas visuales. Los objetos, el color, la disposición de las viñetas y el tamaño de las mismas serán otros elementos a tener muy en cuenta para elaborar las viñetas y evaluarlas. Para una adecuada valoración de los cómics será necesario que los alumnos hayan tenido a su disposición una planilla en la que se haya especificado qué debían hacer, cómo y de qué manera se les calificará, justificando cada aspecto de su trabajo.

En conclusión, y con el objetivo de evidenciar las múltiples posibilidades didácticas del cómic como excelente recurso y medio de comunicación pedagógico, hemos querido mostrar a lo largo de nuestro texto diferentes ejemplos de proyectos en los cuales su utilización ha logrado desarrollar en los estudiantes múltiples competencias y habilidades. Trabajar con este medio en diferentes asignaturas o temáticas ayudará al alumnado, no solo a desarrollar la comprensión del tema de estudio o materia que se trabaje, sino que le obligará a investigar y esforzarse por sintetizar y ser crítico con sus aportaciones. Quizás, lo más complicado para el docente sea su evaluación, por ello, hemos ofrecido algunos criterios e instrumentos que pudieran servir de ejemplo para valorar de la forma más objetiva posible dicho trabajo.

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# Looking for Austen in the 21st Century: from *Pride and Prejudice* to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*

Noelia M<sup>a</sup> GALÁN RODRÍGUEZ

Universidade da Coruña  
noelia.galan@udc.es

**Abstract:** Jane Austen and her works have belonged to the canon since the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but Austen as a popular and cultural phenomenon dates back to 1995 with the release of the BBC adaptation *Pride and Prejudice*. This rebirth of Austen's six novels in the form of movie adaptations, spin-offs and merchandise has led to what it is known as 'Austenmania'. Nevertheless, not only Austen's world is introduced into contemporary times, but contemporary times are introduced into Austen; this is obviously present in the *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* DVDs (originally YouTube videos). This essay studies the last *Pride and Prejudice* modern-day adaptation, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, following a 'close viewing' of the videos as well as a careful reading of *Pride and Prejudice* in order to see how Austen has been introduced in contemporary fiction.

**Keywords:** adaptations; Austenmania; Darcymania; postfeminism; media.

**Resumen:** Jane Austen y su obra han sido parte del canon desde principios del siglo XX, pero Austen como fenómeno popular y cultural datan esto en 1995 debido al estreno de la adaptación de la BBC de *Orgullo y prejuicio*. Este renacer de las seis novelas de Austen en forma de adaptaciones en películas, *spin-off* y *merchandising* ha conducido a lo que se conoce como 'Austenmania'. Sin embargo, no solo el mundo de Austen se introduce en la época contemporánea, sino que la época contemporánea se introduce en Austen; esto se ve claramente en los DVDs *El diario de Lizzie Bennet* (originalmente vídeos de YouTube). Este trabajo analizará la última adaptación contemporánea de *Orgullo y Prejuicio*, *El diario de Lizzie Bennet*, siguiendo un «visionado atento» de los vídeos además de una lectura atenta de *Orgullo y prejuicio*.

**Palabras clave:** adaptaciones; Austenmania; Darcymania; posfeminismo; media.

## I. Introduction

During the last two centuries Jane Austen's novels have been thoroughly read by academic and non-academic readers alike. In contrast to what is popularly called 'high' literature, Austen's novels have been, and still are, a source of inspiration to novelists, journalists, filmmakers and fans all around the world. Her six complete novels have been meticulously studied throughout the twentieth century, and the author's fame is such that the Bank of England has decided that her portrait would appear on the ten pound notes from 2017 (Allen). Jane Austen became part of the popular culture due, in great part, to the BBC's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* in 1995 (Brownstein 2012: 40); some scholars such as Rebecca Munford point the beginning of the 'Austenmania' in the mid-1990s (2012: 61). However, the fact remains that, even without taking into account the success of film adaptations, Austen is well-known in the popular culture<sup>1</sup>, and her novels have been enjoyed by many generations.

The recent bicentenaries of *Pride and Prejudice* in 2013, *Mansfield Park* in 2014 and *Emma* in 2015 have led to a re-enactment and boost of Austen-related works. In this new Austen era, filmmakers and writers have set aside the nineteenth-century English countryside in turn for a more modern approach to Austen's work; in this last decade there is a tendency towards the entrance of contemporary scenarios, such as India (*Bride and Prejudice*) and other European countries (*Mr Darcy, Vampire*), into Austenland. This is the clear case in the miniseries *Lost in Austen* (2008), the *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* DVDs (2013) and the *The Jane Austen Book Club* film (2007). The purpose of this essay is to give a comprehensive background to Austen as a popular phenomenon in contemporary culture, focusing on the last *Pride and Prejudice* modern-day adaptation, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2013) as it is the most significant, prolific and latest bits of Austen on the screen. In order to do so, a 'close viewing'<sup>2</sup> of the videos as well as an attentive reading of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) will be produced. Furthermore, the 'Why Austen?'<sup>3</sup> question will be discussed in order to throw some light into the Austenmania of the last couple of decades which has surrounded scholars and fans alike. This Austenmania will be contextualised in terms of literary and filmic productions.

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1. Corpora of cultural productions such as literature, films, music, television, fashion, etc. which are considered mainstream and consumed by the general public.

2. Attentive watching and careful interpretation of the mentioned visual devices following the same principle of the close reading in literary texts.

3. Reasons why Austen and her novels are so prolific in popular culture in ways of film adaptations, sequels, spin-offs, etc.

## II. 'Why Austen?'

Many have tried to conjecture which were the special ingredients that Austen used to make her writings so 'universally acknowledged'. In *Why Jane Austen?* (2012), Rachel Brownstein tries to unravel the mystery, and quotes Katherine Mansfield writing that «every true admirer of the novels cherishes the happy thought that he alone, reading between the lines, has become the secret friend of their author» (2012: 28), that is, there is a relationship between the reader and the author which provides the basic ground for a partnership between the reader and the text. Austen adheres to this and includes the reader in her universally acknowledged truths, thus creating a sense of camaraderie between them: they (Austen and the reader) share and keep information from the characters. According to Lionel Trilling in Brownstein, «[t]he reason that «we» crave what Jane Austen offers [...] is that human nature requires the restraint, civility, decorum, and organized beauty of art» (2012: 64), but Brownstein argues that «Austen appeals to readers who are inclined to value mental ability and to scorn stupidity» (2012: 204).

In fact, if we take into consideration Austen's fictional and non-fictional love interests, all her heroes share one trait in common (besides their fortune), that is, their intelligence. Even the less than dashing Edward Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility* is characterised by a 'good understanding' and «his education had given it solid improvement» (Austen 1972: 26). Nevertheless, she also portrays comic and silly characters in her novels such as Mr. Collins. By depicting such a lacking, self-absorbent and flighty character, Austen showed how unfair the Bennets' and, to an extent, all women's situations were. Characters such as Mr. Collins, Mrs. Bennet and Miss Bates are often portrayed in the books and movie adaptations as instruments of comic relief, but they also serve to set a quite visual comparative between the characters and others of 'superior' mind as it can be Mr. Knightley. However, this should not lead to think that Austen tried to just mock 'low intellect': for instance, handsome, *clever* and rich Emma is told off by Mr. Knightley for her ill treatment of Miss Bates.

Even though Austen prided on her intellectually superior characters, none of these get away from the author's pen if they are part of some folly: Mr Darcy is thoroughly punished for his arrogance until he redeems himself; Anne (*Persuasion*) faces the dangers of spinsterhood or a possible unhappy marriage to Mr Elliot until she stops being 'persuaded' by others; and Emma is tricked by her own matchmaking game and spends one chapter thinking she had lost her faithful Mr Knightley to her friend Harriet Smith. It is not much later discovered there was no danger of a Knightley-Smith union, but the happy

ending and pairing of Emma and Mr Knightley leaves a bittersweet taste; even though both characters are rewarded, the reader cannot help but think that Emma is not as deserving of this happiness as the constant and unwavering Mr Knightley, but again, Austen already predicted that Emma was «a heroine whom no-one but myself will much like» (Austen-Leigh 2005: 84). It is this sense of imperfection in these seemingly perfect characters that differentiates Austen's heroines from their other counterparts and humanise them to the reading public, thus, creating a sense of comradeship between the characters, the readers and the author.

In *Uses of Austen*, Shelley Cobb shares these perspectives on Austen appealing to riddle-solving people, but goes further and reflects on Austen as the antidote to contemporary life (2012: 215). She considers Austen's novels as time-travel narratives: the reader imagines oneself in the nineteenth-century quaint English county surrounded by charming characters such as Elizabeth Bennet. The hectic pace of contemporary life makes readers to wish for a more simple scenery in which mobile phones and cars are turned into letters and carriages, and tea drinking and gossip are the major highlights of one's day. This domesticity in Austen serves to a dual purpose: to approach realities between Austen's world and contemporary life because, even though two centuries have passed since Austen wrote her novels, «for what do we live, but to make sports for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?» (Austen 1989: 280), but also to transport the reader to the apparently utopic nineteenth-century.

In fact, this is the plot for *Lost in Austen* (2008): «Amanda Price [sharing Fanny's (*Mansfield Park*) surname] whose favourite book is *Pride and Prejudice* [...] finds a door in her bathroom that opens into the Bennets' house, allowing Elizabeth Bennet into the contemporary world and Amanda into the world of the Bennet sister, Darcy and Wickham» (Cobb 2012: 209). Amanda, who feels out of place in the real world, believes that she belongs in the Austen world. By placing Amanda in Regency England and Elizabeth in the contemporary world, a chance of making a feminist reading of the story arises: Elizabeth becomes enchanted with the modern world and the opportunities it gives to women; and Amanda is free to escape from her unfulfilling job and her cheating boyfriend to a more pleasant place. It is significant that Amanda and Elizabeth Bennet are able to time travel, a feat that has been mostly reserved for men in films and books (Smith 2013); this body transportation offers two different readings: time travel serves as a way of escapism for Amanda's colourless contemporary life, but it also sets a precedent for women's empowerment and their ability to change and influence their environment. In *Lost in Austen*, Amanda shakes up the pacific society of Meryton and, thanks to her perspective, the spectator is able to

watch some aspects that Austen was not allowed to expand as, for instance, Mr. Collins' perverted stares or the fact that Caroline Bingley is a lesbian (at least in *Lost in Austen*).

Furthermore, it is not strange to find film adaptations or sequels to Austen's novels in which there is a homosexual character, in fact, it is quite common: Bridget Jones' male friend is gay, and one of the main characters of Karen Jay Fowler's novel *The Jane Austen Book Club* (turned into a film in 2007), Allegra, is a lesbian. It is significant that the homosexual character in *The Jane Austen Book Club* would represent one of the most 'unstable' Austen characters (Marianne Dashwood), and that she is the only one who is single at the end of the film. Allegra is able to take part in Austen's world, but she does not achieve the level of happiness that the other heterosexual couples do. In the same film, Bernadette comments on the fact that Jane Austen could have written Charlotte Lucas as being gay without knowing it, and this could be as well true: Charlotte did not fit in her society and her pragmatic vision of marriage could refer to an apathy towards men, but, if Austen noticed this, she would not have been able to explain it or understand it.

These new materials based on Austen's texts give the reader the chance to expand their own reading of Austen and to pay notice to some aspects that were somewhat hidden, such as colonialism. In the Indian film adaptation for *Pride and Prejudice, Bride and Prejudice* (2004), Elizabeth Bennet becomes Lalita Bakshi and Mr. Darcy is Will Darcy, an American businessman. As it occurs in the original version, the protagonists bicker and argue, but, in this case, they discuss neo-imperialism, and «in so doing, the film seems smoothly to pursue the mode of reading Austen and her texts that was brought to controversial prominence by Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)» (Jones 2012: 177). In Patricia Rozema's film version of *Mansfield Park* (1999), the issue of colonialism is further elaborated by a more assertive and 'slave-conscious' Fanny –played by Frances O'Connor– who confronts her tyrannical slaveholder uncle about slave rights. In this film, the main character does not only represent Austen's heroine, but she interprets Austen as well, that is, the character is a mixture of Fanny Price –a fictional character– and the author of *Mansfield Park*.

Although most of the adaptations regarding the Austen phenomenon are about her complete novels, the author's life has been a topic of interest for filmmakers due to the spread of the so called 'Austenmania' in the last decade of the twentieth century and its lasting presence in the twenty-first century. In these last years, documentaries and biopics have been made of Austen's life such as *Becoming Jane* (2007) and *Miss Austen Regrets* (2008) (North 2012: 92). However, these film versions of Austen's life are considered by many experts a

‘harlequinized’ vision of the author’s biography. In *Becoming Jane*, the action is set in Austen’s earlier years as a writer, in particular, when she was writing the first draft of *Pride and Prejudice*, but many events and characters are reshaped: «Focused on Austen’s flirtation with Tom Lefroy, it ratcheted up the romantic drama by having Harris Bigg-Wither –here recast as a ‘Mr. Wisley’– make his proposal of marriage at this early period, rather than in 1802. In the film ‘Jane’ simply does things that Jane did not do: she visits Ann Radcliffe in London, for instance, and she elopes with Tom Lefroy». (2012: 92)

Even though the film was based on historical documents to some extent, the events in the movie were invented or not accurate enough to fit in Austen’s life timeline: the romantic relationship between Jane Austen and Tom Lefroy is further expanded from the light flirtation they were part to the point of eloping; Austen as a female writer leaves to make space to Austen the woman. This romantization of Austen is surely performed in order to attract a wider audience, but the fact remains that this out-of-character Austen, performed by the starlet Anne Hathaway, has been criticised by scholars (2012: 94).

Nevertheless, not only Austen’s life translation to the screen is rejected by scholars. By quoting Deborah Kaplan, Julian North comments on the film adaptations of Austen’s fiction: «The medium of film itself may be neutral, but American-produced popular films generally are not. To put Austen novels on film by means of corporations (Columbia Pictures and Miramax) that produce what is now a global popular culture informed by American tastes is to enter a medium shaped by powerful generic conventions of romance» (2012: 101-2). These generic conventions and mainstream view of romance are frowned upon in Austen adaptations as her uniqueness is lost, thus making these films be placed among others of the same genre.

Curiously enough, this criticism is not extended to British adaptations, for instance, BBC’s 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* has been widely acclaimed and liked by scholars and Janeites, «a term coined by the English literary critic George Saintsbury» (Brownstein 2012: 27). As it has been pointed out, «[t]he Jane Austen films of the mid-1990s were smart and sophisticated and gaily irreverent, knowledgeable about the novels and literary theory, too; they read against the texts in a poststructuralist spirit, offering new, crowd-pleasing interpretations» (2012: 36). In fact, the interpretation of Colin Firth, Mr. Darcy in the 1995 miniseries, was the beginning of the phenomenon that was labelled Darcymania (2012: 47). This morphed «with a sly, suggestive postmodern gender bend, into something else: Jane-o-mania. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Jane Austen was an adjective and a brand» (2012: 50). After the release of the miniseries, the pilgrimage to Chawton cottage –Austen’s last residence

turned into a museum— increased in numbers until it reached a record of 57 000 visitors in 1996 (F. James 2012: 142).

In fact, the hype on the BBC miniseries and the Darcymania reached such levels that even the acting career of the actor who played Mr Darcy, Colin Firth, has been influenced by his role in the Jane Austen book adaptation. Before Firth accepted his role as Mr Darcy, it was academy award winner Lawrence Olivier, who had been proclaimed as ‘the Mr Darcy’, but it is nowadays Firth’s Byronic Darcy who Janeites take as the ‘true’ and most Austen-like Mr Darcy. When asked about his characterisation as one of the most popular characters in English literature Firth commented that: «to make myself different enough to play Darcy, I will have to do an awful lot. But doing anything is the last thing that is right for playing Darcy. The only way for it to work is to be Darcy already» («Colin Firth on ‘Darcymania’» 2001). In becoming Mr Darcy, Firth created a fully-fledged character with whom the public could sympathise thanks to the scenes where the character was at his most vulnerable, for instance, seeing Elizabeth from his window after taking a bath. This ‘humanization’ of the character and its good public acceptance is clearly seen on the highly popular ‘Darcy takes a dip in the lake’ scene and the endearingly awkward encounter with Elizabeth in the grounds of Pemberley –with Firth on his still wet clothes–.

Actually, this has become a whole phenomenon on its own and has served of inspiration for many book adaptations and fanfics alike. In fact, the miniseries *Lost in Austen* paid its own homage to the iconic scene when Amanda asks Mr Darcy to take a dip in one of Pemberley’s pools clad in breeches and a white shirt. On seeing him like this, she says «I’m having a bit of a strange postmodern moment here»; undoubtedly, Amanda was referring to Firth-Darcy’s lake scene.

However, the BBC’s adaptation has not been the last time Firth has taken a dip in the water filmically speaking, but it seems screenwriters have tried to copy the acclaimed bath scene every time Firth is on their payrolls. Even in the teenage movie *St Trinians* (2007), Firth’s character ends up being thrown into a water tank and the following scene stars him walking in slow motion dressed in a white shirt towards his love interest, resembling very much to the scene when Mr Darcy and Elizabeth find each other at Pemberley in the BBC adaptation. However, Firth finds himself under water in other film adaptations such as in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004) based on the book with the same title by Helen Fielding. In this second *Bridget Jones* movie, Firth falls into a fountain while fighting a Wickham-like character played by Hugh Grant who, curiously enough, played Edward Ferrars in Ang Lee’s interpretation of *Sense and Sensibility* (1995).

Additionally, Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary* was based not only on Elizabeth and Darcy's rocky relationship, but shared many similarities with the BBC's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) as the main character is said to be watching the BBC's adaptation in some part of the novel. All these facts would lead to consider a self-referential relationship between Darcy and Firth; usually it is the actor who introduces their mannerisms in their performance and the character, but in this case Darcy has crawled his way into Firth without the specific invitation of the actor. In a recent interview, the academy winner stated that he does not own Darcy (Branch 2015), but surely all modern takes on this Austen hero in films has lead one way or another to his performance of the master of Pemberley. The *Bridget Jones* films have allowed Firth to play Darcy twice, though a third film will be released in 2016 with Colin Firth starring Mark Darcy once again (Lang 2015).

However, Helen Fielding's novels are set in what is called an alternative universe. The plot does not take place in Austen's Regency era, but it is developed in contemporary London, and the main character is a slightly overweight thirty-year old woman who is looking for a husband. Apart from the plot similarities between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones Diary* (the aim is to get a husband), the characters resemble very much. Mr. Jones (Mr. Bennet), for example, is eclipsed by her much more sociable and gossip-hungry wife and Daniel Cleaver (Wickham) is a charming but 'wicked' character who pursues Mark Darcy's (Mr. Darcy) love interest. In this case, however, there is no elopement between Wickham and Georgiana, but Mark and Daniel's antagonism is based on the latter's liaison with Darcy's wife.

Many *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations and versions<sup>4</sup> born after the mid-1990s boom followed this non-canon idea; from 1995 to 2013 six films or miniseries based on *Pride and Prejudice* within a contemporary setting were produced: *Bridget Jones Diary* (2001), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), *Bridget Jones: Edge of Reason* (2004), *Lost in Austen* (2008), *A Modern Pride and Prejudice* (2011) and *The Liz-zie Bennet Diaries* (2012) (Warren). However, many of those adaptations are not based purely on Austen's novel, but they are adaptations of some of the most well-known literary sequels of *Pride and Prejudice* such as the aforementioned *Bridget Jones Diary*.

Much like Fielding's contemporary setting, *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2005) deals with a representation of all Austen's six novels set in a contemporary city

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4. Version differs from the original form (characters, setting, alternate ending, etc.) whereas adaptation follows the original story with no significant changes.



near San Francisco (Sacramento) in which a group of five women (and a man) discuss Austen's complete novels, and try to use them in real life because, as Bernadette –one of the main characters– says «All Jane Austen, all the time. It's the perfect antidote [...] to life!» (Cobbs 2012: 208). Each of the characters and their lives represent one of Austen's novels, and fall into the same mistakes the original characters did: Allegra (Marianne) breaks her leg being impulsive; Jocelyn (Emma) tries to set up all her friends, but is unable to do the same for herself; and Prudie (Anne) almost gives up on her husband.

However, the great majority of the published novels which reconstruct Austen's world follow the Regency era canon, and place the story after the events of the original books take place without tainting Austen's novels, that is, there is a 'fidelity in betrayal' (Munford 2012: 59). For instance, Tennant's four Austen sequels *Pemberley: A Sequel to Pride and Prejudice* (1993), *An Unequal Marriage: Or Pride and Prejudice Twenty Years Later* (1994), *Elinor and Marianne: A Sequel to Sense and Sensibility* (1996) and *Emma in Love: Jane Austen's Emma Continued* (1996) follow what is called the «classic progression» (2012: 60). Even though those novels do not share Austen's blissful happy endings, they respect her canon.

Not many authors have dared to write a different version of Austen's novels, but there are some such as Seth Grahame-Smith (one of the few male writers who has written an Austen sequel), who has published *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009). In this novel, Grahame-Smith introduces zombies in the Regency era, and turns the Bennet girls into a zombie-fighting army, but he is not the only one to insert mythical and culturally popular characters in the Austen world. In *Mr Darcy, Vampyr* (2009) Amanda Grange explains Darcy's reserved and cold attitude by stating that he and his sister are vampires, hence, his reticence towards marrying Elizabeth is due to his fear of her becoming a vampire. Although mythological elements are introduced, the whole of *Pride and Prejudice* (except from the last three pages) is untouched as the novel is developed during the Darceys' honeymoon around Europe.

Apart from this vampirised continuation of *Pride and Prejudice*, Grange has written several novels or sequels on Austen's fiction; excluding *Mr. Darcy, Vampyr*, one of her most popular books is *Mr. Darcy's Diary* (2007). The novel has an epistolary format (much as Austen's first draft of *Pride and Prejudice*), and Darcy is the narrative voice which explains the events before *Pride and Prejudice* –his father's death, Georgiana's elopement, etc.– Although it follows the events of the original novel, those are told from Darcy's point of view, so his reactions to the incidents in Austen's novel are further explained, though his actions remain as those of the original novel. Therefore, Grange follows the Regency era canon and Austen's world as she only changes the focaliser.

It is significant that many of these sequels are not only influenced by Austen, but also by other popular phenomena such as zombies, vampires, literary genres and best-selling books. For instance, William Codpiece Thwackery (mocking the name of the author of *Vanity Fair*, William Makepeace Thackeray) mixes *Pride and Prejudice* with *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and writes *Fifty Shades of Mr. Darcy* (2012), a parody of E.L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey*, but in the fictional world of *Pride and Prejudice*. Following the success of the mystery and detective novels, British author P.D. James writes *Death Comes to Pemberley* (2011): set six years after the Darcys' marriage, the novel deals with the mysterious murder of Captain Denny by George Wickham (supposedly). In line with Austen's true style, *Death Comes to Pemberley* is set on the beautiful English landscape, and has a –though debatable– happy ending; but the descriptions and the plot could have been taken from a detective novel. This versatility in including Austen is proof that the nineteenth-century author is still present in all kinds of literature, and is introduced within the cultural and popular movements that contemporary culture undergoes.

However, not only Austen is used by professional writers, but her ever-growing popularity has much to do with Janeites (fans of the English novelist) who «have taken to the Web to extend the author's oeuvre themselves, creating on-line libraries of hundreds of stories inspired by her novels» (Licalzi 2000). Juliette Wells cites Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington, and writes that «fans engage with 'texts not in a rationally detached but in an emotionally involved and invested way'. Fandom [...] is essentially a 'mode of reading', one that seeks 'familiarity and the fulfilment of expectations'» (2012: 87). Thus, some Austen Web sites were created in order to fulfil this need for more Austen: *The Republic of Pemberley* collects pieces which mimic Austen's style and her Regency era plots, whereas *Austen.com* allows non-canon and «crossover» stories in which the original characters mix with those from television or other novels (Licalzi 2000). Furthermore, some of these 'fics' are published on paperback later on such as Diana Oaks' *One Thread Pulled* (2012), a what-if-Elizabeth-had-not-heard-Darcy's-comment-at-their-first-ball story. Hence, Austen is alive through her fans, and will remain part of the contemporary literature for the foreseeable future.

### III. The Lizzie Bennet Diaries

«It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife»; this is how the protagonist of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2013) starts her video vlog. Certainly, the video begins with the

first sentence of Austen's most popular novel –as any *Pride and Prejudice* self-respecting adaptation would– but this is as far as Austen's direct quotations go in the one-hundred episodes of this *Pride and Prejudice* spin-off. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* presents the plot-line of *Pride and Prejudice* but setting the story in contemporary America, thus, leaving the Regency era apparel of bonnets and breeches for hipster clothes such as newsy caps and bow-ties. In this new adaptation, «Darcy is a hipster, Lizzie is a beleaguered grad student and her mother is just as desperate to get her married off as in the original» (Welsh 2013). Even though the series are placed in an alternative universe as it is contemporary life in America, the characters share the personality traits of Austen's models.

Lizzie (Elizabeth Bennet) is a twenty-four year old graduate student of mass media communication with student loans to pay, living at her parents' home and the middle child of the family, being Jane the eldest and Lydia the youngest sister (in this version, Mary is the Bennet's cousin and Kitty is her cat). Her extroverted and outgoing nature (some of the most likeable traits in Austen's heroine) is reflected on the videos and the fact that she studied mass media communication emphasises these features. These diary-form videos of about two to eight minutes are part of her thesis project so she does that as a means to improve her career options, thus securing a good job which will lead to financial stability. Besides, the fact that they are part of a creative process could reflect of Austen's own creative work which helped her to get by (Fergus 2005). But her link to Austen's novels does not end here, in fact, Lizzie and her best friend Charlotte were born the same day her mothers were reading in their book club Jane Austen's first novel *Sense and Sensibility*. This makes for an interesting twist in the understanding of the adaptation as it is the first time that Austen as a writer appears in one of her novels adaptation as a non-fictional entity without having repercussions in the development of the story, hence, blending real facts and the fictional world.

In regards to the story, Lizzie begins introducing her family in the earlier episodes much like Austen did in her novel, but, in contrast to *Pride and Prejudice*, the protagonist is not hiding at plain sight during some of these episodes, but the viewer knows from the start that Lizzie is going to be the protagonist of the story. As the story is told from Lizzie's room (and later on from different office settings) with a fixed camera, the background does not vary, though the characters do; using different sketches the viewer is introduced to Charlotte Lu, Lizzie's best friend and video editor, «practically perfect in every way» Jane Bennet and her boisterous and exuberant younger sister Lydia. Later in the videos other Jane Austen characters appear such as George Wickham, Ricky Collins (Mr Collins in the novel) Caroline and Bing Lee (Miss and Mr Bingley),

Fitz (Colonel Fitzwilliam), Gigi (Georgiana) and, of course, William Darcy. Furthermore, throughout dramatization –that is, role play and costume theatre– the eldest characters of *Pride and Prejudice* such as Mr and Mrs Bennet as well as Lady Catherine are introduced in the videos without actually being present, but their actions and conversations are represented by the use of theatre props by the usual characters.

This dramatization is very valuable for the plotline as it explains the events that happen outside Lizzie's room and allows the viewer to draw the background of the story. For instance, Bing Lee is played for the first time by Lydia with a head mirror and a stethoscope (in this adaptation he is studying to become a doctor) and Darcy is characterised with a newsy cap and a bowtie by Lizzie. As in the novel, the public has to trust Lizzie with her portrayal of Darcy whom she defines in episode six as «boring, stuffy, unbelievably rude. He thinks he's too good for us 'common folk'». However, unlike in the novel, the public is allowed to see how Darcy's not so kind words about Lizzie hurt her and how these affect her perception of his character as in the book it is only said that «Elizabeth remained with no very cordial feelings towards him. She told the story however with great spirit among her friends; for she had a lively, playful disposition, which delighted in any thing ridiculous» (Austen 1989: 12).

This playful taking of the 'tolerable enough' (in the *LBD* 'decent enough') is not shown in Lizzie's videos, in fact, she resents him greatly. This could lead to think that twenty-first century Elizabeth nonsensical and offended attitude is the natural progression of a contemporary woman stating freely her opinion without the social constraints that nineteenth-century Elizabeth Bennet had to follow. Lizzie was not taught to forgive men for their follies and slights as, for instance, Jane did after Bingley's abandonment and posterior return in *Pride and Prejudice*. In fact, men are not absolved so easily in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*: instead of swiftly forgiving Bing (as portrayed in the novel), Jane mulls over her relationship with Bing and how it hurt her that his own opinions were not strong enough against his friend and sister's advices. Therefore, it takes a while for Jane to accept him again and, contrary to continuing where they left off, they start dating again and, at the end of the show, the viewers are told that Bing left his medical training because he was not happy at it and Jane has a successful job in the fashion world in New York. Therefore, she moves out and it is Bing, the man, who follows her to her new adventure. Furthermore, Lizzie comments on Bing being an «arm-candy» at one of Jane's work events, making us reflect on how the roles are reversed in this modern take on *Pride and Prejudice*.

Taking into consideration the videos background (set in contemporary times in America), it is only normal that Lizzie's opinions on gender equality and fem-

inism would be further developed from nineteenth-century Elizabeth Bennet. In fact, these are some of the most significant topics in the videos as marriage is very present in Mrs Bennet's mind and her '2.5 WPF' ('two and a half kids with a white picket fence') club. Mrs Bennet represents the nowadays old-fashioned (and the Regency era) way of viewing marriage as the only option for a woman whereas Lizzie represents the twenty-first century take on marriage based solely on love and not as the only option for women: «All life doesn't revolve around men anymore! I can get a PhD! I can run a company!» Lizzie states when speaking about this topic and her mother ceaseless interest on getting them married. However, she also reflects on her family's economic difficulties and wonders if «is this whole marriage fixation a race to get us out of the house before there isn't a house to get us out anymore?». Nevertheless, she does not dwell much on this, but focuses on the importance of having a successful career to support herself and be independent of men. For instance, she describes Jane saying that «she's doing so much more with her life than prancing around as some trophy wife». Work and education are essential to a modern woman's life as these elements will enhance their job prospects and, hence, their future.

The fact that marriage prospects are changed to job opportunities is very telling, but it all comes back to the idea of financial stability. The Bennet family is handling some financial troubles with their house mortgage; this along with Lizzie and Jane's student loans creates the troublesome economic background of *Pride and Prejudice* where the entailment of the state to a male heir could lead to, as Mrs Bennet so dramatically pointed out, them being thrown into the hedgerows. In the novel Elizabeth is offered a marriage proposal from Mr Collins, the future heir, but she refuses him; in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* Ricky Collins (Mr Collins) makes Lizzie other type of proposal, a job. Similar to the book, this job offering would also secure Lizzie's –and, to some extent, her family's– financial stability. However, this work opportunity would mean that Lizzie leave her principles aside and submit to Ricky Collins' ridiculous orders and viewpoints (much like Elizabeth if she were to marry Mr Collins). Furthermore, the acceptance of the job would mean abandoning her studies; as it was previously mentioned, education is an essential element for Lizzie's career and late job options, hence, giving up on her studies would not only mean impoverishing her future prospects, but it would probably also narrow them down.

Nevertheless, her spot is taken by Charlotte who is portrayed as a sensible and practical woman (much like in the novel) who takes the job due to her financial difficulties even if it meant to forgo her studies. Later on the videos, Lizzie goes and visits her friend in her new office in 'Collins and Collins', thus, reflecting again on the idea that marriage life is changed to work life as Eliza-

beth visits Charlotte Collins in her new home in Kent in the original story. In here, she meets Ms de Bourgh (Lady Catherine) and her asthmatic poodle dog Anniekins (Anne de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*) who is Darcy's aunt and the main investor of 'Collins and Collins'. Thanks to this characters' relationship (Darcy and Ms de Bourgh), Darcy is introduced in the videos by becoming consulting accountant to her aunt's investments during Lizzie's stay with Charlotte. His first appearance on the video vlogs coincide with the Hunsford famous proposal, though in this case Darcy does not make an offer of marriage but a more believable confession for current twenty-first century; he declares his love for Lizzie and is rejected much in the same way.

However, this is not the last time that Darcy and the professional world are linked. In fact, one of Lizzie's independent studies is a placement at Pemberley Digital, a multinational company run by Darcy in San Francisco –though this fact is not known to Lizzie until she is informed of this by Charlotte–. It is important to highlight the relationship between Pemberley Digital (*The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*) to Pemberley Estate (*Pride and Prejudice*): both Pemberleys are the place where Lizzie/Elizabeth and Darcy meet again and get to know each other, thus, leading to Austen's happy ending; but still, it has to be considered that, whereas the relationship between Elizabeth and Pemberley Estate resides on her being the possible future mistress of the estate, Pemberley Digital and Lizzie are connected with her work placement and possible future career. In both cases (marriage and career-wise) Pemberley is connected to one of the main topics of these stories, the protagonist's future; in the first case (*Pride and Prejudice*), Pemberley is related to Elizabeth's marriageable prospects and her future, but Pemberley Digital falls into the work realm as the study of the company is part of Lizzie's independent study but it also stands for a possible future job prospect as Darcy offers her a job at the end of the series.

It does not escape to notice that Lizzie's future in both alternative worlds is related to Darcy and his material belongings. However, there is a twist in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*; although Darcy and Lizzie are romantically involved at the end of the videos, she does not accept Darcy's job offer but decides to begin her own digital company, thus, becoming Darcy's working competitor. This unexpected twist certainly falls into the feminist standpoint the videos try to outline by following Austen's feminist ideas and further developing them in the twenty-first century taking as a motto 'women's future is not dependant on men's decisions'.

However, this does not mean that Lizzie rejects the idea of marriage but she is, as Charlotte describes, 'picky' when it comes to men and work. As a matter of fact, Lizzie makes a comparison between job interviews and dating when saying

«a decent job is almost as hard to find as a decent guy». Like her 19<sup>th</sup> century counterpart, she believes marriage should only come from the deepest love, but her reluctance to falling in love in the series in contrast to Elizabeth Bennet's open nature leads to think that Lizzie knows more about the dating world so she is not able to behave as freely as 'innocent' Elizabeth because she knows and has more experience than Ms Bennet. Nevertheless, Lizzie and Elizabeth's ideas on love are not different and nor are their characters in their basic traits.

In fact, when Lizzie describes herself, she says that she likes rain (Elizabeth walked to Netherfield under a light rain), classic novels (they both love and probably read the same books) and any movie starring Colin Firth. On this last trait there is much to be said as this love for Colin Firth is a clear gesture to the actor's role in the BBC miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* (1995). Although it would not have been possible to mention this adaptation without putting into question the realness of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* plotline, the screenwriters found the way to introduce *Pride and Prejudice* and its adaptations and their popular results: the idea of Darcymania originated by Firth's performance of Mr Darcy and making Darcy (in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*) explain that he named his company (Pemberley) after his father's family house in England. Even though it is not explicitly said, the viewer cannot help but to link Lizzie's love of Colin Firth's movies with his role as Darcy, especially when she declares her love for classic novels in the same sentence. Furthermore, there are other references to this adaptation when Lizzie sardonically comments on how Darcy «uses his money to lounge all day in five thousand dollars watching BBC miniseries» so it is not far-fetching to think this is yet another reference to the 1995 adaptation.

However, there are other significant references to other adaptations of Jane Austen's most famous novel which took the *Pride and Prejudice* plot to the twenty-first century such as Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary*. In the series, the 2001 film adaptation with the same title is mentioned in a conversation Lydia and Lizzie have about Darcy's name as Lydia says «I think it's a great name. Isn't that Colin Firth's name in that chubby Zellweger movie?» to what Lizzie responds «I love that movie». As it was previously mentioned, this adaptation takes after the events of *Pride and Prejudice* and follows the marriage plot (to some extent) but with a contemporary setting, hence, it may be possible that Lizzie is somewhat identified with Bridget Jones as she too has experienced the tribulations of being a twenty-first century woman and what it implies in both the professional and love realm. Again, her love for Colin Firth/Darcy could be explained due to her Janeite nature (it must not be forgotten she was born the same day her mother was reading *Sense and Sensibility*) but also it could be read as a prediction of her future love life as if she is destined to fall in love with a Darcy.

Apart from the various Austen references, the series also deals with other cultural phenomena in digital form; for instance, the viewer is told that Charlotte and Ricky Collins are working on a web video series called *Game of Gourds* which has been very well received in its pilot episode. The similarities of the title with the popular TV series *Game of Thrones* cannot be missed and it should be again one considered how popular culture is introduced in *Pride and Prejudice* filmic adaptations as it has happened with literary adaptations (e.g. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, *Mr Darcy Vampyr*, etc.). Furthermore, it is necessary to take a step up and take into consideration how not only 'popular' content, but also new formats, has been introduced in Austenland: the change of format in Austen's materials has gone from being paperback editions to film adaptations in the last decades of the twentieth century. This change was a result of the adaptation of Austen's novels to the visual culture and its new technological era, but a further step was taken when *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* were created.

The fact that Lizzie's story was filmed as a web series says much about the new creative formats that are being introduced in the twenty-first century; from a sociocultural standpoint, the entrance of new formats answers to the demands of people for new media as well as professional creativity. People's hectic lives may not allow them to sit and read *Pride and Prejudice*, but they could spare time to watch the two-to-eight-minute videos of Austen's most popular story. Additionally, the videos digital form allows viewers to interact with the story by means on talking to other fans on the YouTube comment boards, checking the character's Twitter and Facebook accounts made by the creators of the show and asking questions in the different available social platforms which are answered by Lizzie (the character, not the actress) in her Q & A videos. This interaction between the viewer and the story could not have been possible in the traditional way (i.e. reading the books) nor by watching the countless film adaptations; with this web series design Austen and her stories are not only introduced in the twenty-first century but they become part of popular culture.

#### IV. Conclusions

This essay has put forward why and how Austen has been introduced in the twenty-first century by means of spin-offs, book adaptations and films. Even though two thousand years have passed since her novels were published for the first time and in contrast to many other canonical writers, Austen has been kept in the collective's minds and her work is still a topic of interest for academics and non-academics alike. She is one of the two nineteenth-century writers in the



Amazon classics list –the other being Charles Dickens– and the farthest chronologically («Most Popular Authors in Classic Literature and Fiction» 2015). Besides, her novel *Pride and Prejudice* is in the fourth place in the list of «Best Sellers in Classical Literature» (2015) being also the oldest chronologically speaking.

This Austenmania has reached contemporary literary works by following Austen's canon from a different perspective (e.g. *Mr Darcy's Diary*, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*), but also changing Austen's nineteenth-century settings in favour of contemporary life (e.g. *The Jane Austen Book Club*, *Bridget Jones' Diary*). Furthermore, other best seller books such as the young-adult novel *Twilight* is influenced by Austen's writing (Kennedy), but what stands out most in popular culture are Austen films on screen. Both the author and her novels have been taken to the big screen in repeated occasions which have allowed the making of different readings of Austen such as the postcolonial reading of the film *Mansfield Park* (2003). However, there is one which stands out from the many film adaptations: the BBC's miniseries *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth. It must not be forgotten the latter's performance was the key which unleashed the phenomenon named Darcymania and, to some extent, the Colinmania. As previously mentioned, the bath scene and Firth/Darcy have reached fame of their own up to the point of being a significant part of many Austen-related films such as *Bridget Jones*, *Lost in Austen* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

Many of these Austen-intertextual aspects are handled in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (*Pride and Prejudice* quotations, *Bridget Jones Diary*, Colin Firth's films), but it is also true that the twenty-first century setting has had an influence on Austen's most famous novel: from the new web video format to the story plot, some changes had to be made in order to adapt the nineteenth-century story to contemporary life. The marriage plot is set aside (apart from Mrs Bennet obsession to marry off her daughters) to focus on the female protagonists' future professional careers. In this *Pride and Prejudice* version, the Bennet sisters do not need to get married in order to obtain financial stability as their future economic prospects depend solely on themselves and their job opportunities, unlike in nineteenth-century England. Therefore, men stop being women's providers and women become economically independent, thus, adapting *Pride and Prejudice* to contemporary life. Still, the story remains faithful to the Austen canon as the plot differences can only be taken as a natural progression of how Elizabeth Bennet and the rest of the characters would have behaved had they lived in the twenty-first century.

To conclude, it is necessary to point out that Austen as a cultural phenomenon does not end with published works, but many Janeites have taken into their

shoulders the responsibility of not letting Austen be forgotten by means of Regency Era parties, self-made Austen merchandising and stories which recreate the Austen world with a slight plot twist or an alternate universe. These stories (commonly known as ‘fics’) are often published and become part of popular and contemporary literature, but no matter what the story is or whether they are OOC (out of character), they have two things in common; their appreciation of Austen as an all-times writer and the need to continue with her work because, as Pamela Licalzi wrote, «it is universally acknowledged that Austen wrote too little».

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