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GOOD PRACTICES
IN LITERARY EDUCATION



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Journal of Literary Education

Editorial

Good practices in Literary Education

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Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost "The Road Not Taken"

As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.

C. P. Cavafy "Ithaka" (translated by Edmund Keeley)

This issue of the *Journal of Literary Education* is dedicated to Good Practices, i.e. case studies, methods, teaching practices and activities that have proven to be successful and useful for the teaching of literature and literary education in general. However, Good Practices are inextricably linked to the theory, theoretical developments and paradigm shifts that have shaped literary education as an academic subject. Thus, good practices reflect a shift in philosophy and teaching methodology in the teaching of literature, moving the teaching of literature away from the strict text-centered model. Literature teaching is now understood as a field of self-active learning and creation, experiential literary experience, active reading and making sense of the world of texts. The cultivation of literacy, aesthetic enjoyment, the effortless interaction of the student-reader with the text, multiple activations and student expressions are just some of the main axes of the good practices presented in the contributions of this special issue.

1. Finding the Loch-Ness monster

In a pioneering scientific article (Benton, 1984), Professor Michael Benton formulated key points for the renewal of the teaching methodology in literature. The themes developed by Benton are still relevant and continue to feed the wider debate that has been developing in recent years on key issues in the teaching of literature.

The author states that, for many years, teachers have been teaching literature by making use - in the best cases - of their innate wit, intuition and wellspring of enthusiasm. Although these personal qualities are important for lively and interesting teaching of the subject, they are hardly a solid basis for teaching in themselves; they need the support of a methodology. According to Benton (1984), the trend that offers real hope for change in the teaching methodology of literature is the 'theory of reception' or 'critique of reading response', as it is commonly called. Following the studies of the pioneering theorists of reading theory, Benton emphasizes that the reader plays a critical role in the creation of the literary experience and in the process of literary communication. The uniqueness of reading lies in two factors: the text and the reader. In the past, says Benton, the teaching of literature has given importance to the former and neglected the latter. The importance of emphasizing the reader is that teachers must consider the uniqueness of the student-reader's response to a literary text. This is the point from which the teaching of literature begins, and it requires a methodology which is not based on criticism and comprehension, but on reading and the reader's response. Research on this point can help. We need only ask: What happens when children read stories or poems? The emphasis on the student-reader's response enables teachers to focus on the

representations and cognitive strategies their students use when making sense of the literary text, thus priming the communicative climate of the teaching, but also shifting the focus from the textual (what the text says) to the factual stakes of the teaching (how the reader reads it).

Benton makes a main distinction between response as a mental process (what happens when we actually read) and the response that develops in the reader's mind after the reading process is over. He also distinguishes the initial, emergent response from the manifested or expressed (stated) response, which is manifested through the spoken and written word or through the visual expression of pupils. But in what ways can we reliably study the processes of reading response when we inevitably have to work with uncertain and inaccessible data? The reading response is hidden in the dark and very deep waters of the Loch Ness Lake.

The material that usually emerges when we ask our student readers to tell us what is going on in their minds during reading is uncertain, ambiguous and half-formed. Readers answer the question by activating a mental process, which, according to Benton, can be called introspective recall, inasmuch as this term emphasizes both the internal exploration in which the reader engages and the positive effort to recall and reconstruct his or her literary experience. Benton suggests the use of the ethnographic method in educational research to study student readers' responses to literary texts and stresses that it is advisable to focus on small groups of students (four to six of the same age), who can work individually, in pairs or as a group. Studying the reading response of a few individuals in depth leads to more reliable results than taming an unmeasured and chaotic amount of data. The emphasis therefore on empirical research is on actual student readers, the orientation of research to the responses of the student readers themselves (Benton et al. 1988; Frye, 1985; Miall, 2006) can only be combined with an emphasis on good practice, empirically tested instructional approaches of literary texts, which show us what works well in the classroom and what does not, or what could be improved.

2. The active literary classroom

The varied and imaginative teaching strategies and activities used in the teaching of literature, always in accordance with the ideological particularities of the literary text, seek to involve students and teachers in the game of literary reading, which is presented as an open and endless process, a means of individual expression and communication-collaboration with fellow students-readers. In particular, the activities, whether individual or in groups, are playful in nature, leading students to produce oral or written language, but mainly activating

them in the direction of diverse artistic expression - literary, artistic, musical, theatrical. The activities highlight the polyphonic character of the literary text and relieve the teacher and the pupils from the stress of searching for a correct or formal answer.

The activities serve multiple objectives: reconstruction of textual reality and consolidation of plot structure, critical approach to the structural components of the text (setting, characters, theme, plot), exercise in poetic expression and familiarization with open poetic language, synthesis and cultivation of oral and written language, familiarity with fictional writing and the arts, activation of the imagination through multiple journeys in space and time, cultivation of cognitive and metacognitive skills, etc. All students participate equally in the learning experience within the classroom reading community according to their aptitudes, abilities and needs. The teacher's role is particularly important in inspiring in students a desire to take "the road not taken" and cultivating their willingness to actively engage in literary reading and activities. Through good practice and investment in student-centered forms of teaching, the road seldom taken can become a well-worn path. But to achieve this, the teacher must invest both in their training and their creativity, their desire to lift the veil of habit, of teaching rut and barren, formalistic teaching.

We are undoubtedly living in a bleak, challenging time. Resistance to crises and the various daily barbarities has always been and still is an investment in education, Odysseus' journey to Ithaca on the sacred and virtuous raft of *knowledge*. In this journey full of charm and adventure, the teacher has the role of navigator: their mission is to help the pupil to cultivate through literature, to emancipate themselves and to contemplate the world with a contemplative eye. The emphasis on good practices strikes at the heart of the literature teacher's mission, at the heart of *teaching*, which, in its indissoluble congruence with *learning* - means helping the student to construct knowledge through experience, discovery and adventure; helping them to develop self-consciousness, breadth of mind and new codes of understanding the world, elements that will imbue tomorrow's adult citizen and shape their personality. Good practices in literary education and teaching can therefore invigorate and significantly improve both teaching and learning. The teacher quickly realizes that their role in the classroom, even in the midst of the larger, unforgiving and grim social reality, can become more creative, more supportive of their students' learning. Their imagination, flexibility, well-meaning ability to improvise, and their readiness will help them gain the trust and interest of their students and at the same time reap all the joy and satisfaction that the art of teaching can offer. The suggestions presented in this issue may remind us in a valid as well as charming way of a fundamental condition of teaching: *that the object of learning, even*

if not attractive in itself, must be presented in an attractive way. Only in this way will the interest and active participation of students at all levels of education be won over, and the literary classroom be transformed into *a voyage full of adventure, full of discovery.*

3. Articles

All articles included in this issue reflect different and unique approaches to the topic of Good Practices and are based on in-depth as well as detailed research by their authors.

In Dalila Forni's article *Literature for self-discovery. Looking into adolescence through graphic novels*, the genre of graphic novel for children and young adults is analyzed. Some selected works are compared and literary strategies for adolescents are further discussed.

Maren Conrad, Magdalena Michalak and Evelina Winter, in their *A Case Study on interactive wordless picture books and their potentials within a multilingual classroom*, focus on how the book can be used for literary-aesthetic and linguistic promotion within heterogeneous classes via an innovative form of multimodal storytelling, taking as an example the wordless picture book *Was ist denn hier passiert?(What happened here?)* illustrated by Neuhaus & Penzek (2015).

In the article *Reception of comics revisited. A revision of gender-based reading practices at school*, Carolin Führer discusses gender constructions and authorship in comics and/or exploring new non-binary reading education paths that adequately consider the hybrid mediality of comics and the segment's recent developments on the market.

María Pareja Olcina, in her article *Development education: socio-affective learning in the Language and Literature classroom*, presents an experience in the subject of Spanish Language and Literature. Via her methodological proposal, she wants to explore other pedagogical possibilities for secondary school teachers to teach through active participation.

Mike John Panayiota and Tasoula Tsilimeni, in *Developing children's critical thinking through wordless book*, discuss how wordless books can be used within the classroom by small groups of students or individual students in order to develop their critical thinking skills and to expand their vocabulary.

In the monograph by Leonor Ruiz-Guerrero, Beatriz Hoster-Cabo & Sebastián Molina-Puche, *Lectura dialógica de álbumes ilustrados para fomentar el pensamiento crítico: un enfoque para Educación Primaria*, an approach for dialogic reading is proposed, via a qualitative

methodology and an evaluative research in three phases, out of which, the results of the third are discussed.

In the Miscellaneous section, Mary Dimaki-Zora's & Thomai Gkerlektsi's *Applied Theatre in Greece: Skipping from Crisis to Crisis* deeply explores the emergence of applied and online theatre in Greece through Greek literature as well as three case studies of applied theatre, linked to the post-pandemic era in times of social, political and economic adversity.

Also, in the Miscellaneous section, Anastasia Oikonomidou's & Anastasia Karagianni's article *Printed hyper-texts in the Greek literature for children. Breaking the canon and creating a new type of implied reader: the case of Eugene Trivizas* highlights two ground-breaking books for young readers by the Greek author Trivizas within a framework of the multimedia world and hyper-texts, expanding on how reading can be viewed as a game.

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A Case Study on Interactive Wordless Picturebooks and their Potentials within a Multilingual Classroom

Un estudi de cas sobre àlbums sense paraules interactius i el seu potencial en una aula multilingüe

Un estudio de caso sobre álbumes ilustrados silentes interactivos y su potencial en una aula multilingüe

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Abstract

The innovative wordless picturebook *Was ist denn hier passiert?* (What happened here?) illustrated by Neuhaus and Penzek (2015) offers a new form of multimodal storytelling by causally linking its pictures to an animated film via a QR code, thus switching from picturebook to animated film convention. This book is an example of combining literary considerations on multimodal wordless picture books with considerations on the possibilities and limits of multimodal storytelling, literature didactics and media didactics. The use of this innovative book is particularly interesting from the perspective of migration-related linguistically and culturally heterogeneous learning groups. We are interested in how the book can be used for literary-aesthetic and linguistic promotion within heterogeneous classes. This article presents selected results of an explorative study with primary school pupils with and without German as a second language. The pupils were videographed in groups during the reception process of the multimodal wordless picture book. The evaluation was carried out with a qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2015). In addition to the different ways of accessing the picture book, the influence of the subsequent change of media, the change of genre, the follow-up communication as well as the multilingual access of the pupils on the reception is examined. It turns out that it is not the children's linguistic, but mostly their media experiences that influence their interaction with multimodal narrative wordless picture books. Our study showed that the change in the media plays a decisive role. Based on our initial results, we concluded that there is a great potential as well as challenges, in using the multimodal wordless picture books for heterogeneous classes in an inclusive learning environment, which are put up for discussion.

Keywords: Picturebooks, Multimodality, Second Language Acquisition, Inclusive Education

Resum

L'innovador àlbum il·lustrat sense paraules *Was ist denn hier passiert?* (Què ha passat ací?) il·lustrat per Neuhaus i Penzek (2015) troba una nova forma de narració multimodal en vincular causalment les seues imatges amb una pel·lícula d'animació a través d'un codi QR amb el que es passa així de la convenció de l'àlbum il·lustrat a la del cinema d'animació. Aquest exemple combina consideracions literàries sobre els àlbums il·lustrats multimodals en la didàctica de l'alemany, la literatura i els mitjans de comunicació. Açò es fa des de la perspectiva de grups d'aprenentatge lingüísticament i culturalment heterogenis relacionats amb la migració. L'article presenta els primers resultats d'un estudi exploratori amb alumnat de primària amb i sense l'alemany com a segona llengua. L'alumnat va ser filmat en grups durant el procés del llibre il·lustrat sense paraules. A continuació, es va realitzar una anàlisi de contingut qualitatiu tot seguint Mayring (2015). A més de les diferents formes d'accedir a l'àlbum il·lustrat, s'examina també la influència del canvi posterior dels mitjans de comunicació, el canvi de gènere, la comunicació de seguiment a més de l'accés multilingüe de l'alumnat en la recepció. Resulta que no són les experiències lingüístiques dels infants, sinó principalment les seues experiències amb els mitjans de comunicació, les que influeixen en la seua interacció amb els àlbums il·lustrats multimodals sense paraules. El nostre estudi mostra que el canvi en el mitjà juga un rol decisiu. Basat en els nostres resultats inicials, concloem que hi ha un gran potencial, així com diferents reptes, que també es discuteixen a les conclusions, en fer servir els àlbums sense paraules per classes heterogènies en un ambient d'educació inclusiva.

Paraules clau: Àlbum il·lustrat, multimodalitat, adquisició de segones llengües, educació inclusiva

Resumen

El innovador álbum ilustrado silente *Was ist denn hier passiert?* (¿Qué pasó aquí?) ilustrado por Neuhaus y Penzek (2015) encuentra una nueva forma de narración multimodal al vincular causalmente sus imágenes con una película de animación a través de un código QR, pasando así de la convención del álbum ilustrado a la del cine de animación. Este ejemplo combina consideraciones literarias sobre los álbumes ilustrados multimodales sin palabras con consideraciones sobre las posibilidades y los límites de la narración multimodal en la didáctica del alemán, la literatura y los medios de comunicación. Esto se hace desde la perspectiva de grupos de aprendizaje lingüística y culturalmente heterogéneos relacionados con la migración. El artículo presenta los primeros resultados de un estudio exploratorio con alumnado de primaria con y sin alemán como segunda lengua. El alumnado fue filmado en grupos durante el proceso de recepción del libro ilustrado multimodal sin palabras. A continuación, se realizó un análisis de contenido cualitativo siguiendo a Mayring (2015). Además de las diferentes formas de acceder al álbum ilustrado, se examina también la influencia del cambio posterior de los medios de comunicación, el cambio de género, la comunicación de seguimiento, así como el acceso multilingüe del alumnado en la recepción. Resulta que no son las experiencias lingüísticas de los niños y niñas, sino principalmente sus experiencias con los medios de comunicación, las que influyen en su interacción con los álbumes ilustrados multimodales sin palabras. En nuestro estudio se muestra que el cambio de medio juega un papel decisivo. Sobre la base de los resultados de este análisis inicial, se discuten la potencialidad y los retos de utilizar álbumes ilustrados multimodales sin palabras en las clases de alemán en un entorno de aprendizaje inclusivo.

Palabras clave: Álbum ilustrado, multimodalidad, adquisición de segundas lenguas, educación inclusiva.

1. Introduction

The linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of learners in today's classes influences today's teaching, which is why there is an urgent need of an innovative approach. Contemporary lessons try to reach students with different linguistic knowledge and experience in dealing with (digital) texts. In terms of teaching¹ German literature and language, this could mean looking for media that are accessible to readers of a certain (young) age and (low) experience. Therefore, the questions arise as to which literary pieces could be accessible to all pupils and what didactic material could be designed for these pieces to be prepared for the classroom. This should be considered particularly in relation to the digital experiences of the pupils. One possibility is to use structurally all-inclusive artifacts in class to level out possible differences between media and language competences. We decided to do so with an innovative wordless picture book, published in 2015, that worked on the basis of digital expansion, multimodal and transmedia storytelling, and was based on picture-narrative. This sort of 'silent book' explores new forms of media interdependence by breaking off with the epistemic hierarchies of rank and meaning which used to be typical for classic picture books (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2015; Kriechel, 2020). Thus, they break with conventional reading habits – as the text functions no longer as the dominant carrier of meaning. Our wordless picturebook *Was ist denn hier passiert?* (What happened here?) (Neuhaus & Penzek, 2015) works with media changes by offering reference to an animated film via the QR code, which offers an inclusive option of reading and helps to make the story accessible. Only those who activate the QR code can find out how the curious scene depicted in the picturebook came about – the clip reveals the answer to the title question “what happened here?”. Through this media progression, experimental picture books of this kind playfully expand the digital knowledge of their recipients. At the same time, they offer different ways of developing aesthetic experiences and could offer new learning activities through their intricacy.

Therefore, the questions arise as to which literary pieces could be accessible to all pupils and what didactic material could be designed for these pieces to be prepared for the classroom. This should be considered particularly in relation to the digital experiences of the pupils

Additionally, multimodal picture narratives work especially well in the form of wordless picture books: books which tell a story through illustrations without any written text (Bosch, 2014; Reese, 2015). Individual interpretations of the pictures will take place regardless linguistic barriers to understanding or linguistically formulated trains of thought (Dammann-Thedens & Michalak, 2011). Wordless picture books can be beneficial primarily in so called learning groups. Such groups are linguistically

¹ In Germany, both literature and language teaching are one subject: German Studies.

heterogeneous due to their families' backgrounds. Innovative multimodal storytelling is thus oriented towards heterogeneous dimensions of culture and society in the sense of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity and their representation (Bittner, 2011). It is particularly suitable for a teaching which is focused on media literacy and literary aesthetics as well as linguistic competences in learning settings focused on diverse groups. Also, the book itself is well suited for lessons in any language and culture, which is why we present our findings and thoughts on teaching opportunities in this article to an international readership.

Our study and the findings presented in this paper discuss the opportunities and challenges in dealing with multimodal wordless picture books which are used for German lessons to a group of learners with divergent linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as different levels of media competence. Using the book *Was ist denn hier passiert? (What happened here?)* as an example, we have investigated how

Our main interest lies in the examination of how the reception of a literary piece is influenced by multimodality and the change of media, i.e. digital expansion. Moreover, we will focus on the cross connections between the subjects[...] in the sense of promoting media education

children with and without knowledge of German handle such picture books and which factors influence their reception. The article contains only a selected amount of detailed information on our study, which has been completed (Conrad & Michalak, 2020) and aims to reflect upon its abstraction for inclusive teaching, and its dimensions of differentiation (Boelmann & König, 2019; Brand, 2016). Therefore, in the following sections, we will discuss the results of our study with regard to the first and second language approaches, and the teaching-learning offerings designed for participation. Our main interest lies in

the examination of how the reception of a literary piece is influenced by multimodality and the change of media, i.e. digital expansion. Moreover, we will focus on the cross connections between the subjects, be it German (as a foreign language) or Music and Art, in the sense of promoting media education (Jörissen et al., 2019). Therefore, we aim to derive principles of teaching for German (as a foreign language) under the conditions of digitisation.

2. Research Context

Picture books as part of the field of children's literature have undergone a change in aesthetics, content and book design and such developments "certainly change the modes of story-telling in picturebooks and other children's media in the long run, introducing children to transmedial narration" (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2015, p.261). Many developments have offered changes towards innovative forms over the past 20 years, influenced by constantly improving capabilities of print media (Kurwinkel, 2017). Children's literature is therefore becoming increasingly complex in terms of topic and content

as well as design and artistic qualities (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2018; Krichel, 2020). At the same time, our digital culture of the 20th and 21st century is more and more focusing on visuality as the centre of medial representation (Schmitz, 2011). This effect also explains a certain trend towards multimodal communication, i.e. communication via parallel channels and with several senses (ibid.) that is becoming omnipresent. These developments have made profound impacts on the new ways picture books 'work' nowadays.

2.1. Multimodal children's literature as digital artifact

Looking at the field of children's literature in its historical development, it appears that multimodality has been constitutive for children's literature from the very beginning. Since the 19th century, children's literature in particular has naturally used modal codes other than verbal language and writing (Weinkauff & Glasenapp, 2010). This tendency towards multiple coding and the associated semiotic complexity in pictorial, lyrical-musical elements of early picture sheets or panorama books of the 19th century is already evident. The multimodality of children's literature has always been embedded in a specific historical context of media use and is mostly implicit at its beginnings, meaning that the integration of a medium takes place 'inwardly' through representation (e.g. the picturebook as a museum room in the 19th century or the picture of a television set in a picturebook in the 20th

The multimodality of children's literature has always been embedded in a specific historical context of media use and is mostly implicit at its beginnings, meaning that the integration of a medium takes place 'inwardly' through representation

century). More recent multimodal narratives, on the other hand, are often explicitly designed. They use multimodality to strive for an interactivity with the recipient, which is mostly explicitly addressed. The inclusive picturebook *Maulwurf Max* (*Mole Max*) (Rhyner, 2018), for example, stimulates interaction with the book by constantly changing the mode in which the story is perceived, allowing children not only to read, see and hear, but also to smell and touch the narration and thereby experience the things that the blind mole hero perceives on his

journey. With shifting the element of importance from one century to another, from book audio-visual artefacts to increasingly digital and interactive media (Niklas, 2012; Schrenker & Beyer, 2014), the picturebook today is more and more an essential part of a transformed culture that is shaped above all by audio-visual media. It is also integrated into cultural developments and changes and shaped by more open narrative concepts (Thiele, 2003; Abraham & Sowa, 2016; Scherer & Volz, 2016).

Therefore, "[w]hen analyzing [...] picturebooks with their diverse visual and linguistic codes, their multimodal character demands the specific capacity of code switching." (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2015, p.258). Additionally, it is possible to speak of an emancipation and associated mediatization of the picture book, as modern digital tools and design options are increasingly expanding the traditional

picturebook (Tabbert, 2010). Explicit multimodal narratives can therefore be defined as picture books that exhibit both their own mediality and the mediality of other artefacts by metareferentially transcending conventionalised narrative boundaries (Klimek, 2010; Kruse, 2014).

In the course of a “pictorial” towards a “multimodal turn” (Bucher, 2012), the multimodal character of the picturebook has been strengthened. Multimodal narratives in children’s literature mainly work by combining different visual codes, e.g. texts, comic, illustration and photography. But as the medial discourse evolves, so does multimodality within children’s literature. In recent innovative publications within the field, digital elements have played an essential role in broadening the potential of transmedia storytelling within children’s literature. They could turn a single book into a multimodal artefact offering a world of possibilities, that can not only be seen, but also heard, felt or even smelled or interacted with (Serafini, 2010). This kind of multimodality goes beyond the concept literary studies refer to as ‘intermediality’. Intermediality is a concept to distinguish references between at least two forms of media or sign systems which are perceived as distinct, but are combined within one artefact (Rajewsky, 2018). Multimodal artefacts depict, integrate, or cite another sign system within their own medium/sign system. Multimodal picture books go beyond depicting and tell stories according to this concept mostly by using several different visual and interactive/ digital levels. Consequently, they also pose the question of 'how the story is told' in a new way and distribute the actual story on multi-layered medial and modal levels, for which they use a vast variety of semiotic resources. Nowadays the semiotic complexity of these artefacts is constantly increasing, as these innovative artefacts work by adding interactive dimensions to the narrative (Siefkes, 2015; Bucher, 2010). In innovative children’s literature the act of ‘reading’ therefore involves decoding an artefact far beyond a text-centered reception, it includes being a visual, acoustical, interactive, haptical or olfactory challenge.

2.2. Extension to wordless multimodal picture books

Innovations in children’s literature use digital media for their multimodal narrative and may potentially create new opportunities to engage young readers and may help to develop skills which students need to successfully participate in a digital society today (Hovious et al., 2020; Renck et al., 2002). The multimodal narratives that we focused on for our study were part of the picturebook *Was ist denn hier passiert?* (What happened here?). It features twelve unusual and artistically sophisticated pictures without text.² Each of these absurd, multi-layered images raises the very same question that is asked in the title of the book, and encourages the reader to guess: what happened here? This book motivates the reader to search for clues and creatively explore the background story. All images are accompanied

² Exemplary pictures from the book with the corresponding extension by an animated film can be found on the homepage of the Tulipan publishing house.

by QR codes that lead to the short, 'silent' (wordless / no accompanying language) story-animated films with music that reveal the secret of each image, thus carrying out media change from book to screen. In this way, the QR code not only provides a resolution for the background story but also functions as a reward for the reception of the images in the book. In its challenging hybridity, multimodal narration could be found at the interception between image, moving image, narration, music, and switching from one medium to another (book to screen). A prerequisite for developing the complex relationship between image and animated film is the existence of multimodal and cultural competences, because it is only through the change of mode that the visual conventions of two very different kind of media can be clearly recognized and decoded (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2012; Serafini, 2010). At the same time, however, the challenging conditions of reception require of the picturebook reader certain openness towards the construction of the story's meaning and sense (Neuhaus, 2014).

In other forms of children's literature multimodality might be part of the artefact via an enclosed piece of music (CD), an attached arts&crafts offer, an app or a QR code which would lead directly to an extension of what is depicted in the book and thus would transfer the interaction with the book to digital level. The boundaries of the respective narrative world are therefore crossed through interactivity. By means of its extensions, components of explicit virtuality and materiality are paired with the medium of the book (Hopp & Lieber, 2013). In children's literature and especially in picture books, this crossing of boundaries is always instrumentalised as a moment of surprise, curiosity, playful encounter and excitement for the recipient. This brings together various participants: (picture) bookmakers and authors, illustrators and potential readers: they all share an interest in a book as both a cultural asset and an artefact of a specific definition of education, but also as an object of reading, a place to acquire literacy and narrative competence that initiates linguistic and aesthetic action and reflection. This makes the picturebook an innovative genre with media-integrative and media-convergent characteristics which also are more and more subject to the conditions of digitisation (Ritter, 2014).

2.3. Multilingual pupils' interaction with wordless picture books

Wordless picture books and especially its multimodal extension, as it is described in the chapter above, is an important tool for storytelling in multicultural classrooms. Accordingly, a look at the target group is crucial. The children are not only multilingual but also multicultural and thus bring with them diverse linguistic, cultural, educational, and also literary previous experiences (Ahrenholz et al., 2013). So, they have different levels of proficiency in the target language German depending on the length of stay in the destination country. Thus, the different linguistic levels in the target language have a direct influence towards the access to the wordless picture books in German. For language beginners, it has therefore been shown that the division of the reading process into three phases (pre-, while- and post-

reading) according to Rosebrock & Nix (2015) must be expanded for this target group to include the phase of orientation or encounter with this genre of wordless picture books (Dammann-Thedens & Michalak, 2012). This helps pupils find fitting vocabularies and categories to the objects and activities in the target language German and to overcome the hurdle of the parallelism of picture development and linguistic transformation (Dammann-Thedens & Michalak, 2012). The pupils' first languages are also different and so are their proficiency levels, which depend crucially on socialization (Eßer & Nimet, 2018). Some of the multilingual pupils can read and write in their first language, while others may completely refuse to use their first language.

Therefore, wordless picture books are a good starting point. It is to be expected that especially multilingual children will benefit from dealing with wordless picture books, as they have an overall language repertoire that allows them to switch between languages and this is particularly useful in negotiation processes, as it reflects the pupils' competent use of languages (Tracy, 2008). This engagement with visual stimuli seems to require a multilingual exchange between pupils at different stages of reception. For multilingual children, picture-based storytelling with its multimodal approaches opens a variety of possibilities for reception that go beyond linguistic approaches. Each child, regardless of language, is encouraged by the pictures in the wordless picturebook to construct its own meaning of the story and thus uncover the narrative structure (Wieler, 2015). This construction of the meaning or narrative structure is based on the individual cultural prior knowledge as well as acquired visual literacy which is used by de- and encoding symbols and signs in pictures (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2006). The wordless picturebook here requires not only the identification of the various pictorial signs, but rather also the uncovering of the underlying layers of meaning. Thus, the so-called "closed-class-lexical-items" presuppose culture-specific knowledge, which must be decoded with the help of the "referential code" (Krichel, 2020). The previous findings of research on wordless picture books do not consider the handling of multimodality or the inclusion of childrens' multilingualism and how they use it in reception (Krichel, 2020; Wieler, 2015). Previous studies have mainly focused on multilingual pupils' engagements with short picture stories and not with narrative wordless (multimodally extended) picture books and the extent to which access or interaction varies based on the individual first languages is not investigated (Kalkavan-Aydın, 2016). In the study, we will examine this connection between narrative multimodal wordless picture

Wordless picture books and especially its multimodal extension, as it is described in the chapter above, is an important tool for storytelling in multicultural classrooms. [...] The children are not only multilingual but also multicultural and thus bring with them diverse linguistic, cultural, educational, and also literary previous experiences

books and multilingual negotiation processes plus the potentials of wordless multimodal picture books for working with multilingual pupils.

3. Methodology

Realisation of multimodal storytelling takes place through images and moving pictures, this allows for more levels of interpretation than a written text and provides different ways of exploration and linguistic development (Dammann-Thedens & Michalak, 2012; Renck et al., 2002). Due to these characteristics, multimodal wordless picture books such as *Was ist denn hier passiert?* (*What happened here?*) offer beneficial possibilities for use in all-inclusive learning settings, especially in culturally and linguistically heterogeneous learning groups. To work on this assumption, our exploratory qualitative study 2018 (Conrad & Michalak, 2020) examines the literary-aesthetic and linguistic approach of primary school pupils with and without German as a second language to the multimodal narrative complex of *Was ist denn hier passiert?* (*What happened here?*). Therefore, we focus on the following questions:

- Do students' approaches vary depending on their media, language and school experiences?
- To what extent does the change of media play a role in their reception?

3.1. Sample

The sample consists of 23 primary school pupils (in Germany) with an average age of 10.08 years (SD = 1.98). Twelve children defined German as their second language. Seven stated that they spoke Arabic, two Romanian and three Russian as their first language. The range of German language learning time was between zero and three years. The children's language competence showed a clear spread between the learners with German as their second language and German as their first language. All pupils achieved an average of 39.34 (SD = 18.33), those with German as their second language (L2) an average of 36.27 (SD = 14.47) out of 100 possible points in the C-Test.

It is important to bear in mind that the students are learners who live in Germany and therefore their first language (L1) utterances do not correspond to the language variety spoken by children of that age in the corresponding country of origin.

3.2. Implementation

In order to answer the listed research questions, the children's general linguistic competences in German were assessed in advance with a C-Test (Eckes & Grotjahn, 2006). According to the classical principle of erasure, the second half of every second word is erased. A maximum of 100 points can be achieved, whereby only completely correct words are counted. This test was implemented with the

aim of comparing the results to see if there are differences between linguistically stronger and weaker pupils.

By means of a semi-standardised questionnaire, it was also possible to collect language biographical data from the pupils to draw conclusions about their school experiences, reading experiences and the time they spent learning German. Furthermore children (n=23) with different previous linguistic and aesthetic experiences were assembled as one group and filmed in a cooperative process of understanding four pictures and writing down their stories based on what they understood.

The implementation took place in one informal meeting, which was about 45-60 minutes in total (ca. 15 minutes for each round/ picture). It was structured in three steps:

1. In the first-round, students were divided into groups of three according to their first languages (L1). The groups were asked to deduce the meaning of the first picture and its background story and to write down the results in their first language (L1).
2. In the second-round, the composition of the groups remained unchanged, however the children were given the task of talking in German as their second language (L2) to construct the narrative.
3. In the third round, the pupils were reassigned, so that heterogeneous groups were formed with regard to the first languages. This allowed German (L2) to be used as the only possible language of communication in the respective recipient group.

The focus group discussions were then transcribed in a teamwork cooperation by students and researchers, working in teams on the interpretation and transcription of the video material, those whose mother tongue is Arabic, German or Russian focusing on the equivalent recording. Since the exchange and writing of the learners took place in the first and second language settings the data reflecting different approaches to the picturebook in the first and second language provides valuable information and can also be analysed.

The aim of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2015) is to filter out certain aspects from the material, to lay out a cross-section of the material under previously defined classification criteria or to assess the material based on certain criteria. In this explorative study, categories for dealing with wordless picture books were formed in the deductive analysis process, which were first defined and then inductively differentiated into further subcategories. In addition, the children wrote a written text for each received narration in a cooperative setting.

4. Findings and Discussion

The result of the analysis led to the following categories, which we will discuss in the following:

- Influencing reader reception through paratexts
- Change of media
- Digital entanglements and intertextuality
- Follow-up communication
- Multilingual learning

These categories show the potential of multimodal storytelling. In terms of content, we were able to identify an interface in learners' reception, that was decisive whether the story was created before or after the first change of media. In the following analyses, the individual categories are described with the help of evidence from the group discussions.

4.1. Influencing reader reception through paratexts

During the first round, the recipients are confronted with the challenge of recognising and putting to use the connection and complex relationship between image and animation. The analysis of the video recordings of the group discussions show that the actual sign system and the complexity or materiality of the image play almost no role in reception processes. It is not the picture and its details, but the event within the picture that prompts the absorption of the narrative, whose content and stylistic conventions are the subject of an intensive exchange among the children. This shows that the advantage of the book is its strong focus on eventfulness. This is already emphasised by the title of the book and expanded by the digital extension of the book.

The change of mode represents a hurdle for the recipients in that the conventions of both media have to be deciphered: certain visual and cultural symbols and codes that go beyond static visual stimuli (Danner, 2009; Renck et al., 2002) must be recognised (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2012). The recordings thus confirm that dealing with such books requires guidance in order to get to know the principle of the story. But they also show that their use is well suited for inclusive learning settings. Because even if the children bring along quite different media literacy, the change of media functions as a creative outlet and connecting element for a productive reception (Serafini, 2015). The second round – once the concept has been recognised – shows greater equality between the children in terms of content comprehension in the attempt to invent a story in a collaborative process, as it is now not a matter of prior knowledge and narrative conventions, but of creativity and imagination. Here, language barriers or reading socialisations do not create hierarchies in the design of the narrative. At the same time, it can be shown that after the first round of the second picture, the pupils look at the picture as a medium with content-carrying details in a much more concentrated way and set off on a 'search for clues' (see

fig. 1, line 3). In the picture the pupils see an organ grinder and musical notes flying around and a girl with a dog leash hanging from her hand leading to an inflated flying dog. You would think the pupils would focus on this. However, they focus on the newspaper (fig. 1, line 5) which is lying on the right-hand side in the corner; this can be now taken as a symbol that they do not want to miss out. By getting to know the book's concept, a learner is prepared to pay attention to details in the picture as if using a magnifying glass, which could have a meaning for the background story. Again, this step is independent of the children's language skills, age, and previous digital experiences.

- | | | |
|---|--------|---|
| 1 | blue1: | а что с этой савой тут (-)
[And what about this owl here?] |
| 2 | blue2: | тут ничего
[It's nothing.] |
| 3 | blue3: | сова (-) может там же ночь
[Owl, maybe there is night.] |
| 4 | blue2: | просто вот такая сова
[Just an owl.] |
| 5 | blue3: | а почему там газета (-) почему эта газета (-) можно читать
[And why is there a newspaper, why this newspaper? Can one read them?] |
| 6 | blue1: | а ни могут это (-) быть новости
[And could this be news?] |
| 7 | blue3: | ну могут
[Could be] |

Figure 1³: Group A1 (blue) (L1 Russian, Age: 7/8/8, c-test: 14/44/23; German learning time: 18 months/24 months/born in Germany; picture: Girl with flying dog)

As a conclusion from these observations from a language and literature teaching point of view, multimodal narration requires an orientation towards familiar literary text forms. This guidance may be offered by the paratextual elements of a book, but also by a well-prepared setup for a lesson. This allows linguistic structures specific to text forms to be used effectively as a support for the development of narratives. The connection between the image, the QR Code and the cartoon behind it as well as the title of the book and the associated guiding questions must be conveyed. In this way, the link between the final state, which is presented by the picture, and the initial state, which the students have to guess, is successfully established. Therefore, it is useful to consciously integrate the paratexts, in our case meaning the title and a comic, introducing the idea of the book, into the tasks first and then to discuss the first picture together so that the students can understand and apply the

³ The transcriptions of this article are translated by the authors with the aim to make the dialogue of the children understandable for the reader.

concept of the book. This may be particularly helpful for younger children who tend not to reconstruct the story as requested, but simply to continue telling it.

4.2. Change of media as access to fictionality

Multimodal storytelling builds on children's digital experiences and enables them to improve their media competences and expand those by multimodal means. In the group discussions, for instance, it

In the conversations, it becomes clear that most children choose a conventional approach to books known to them from the educational or reading context, that anticipates literary narration. Reading and writing socialization therefore essentially determined their initial reception.

becomes clear that most pupils are already familiar with the use of a QR code. The ability to work with the QR Codes strongly increases the children's intrinsic motivation. If they are not familiar with the concept of the QR code, they can improve their media competence on a technical level. In addition, the multimodal picturebook offers room for the perception of multimodal diversity in literary works. The multimodal approach of the book is particularly evident in the first stage BEFORE the change of media, when the

children try to find a first 'answer' to the question 'What happened here?'. The constant and intensive negotiation of the 'genre' of the image takes up a large part of the communication. In the conversations, it becomes clear that most children choose a conventional approach to books known to them from the educational or reading context, that anticipates literary narration. Reading and writing socialization therefore essentially determined their initial reception.

The negotiation of factual versus fantastic-fictional text ("Is this a fairy tale?" vs. "No, this happened for real") takes up a large part of the first conversation. In this way, group discussions are used to deliberate what is possible or permissible:

- 1 yellow2: das auto kann fliegen
[the car can fly]
- yellow3: (lacht)
[(laughs)]
- 2 yellow1: lach nicht (-- ist es ein märchen
[don't laugh (-- is this a fairy tale?)]
- 3 yellow3: das ist kein märchen (-) das ist in echt passiert
[this isn't a fairy tale (-) this happened for real]
- 4 yellow 1: in echt?
[for real?]
- 5 yellow 3: ja (-) es gibt keine fliegende auto
[yes (-) there are no flying car]

Figure 2. Group B1 (yellow) (L1 Arabic, Age: 10/11/14, c-test: -/41/21; German learning time: 18 months/36 months/born in Germany; picture: Old lady hovering in a car)

The change of media to the animated film is the initial spark for creative rethinking and the subsequent approaches, which are now multimodal and attempt to interpret the images beyond literary narrative conventions.

AFTER the change of media, the children's media experiences determine approach and reception. The groups realise that despite the initial picturebook format the story is told according to cartoon conventions, which uses a fantastic-fictional story language. Media experiences now determine approach and reception:

- 1 blue3: пиши что он крутит музыку (-) а девочка (-) слушает (-) она купила себе шарик всё
[Write that he is spinning the music and that the girl is listening and bought a balloon. End]
- 2 blue2: нет это (-) может собачка быть и (-) надуться
[No this can be a dog and he inflated himself]
- 3 blue1: это просто (-) как-то это (-) что то придуманная (-) вы видели спаун (-) все думали что она там что-то (-) нормальное делал но она из чего-то нормального (---) с ней играли эмоции это - фантазия тут
[It's just something that's kind of made up. Have you seen the movie "Spawn" (movie about a secret agent with super powers, on a comic strip)? Everybody thought that she was somehow doing something normal, but she made out of something normal...(drops the sentence as language skills in L1 are not sufficient). She acts out of emotion. This is fantasy.]
- 4 blue3: может её надули (-)
[Maybe he (the dog) has been inflated]

Figure 3. Group A1 (blue) (L1 Russian, Age: 7/8/8, c-test: 14/44/23; German learning time: 18 months/24 months/born in Germany; picture: Old lady hovering in the car)

The challenge of understanding the narrative that is non-conventional due to its multimodality and non-linear character because of the coupling of narrative structure and media change often generates a 'collective overload' during the first reading passage (fig. 3, line 3). This, however, is cancelled out, e.g., by the change of media to cartoons, and creates a positive effect of understanding and cognition, hence lays the foundations for multimodal competence.

The perception of the change of media facilitates understanding in general and the understanding of fictionality in particular. The cartoon offers a different concept of fictionality, so that after the first example, the recipient understands more quickly the idea, overcomes the excessive demands, and rediscovers the 'illogical' that goes along with the change of media, as a fantastic and creative potential for dealing with the object. Surely this is also central potential quality of multimodal picture books, which stimulates reflection on one's own reading, learning and media socialisation. Hence, they also make the negotiation of one's own narrative in group communication a subject of discussion.

At the same time, this type of media change influences the teaching approach, as there is a risk of comparing the children's story with the authors' shown in the cartoon. If one analyses the children's facial expressions when they first watch the film belonging to the first picture, disappointment can be observed regarding the dissolution of the story. Such pupils' exclamations as "How illogical. What? Totally illogical" occurred after the change of media very often. Students show their surprise, and this can be interpreted as an understanding of the story as fictional, but also as displeasure with the plot portrayed. Once the children's perceptions are shaped by their previous educational experiences in such a way that they see the cartoon as the only real solution, their motivation in making up their own stories based on the next pictures may be impaired. This could be counteracted didactically by rewarding creativity and inventiveness of the stories created as alternative narratives. In cooperation with the author, who offers respective workshops, it would even be possible to realize an alternative story as a stop-motion film. In this way, in connections with the subjects of art and music, one can offer a wide range of design possibilities. By adding music, low-threshold access to musical-aesthetic experiences or processes of "being creative" with music can be made possible (Ahlers, 2017). This access can be easily done by using tablets (like the App Yousician) or smartphones (e.g. Garage Band) in classes. Here, pupils can compose and incorporate their own music to the stories. In addition, the artistic techniques of the book can be taken up and developed further. For example, collage-technics do not necessarily have to be retained as the main form of the visual expression; here, too, other digital forms of art teaching with smartphones can be used, for example with the help of the PixArt app, which enables different designs, such as transferring photos into cartoons.

4.3. Digital entanglements and intertextuality as a form of approach

Through the complex cultural references and quotations in the context of multimodality, the book *Was ist denn hier passiert?* also offers intertextual or intermedial points of approach. These are supported by the openness of the narrative's range of meaning and are promoted by digital links. In this way, it is natural for the pupils to switch between the different media and to establish references between pictures, books, music, and film. They have to rely on their knowledge of familiar pretexts and their media experiences for successful exploration of the images.

A change of media is already anticipated in the search for a suitable narrative in the story about the old lady in the flying car entitled "Agent Grandma 007" (Group red, L1 Arabic).

The group thereby places the picture in the context of its own filmic association and draws on the James Bond film/book series as an intertextual narrative and explanatory pattern for the obviously action-packed picture composition and the inventory of the picture (car/city). The children also refer to films such as *Superman* or *Spawn* (Group yellow, L1 Russian, fig. 3) in order to explain the

image of the grandmother flying in a car with the phenomenon of superpower. Another group (purple, L1 German) finds a current German pop-cultural and musical context. Based on the expression 'take off', they use the lyrics of "Astronaut" by Sido featuring Andreas Bourani, omnipresent on German radio in 2018, as an association for the flight scene depicted. The images are also associated with well-known children's songs. This illustrates that intertextual and intermedial links extend the creative approaches so that the children's knowledge from film and music is used to interpret the images and invent their own stories. It is these elements in particular that can be seen as an opportunity for the didactic use of this genre, for example by stimulating the associations in the task at hand. The potential of multimodality becomes especially clear this way, as the levels of diversity, observation and insight are always addressed here through their own materiality. Multimodal narratives, which are expanded digitally and through print media, are therefore inclusive to the extent that they promote new forms of multimodal competence in all recipients. In addition, it is particularly interesting with regard to action and production-oriented literature teaching, as several implementation possibilities can be creatively introduced here. For example, QR-codes can be very easily created by the students and thus enrich and continue their reception. In this way, students can create online stories by permanently anchoring individual links to pictures, videos, graphics, texts etc. (Krommer, 2016). This represents a great potential for interdisciplinary project work.

Multimodal narratives, which are expanded digitally and through print media, are therefore inclusive to the extent that they promote new forms of multimodal competence in all recipients. In addition, it is particularly interesting with regard to action and production-oriented literature teaching, as several implementation possibilities can be creatively introduced here.

4.4. Follow-up communication as an open learning setting

The complexity of the multimodal picturebook is a central opportunity due to its facilitated accessibility, for example in the form of its 'silent' nature. In this way, the moment of creativity is at the centre of a collaborative, active and explicitly non-rule-bound exploration (Conrad & Michalak, 2020). To do justice to the different communication skills in literature teaching, communicative, language-bound requirements must also be modified. In addition to the conceptual expansion of storytelling and communication in inclusive settings, the focus is on active participation in literary learning processes (Thiele & Bosse, 2019). This tendency of multimodal innovation, which literally provokes a creative approach to new formats, opens up central multimedia and communicative options within the framework of media-integrative and identity-oriented German teaching (Frederking, 2013). The collaborative follow-up communication (Rosebrock & Nix, 2015) facilitates the development of image narration both literarily and linguistically. Besides, the 'draught horse effect' (Helmke 2012), whereby weaker or insecure children are pulled along by the stronger ones to initiate "the zone of the proximal development" (Vygotski, 1987), also applies to inclusive, collaborative learning.

Looking at the data material of our study, it can be observed that the cooperative examination of the book leads to various discussions on several levels. Not only the genre (fig. 2, l. 4) is discussed, but also the linguistic application, the difference between oral and written narration, one's own linguistic and narrative skills (fig. 5, l. 5, 9) as well as the content of the story and its narrative characteristics. Decisions on the division of work and the allocation of responsibilities also become the subject of the discussions.

Far more important, however, is that the potential of follow-up communication lies in the fact that the subjective development and communicative appropriation or processing of the reception often interlock and influence each other (Dammann-Thedens & Michalak, 2011). Through the exchange about the individual receptions and interpretations based on the images, a common construction of meaning is made possible; it goes beyond the individual narrative as well as linguistic competences. The students take up the ideas of the others, reflect on them, and in this way construct a coherent story together:

- 1 green3: ein auto ist runtergefallen
 [*a car fell down*]

- 2 green2: es stimmt (-) das ist eine Wolke (-) die ist von einer Wolke gefallen, ja (--)
 passt schon
 [*it's right (-) that's a cloud (-) she fell down from a cloud (-) yes (-) it fits*]

- 3 green3: ja ist eine wolke
[yes that's a cloud]
- 4 green1: nein (-) aber es könnte auch sein dass zum beispiel da unten eine baustelle war (-) also eine rampe
[no (-) but it can also be that there was a construction underneath (-) means a ramp]
- 5 green3: Ja (-) so wie in jedem (-) wie in jedem guten cartoon
[yes (-) how in every (-) in every good cartoon]
- 6 green2: von hier und strom (*deutet auf das Bild*) und muss von da kommen meine ich (--) oder (-) ja (-) einfach eine Oma mit einem Auto was durch die Luft fährt
[from here and power (*points to the picture*) and must come from there I mean (-) or (-) yes (-) just a grandma with a car driving through the air]
- 7 green3: nein nein (-) Superman hat sich unsichtbar gemacht und trägt das Auto
[no no (-) Superman has made himself invisible and carries the car]
- 8 green2: Superman hat sich in diese oma verwandelt
[Superman has turned into grandma]
- 9 green3: finde ich das mit über eine rampe fahren und hochspringen besser (-)
[I liked the idea more to drive over a ramp and jump up]

Figure 4. Group A3 (green) (L1 German, Age: 11/12/11, c-test: 58/58/60; German learning time: born in Germany; picture: Old lady hovering in a car)

As a consequence, particularly collaborative learning should be promoted through appropriate tasks and negotiation processes must be initiated.

The title of the book and its concept offer a suggestion or a starting point for follow-up communication. From the beginning, the focus is therefore placed on the action or an event structure in which both a chronological sequence and causal relationships play a decisive role. Although the interpretation of the depicted individual images or the individual elements is important from an intercultural point of view, it is negotiated in the consensus of each group in the context of the common story as a whole and thus does not change the plot. For example, geese are identified as chickens, or a dog is identified as a goat. For the development of the narrative, though, this is irrelevant. Cultural conditions or linguistic insecurities are not essential to the negotiation. The unconventionality of the material and the narrative as well as the medial rule violations of the multimodal are, according to the medium, the norm of collaboration. Creativity, openness and unconventional thinking 'out of the box' e.g. the medium should therefore be an essential theme of this exercise in class.

The video analysis showed that the book with its specific structure and its purely visual input leads to an overload via its visual monotony. The effect of overload, perceived as boredom therefore already inhibits motivation after the 3rd picture and should be taken into consideration, when preparing a class with wordless picture books. Based on facial expressions, gestures, participation behavior, the time frame devoted to indexing, and the volume of written texts the reception in class should be limited to a maximum of two pictures in succession. With inclusion of the third picture, not only the motivation but also the concentration decreases considerably, and the amount of expressed ideas declines. Moreover, the willingness to participate in the verbal discussion on the third picture strongly decreases, so that the communication, which until then had been goal-oriented and important for promotion in both the literary-narrative and linguistic sense, is notably reduced. This occasionally leads to a child taking the initiative and usually writing a short story without entering into a discussion. Based on the results so far, a recommendation can therefore be formulated to look at a picture together in a teaching unit in order to get to know the function of the picturebook and then let the children explore one or two further pictures in cooperative group processes.

4.5 Opening up to multilingual learning

Dealing with wordless (multimodal) books creates a basis for multilingual approaches. These can help to overcome language barriers and strengthen the children in their individual narrative and media knowledge as well as skills in a migration-related heterogeneous classroom.

The present study shows that children's approaches to multimodal narration do not differ depending on their first and second language. The focus here is on the creativity of the pupils. The same applies to dealing with the change of media. The linguistic differentiation, such as marking the chronological sequence of events, varies depending on the children's age and German learning spent-time. If the selection of the language of communication is analysed in the second round, i.e. with the task of developing stories in the first language, a differentiated picture emerges in the sample. Children with Russian as their first language consistently exchange information in Russian but then they start repeatedly drawing on German words in order to help each other and jointly supplement the appropriate vocabulary. Pupils with Arabic as their first language, on the other hand, use the German language in their negotiation processes. It is only when the results are written down that the first language becomes relevant. Here, however, it becomes noticeable that they often spend a long time looking for individual words in their first language when formulating the results to represent the events precisely. When writing, they concentrate on individual vocabulary and less on the creation of a coherent text. These different approaches in the first languages can be explained by, among other things, different educational experiences, the time, and reason for emigration or even the reputation of the first language. These causes would have to be questioned in practice to be able to respond to

pupils individually. The opening up of the classroom with regard to the first language and also the change of mode from speech to writing in the treatment of a picture as a story merely represents an increase in complexity which is problematic for the treatment. At the same time, though, it has the

If the multilingualism of children is incorporated into the learning process, the written competences of multilingual children must be assessed in their first languages, as not all children are alphabetized in their first languages or show insecurities in their written expressions

potential to consciously apply the narrative skills already developed in the first language and to actively participate in the creative negotiation of the stories. It is precisely these interfaces – between the first and second language, between orality and writing – that must be taken into account when selecting learning arrangements. One has to keep in mind that well-developed competences in the oral language do not necessarily indicate well-developed competences in writing. In inclusive learning settings, therefore, children with AND

without German as a second language benefit from linguistic aids that provide them with the necessary orientation to formulate a well-structured, comprehensible written text in German in a way that is appropriate for their age. If the multilingualism of children is incorporated into the learning process, the written competences of multilingual children must be assessed in their first languages, as not all children are alphabetized in their first languages or show insecurities in their written expressions.

This assumption is supported by the observation in the study that showed multilingual children having a lively discussion in German during the decision-making about who is allowed to write. It is decided to take turns. In the second round, the children enjoyed the oral exchange in their first language. When they learned, however, that this time their own story should be written down in their first language, a lengthy discussion ensues as to who should now take on this task:

- 1 blue2: ты можешь (-) шрифт на русси
[Can you do the russian font?]
- 2 blue3: всё я тебе написала теперь ты (-) давай пиши все про твою девочку твою сказку
[So I have written everything down for you, write everything about your girl, your fairy tale.]
- 3 blue1: я не понимаю что писать (-)
[I don't understand what I'm supposed to write]
- 4 blue3: что собачка надулась
[That a dog has inflated himself]
- 5 blue1: я не могу так хорошо писать
[I'm not that good at writing]

- 6 blue3: ты сказал что ты хочешь писать пиши
[*You said that you want to write, now write!*]
- 7 blue2: а я сама не могу хорошо писать
[*I'm not very good at writing myself.*]
- 8 blue1: уже не могу хорошо писать
[*Now I can't write well either.*]

Figure 5. Group A1 (blue) (L1 Russian, Age: 7/8/8, c-test: 14/44/23; German learning time: 18 months/24 months/born in Germany; picture: Girl with flying dog)

The challenge of dealing with the complex-paradox pictorial-literary narrative form is a unifying element that does not under- or overburden monolingual and multilingual learners with different linguistic preconditions in terms of content, since they are working on an open narrative form that does not prescribe any narrative or linguistic conventions. This can lead to a highly productive discussion, especially in terms of oral communication. Written task formats can tie in with oral communication to develop the educational language skills of the pupils in a targeted manner – oriented toward the principles of multilingualism and German as a second language teaching.

This shows us that teachers have to be very careful when assessing the level of knowledge in the first languages, because the pupils assess their own competences in the first languages differently. In addition, we found that linguistic help would have been very helpful for all pupils both - those with German as first language and others with German as second language. We would like to emphasise in particular the need to take age as an essential factor into account, because although these books seem to be suitable for children as young as 3-years old, the narrative complexity is of such a high level, that we would place it differently: the book could be used at the end of primary school earliest, we would rather recommend it for secondary school.

5. Conclusion

Our exploratory study concluded that dealing with multimodal wordless picture books is essentially related to the reading socialisation as well as to the media experiences of the recipients. The use of the multimodal wordless picture books offers an innovative potential for learning arrangements. Multimodality within children's literature offers the possibility of using resources beyond the

traditional book to exploit the full potential of diverse learning structures. For example, when the 'reading' of an interactive wordless picturebook establishes an expanded concept of communication,

Our exploratory study concluded that dealing with multimodal wordless picture books is essentially related to the reading socialisation as well as to the media experiences of the recipients

reading, writing and text-comprehension for inclusion-oriented German lessons. This form of multimodality includes picture books as media in the context of further verbal, non-verbal, visual and auditory forms (Abraham & Kepser, 2016).

The way we used the *Was ist denn hier passiert?* can be applied to other multimodal picture books with unconventional storytelling and associated "reading against the grain". In the paradoxical violation of the established reading habits and media

socialisations as well as children's expectation from a reading process, the central opportunity of these unconventional multimodal picture books for heterogeneous learning settings can be characterized as the joint acquisition of narrative, media, linguistic and communicative competences. The complex task of thinking backwards is consistent with the conviction of Frickel and Kagelmann (2016) that literature suitable for inclusion should also include sophisticated, advanced literary-aesthetic works, and that these works must be integrated into conceptual considerations. Besides the format of literacy, the core aspect here is to enable a wide variety of receptions and expressions to allow pupils in an inclusive learning setting the possible to choose various forms of participation, which best correspond to their abilities and skills (Schluchter, 2015). The diversity is therefore not only guaranteed by the learning setup, but also by the format of the multimodal artifact. The multimodal opening makes the content accessible, without losing its literary content (Frederking et al., 2012). Multimodal, multi-perspective and multilingual tasks and materials can support the individual approaches of pupils constructing a narrative in their first and second languages and help to lower implicit hierarchies in the classroom. By using media, unconventional storytelling and a call for creativity encourages pupils' own interests and thus also their scope for action are pursued and expanded. Open teaching-learning formats, such as the one we have presented here within our study, combined with multimodal narratives with the use of digital elements, which are enhanced by a follow-up communication, enable all pupils to participate equally.

Multimodal, multi-perspective and multilingual tasks and materials can support the individual approaches of pupils constructing a narrative in their first and second languages and help to lower implicit hierarchies in the classroom

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Lectura dialógica de álbumes ilustrados para fomentar el pensamiento crítico: un enfoque para Educación Primaria

Dialogic reading of picturebooks to foster critical thinking: an approach for Elementary Education

Lectura dialògica d'àlbums il·lustrats per a fomentar el pensament crític: un enfocament per a Educació Primària

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Abstract

The discussion of literary texts, and in particular picturebooks, is a valid resource for promoting critical thinking in education (McDaniel, 2006; Roche, 2015; among others). Based on this premise, this paper proposes an approach for dialogic reading, supported by maieutics, which causes a critical look not only at literary aspects but also at the democratic or anti-democratic behaviours present in the picturebooks. The approach integrates, with a writing task, the three critical skills pointed out by Cassany (2017). The methodology is qualitative; it is evaluative research comprising three phases. This article presents the results of the third one, in which the approach was applied to 157 students of the six grades of Elementary Education. The analysis of the responses allows us to contemplate two dimensions: how the students react to the situations that the picturebooks narrate; and how their interventions are produced in the discussion. It is possible to conclude that the guided conversation reinforces the skills of identification and perception of democratic or non-democratic situations, and increases critical abilities such as argumentation, contrasting of ideas, and questioning of what has been read, which become consolidated with writing.

Key words: Critical thinking, dialogic reading, Elementary Education, picturebooks.

Resumen

La discusión sobre textos literarios, y en particular álbumes, resulta ser un recurso válido para la promoción del pensamiento crítico en el ámbito educativo (McDaniel, 2006; Roche, 2015; entre otros). Desde esa premisa, en este trabajo se propone un enfoque para la lectura dialógica, apoyado en la mayéutica, que provoque una mirada crítica no solo sobre los aspectos literarios, sino también sobre los comportamientos democráticos o antidemocráticos presentes en los álbumes. El enfoque integra, con una tarea de escritura, las tres habilidades críticas señaladas por Cassany (2017). La metodología es cualitativa, se trata de una investigación evaluativa en tres fases. En este artículo se exponen los resultados de la tercera, en la que el enfoque se aplicó a 157 estudiantes de los seis cursos de Educación Primaria. El análisis de las respuestas permite contemplar dos dimensiones: cómo el alumnado reacciona ante las situaciones que los álbumes narran; y cómo se producen sus intervenciones en la discusión. Es posible concluir que la conversación guiada refuerza las habilidades de identificación y percepción de situaciones democráticas o no democráticas, e incrementa las capacidades críticas como la argumentación, contraste de ideas y cuestionamiento de lo leído, que se fijan con la escritura.

Palabras clave: álbumes ilustrados, Educación Primaria, lectura dialógica, pensamiento crítico.

Resum

La discussió sobre textos literaris, i en particular àlbums, resulta ser un recurs vàlid per a la promoció del pensament crític en l'àmbit educatiu (McDaniel, 2006; Roche, 2015; entre d'altres). Des d'aquesta premissa, en aquest treball es proposa un enfocament per a la lectura dialògica, recolzat en la maièutica, que provoqui una mirada crítica no només sobre els aspectes literaris, sinó també sobre els comportaments democràtics o antidemocràtics presents als àlbums. L'enfocament integra, amb una tasca d'escriptura, les tres habilitats crítiques assenyalades per Cassany (2017). La metodologia és qualitativa, es tracta d'una recerca avaluadora en tres fases. En aquest article s'exposen els resultats de la tercera, en la qual l'enfocament es va aplicar a 157 estudiants dels sis cursos d'Educació Primària. L'anàlisi de les respostes permet contemplar dues dimensions: com l'alumnat reacciona davant les situacions que els àlbums narren i com es produeixen les seves intervencions en la discussió. És possible concloure que la conversa guiada reforça les habilitats d'identificació i percepció de situacions democràtiques o no democràtiques, i incrementa les capacitats crítiques com l'argumentació, contrast d'idees i qüestionament del que s'ha llegit, que es fixen amb l'escriptura.

Paraules clau: àlbums il·lustrats, Educació Primària, lectura dialògica, pensament crític.

Extended abstract

In these times of post-truth, critical thinking is more necessary than ever. If we want to strengthen our democracies and save them from the threats looming over them (Alba Rico et al., 2017; Mounk, 2018; Todorov, 2016; Valadier, 2017), this kind of thinking must be fostered as an unavoidable priority.

Schools are the most appropriate place to promote critical thinking, since democracy is a content that can be learned in the educational context both through reflection and practice. However, for a long time, it was considered that critical thinking, being a higher-order skill, could not be acquired at lower educational levels, such as Elementary Education. Fortunately, new winds of change are blowing that denote the contrary (Álvarez-Álvarez y Pascual-Díez, 2013; Chambers, 2017; Evans, 2015; Guzmán-Cedillo y Flores, 2020; Jurado, 2008; Klooster, 2001; Roche, 2015), and even the educational legislation integrates critical thinking as a core objective in the cited stage.

There are several strategies to promote this type of thinking in education. In this paper, we want to explore the discussion of literary texts, and in particular picturebooks, as a valid resource (McDaniel, 2006; Roche, 2015; among others). Based on this premise, this paper proposes an approach for dialogic reading, supported by maieutics, which generates a critical look not only at literary aspects but also at the

democratic or anti-democratic behaviours present in the picturebooks. This work studies the connection between visual/verbal mechanisms and the generation of critical thinking in this kind of text, adding to the already existing theoretical corpus (Chambers, 2015; Cunningham y Enriquez, 2013; Da Mota, 2020; Evans, 2015; Kalogirou y Malafantis, 2014; McDaniel, 2004, 2006; Peterson y Eeds, 2007; Roche, 2015). Through a writing task, the approach integrates the three critical skills pointed out by Cassany (2017): thinking, reading, and writing. Moreover, it allows to address the traits that Klooster (2001) incorporates into this kind of thinking: its independent or individual character, information as to its starting point and not its point of arrival, its initiation with questions or problems to be solved; its pursue of reasoned arguments, and its social nature.

The methodology of the study is qualitative, being an evaluative research comprising three phases. This article presents the results of the third one, in which the approach was applied to 157 students of the six grades of Elementary Education from one Spanish public school. The didactic intervention was structured in three sessions. First, the students were familiarized with the approach using an introductory picturebook; then, they collectively explored the selected picturebook, and finally, they individually wrote a text adopting the stance of the characters. The titles elected were *Bugs in a Blanket* (Alemagna, 2011), for the first grade; *Four Little Corners* (Ruillier, 2005), for the second grade; *The Conquerors* (McKee, 2004), for the third grade; *The Hueys in the New Jumper* (Jeffers, 2015), for the fourth grade; *Louis I, King of the sheep* (Tallec, 2015), for the fifth grade; and *The Enemy* (Cali, 2008), for the sixth grade.

The approach presented is based on *Tell me*, by Chambers (2017) and *Critical Thinking and Book Talk (CT&BT)*, by Roche (2015). Furthermore, it considers the five functions of mediation that teachers assume in this type of discussion, detailed by Munita and Manresa (2012): to help in the search for significant textual clues; to help in the construction and substantiation of their arguments; to relate the discussion to other books and previous knowledge; to offer metalanguage to talk about books; and to reformulate, synthesize and systematize what has been said to advance the discussion and to fix concepts and contents. In the proposed approach, the first two functions have had significant relevance. Last but not least, it also relies on the Picturebook triangle model by Ellis and Mourão (2021).

The approach suggested has four steps: an introduction (before reading), a start-up phase, a development and a closing phase (after reading). In the development phase, the mediator offers the group several questions that follow the typology collected by Kalogirou and Malafantis (2012) for this kind of discussion. From this phase onwards, aspects are introduced that represent a novelty concerning previous studies. The first of these would be the concreteness of the questions, which, without contradicting their open nature, allows students to identify what they should focus their attention on. The first question requires them to place themselves in the conflictive situation that the picturebook renders, recognizing it. After this, the questions are structured around three dimensions: difference/diversity, conflict resolution, and the visual/textual ellipses of the picturebook. The formulation of the questions aims at making inferences, expressing argued opinions, and hypothesizing, both about what is narrated and about the author's intentionality. The second innovative aspect is presented in the closing phase, in which students are expected to transcend the text.

The analysis of the responses allows us to contemplate two dimensions: how the students react to the situations that the picture books narrate; and how their interventions are produced in the discussion. It is possible to conclude that the guided conversation reinforces the skills of identification and perception of democratic or non-democratic situations, and increases critical abilities such as argumentation, contrasting of ideas, and questioning of what has been read, which become consolidated with writing.

1. Introducción

El desarrollo del pensamiento crítico, junto con el de otros elementos de ciudadanía democrática, es una preocupación que se extiende por Europa desde, al menos, finales del siglo XX. Acciones como el auge de movimientos populistas y radicales de diverso signo político o la manipulación de la información, son difíciles de contener sin la presencia de este pensamiento y llevan a un temor creciente a que se produzca el desmantelamiento de los sistemas democráticos (Alba Rico et al., 2017; Mounk, 2018; Todorov, 2016; Valadier, 2017).

Frente a este temor, el ámbito educativo se erige como el espacio idóneo para recuperar el sentido de la democracia. Es preciso que desde las aulas, y desde bien temprano, se enseñe a ser ciudadanía (Santisteban, 2004). Sin embargo, durante mucho tiempo ha existido la creencia de que por ser una habilidad de orden superior el pensamiento crítico no podía ser adquirido en los niveles educativos inferiores, como Educación Primaria. La persistencia de esta idea se observa en el último informe Eurydice, donde se constata que en la organización de la educación cívica en Europa este pensamiento se desplaza a la Educación Secundaria (European Commission, 2017). Asimismo, el corpus teórico se inclina hacia esta etapa y la universitaria (Albertos y De la Herrán, 2018; Martínez, Ballester e Ibarra, 2018). Empero, se perciben también cambios que se reflejan en la legislación. En el contexto español, el Real Decreto 126/2014 para Educación Primaria nombra repetidamente el sentido crítico, se señala como un objetivo de la etapa, y se incluye en los elementos curriculares de las áreas de Ciencias Sociales y Lengua Castellana y Literatura. Hay también un interés al alza desde el campo investigador (Álvarez-Álvarez y Pascual-Díez, 2013; Chambers, 2017; Evans, 2015; Guzmán-Cedillo y Flores, 2020; Jurado, 2008; Roche, 2015). Como Klooster (2001, p. 38) asevera: “students of every age, from the first grade to the university, can think critically, because all of them already have rich life experiences and deep resources of prior knowledge.”

[...]durante mucho tiempo ha existido la creencia de que por ser una habilidad de orden superior el pensamiento crítico no podía ser adquirido en los niveles educativos inferiores, como Educación Primaria.

Ante la variedad de perspectivas existentes sobre qué es pensar críticamente, este artículo se decanta por los cinco rasgos propuestos por el citado Klooster (2001). Para él este pensamiento posee un carácter independiente o individual; la información es su punto de partida, no de llegada; se inicia con preguntas, problemas por resolver; persigue argumentos razonados; y es social. Estos atributos son subrayados también, total o parcialmente, por otros autores (Cassany, 2017; Jurado, 2008), y beben en gran medida de la pedagogía crítica de Freire (Morales, 2018) y Giroux (1990). La

relevancia del aspecto social es remarcada también por Mercer (1997), que aboga por fomentar conversaciones de tipo exploratorio en las aulas, ya que estas generarán un pensamiento compartido (interthinking) fruto de la intersección crítica y argumentada de las voces participantes.

Para alcanzar el pensamiento crítico son diversos los recursos y estrategias que se pueden emplear; en este estudio se propone el uso de textos literarios. Enseñar a leerlos con mirada alerta es el fin último de esta investigación. Como afirma Cassany (2017, p. 114): “Ante el mundo multicultural, globalizado, dinámico y conflictivo en el que vivimos, la única respuesta educativa posible es la necesidad de formar a una ciudadanía autónoma y democrática que tenga habilidades críticas de lectura, escritura y pensamiento.”

El vínculo entre literatura y pensamiento crítico, y su abordaje en las aulas, ha sido planteado de manera abundante (Álvarez-Álvarez y Pascual-Díez, 2013; Cassany, 2004, 2017; Freebody y Luke, 1991; Jurado, 2008; Saldaña, 2020). La singularidad de los textos literarios parece hacerlos especialmente favorables al logro de tal pensamiento (Jurado, 2008). Esto ocurre de manera significativa en el género álbum ilustrado, debido a su mayor apertura interpretativa, que posibilita la puesta en común y contraste de diferentes perspectivas. El presente trabajo considera la conexión en esta clase de obras entre los mecanismos visuales/verbales y la generación de pensamiento crítico, sumándose al corpus teórico ya existente (Chambers, 2015; Cunningham y Enriquez, 2013; Da Mota, 2020; Evans, 2015; Kalogirou y Malafantis, 2014; McDaniel, 2004, 2006; Peterson y Eeds, 2007; Roche, 2015). En estos estudios se pone el acento tanto en la lectura como en la discusión literaria posterior.

La lectura dialógica, o discusión literaria, se conforma en una estrategia de primer orden para alcanzar los propósitos aquí señalados. Se trata de animar al alumnado a conversar sobre lo leído, aportando sus puntos de vista de manera argumentada. Quien modera la sesión sugiere una serie de interrogantes como germen de la discusión. Estas preguntas suelen ser en un primer momento genéricas: ¿qué te ha gustado de lo leído?, ¿alguien tiene algo interesante que decir?; y más tarde específicas. Se trata de una labor de mediación basada en estrategias de andamiaje (scaffolding). Ellis y Mourão (2021) lo muestran a través del Picturebook triangle model, que tiene la siguiente estructura:

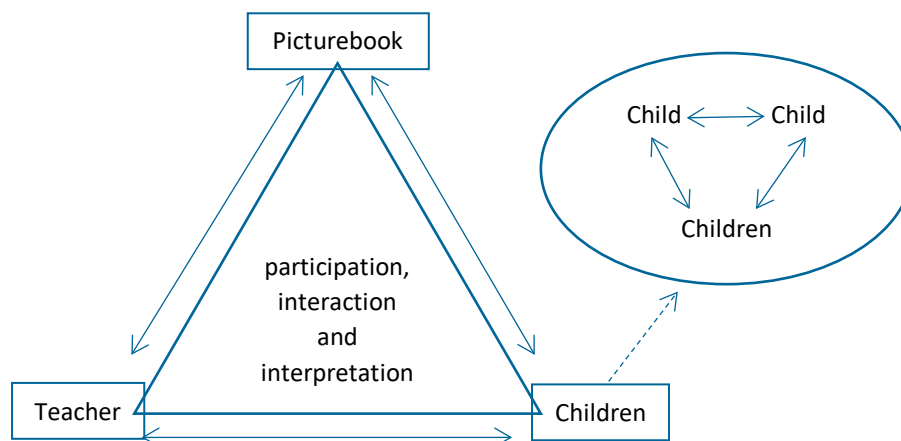


Figura 1. Estructura de The picturebook triangle model. Fuente: Ellis y Mourão (2021).

Cuando esta discusión tiene como fin el despliegue del pensamiento crítico, lo que se promueve es una posición de cuestionamiento sobre el texto, que pueda trasladarse al resto de ámbitos de la vida. Basándose en Burke (2010), Kalogirou y Malafantis (2012) recogen la tipología más idónea de interrogantes para este tipo de discusión: “1. *Factual or verifiable questions that respond to matters*

El estudio que aquí se muestra sigue la estela de los previos, pero pretende innovar con la oferta de un enfoque para la discusión cuyos interrogantes, si bien parten de lo literario, abren la puerta a reflexiones de tipo cívico, a pensar críticamente sobre la vida social y sus bases democráticas

of who, when, what, where, how?” (p. 268); “2. *Inductive questions that are still verifiable but respond to matters of why, how, so what?”* (p. 269); y “3. *Analytical questions that connect the text to other texts, ideas or situations.*” (p. 269)¹.

De ellos se deduce que la lectura y discusión crítica sobre un texto no se ciñe solo a este, sino que demanda la contextualización de la obra en unos parámetros sociohistóricos que condicionan su interpretación (Cassany, 2013).

Desde el rol moderador también se proponen pautas para un intercambio comunicativo basado en los principios democráticos, tales como el respeto a las ideas ajenas, o el uso del turno de palabra (Roche, 2015). De este modo, se ayuda a comprender que en democracia la diversidad de opiniones no solo es aceptable, sino deseable, pero que debe ser canalizada a través del diálogo respetuoso.

Los resultados de las investigaciones sobre esta lectura dialógica evidencian su efectividad, e incitan a continuar con su empleo, pero también a buscar aplicaciones que traspasen la frontera de la crítica o conocimiento puramente literarios. El estudio que aquí se muestra sigue la estela de los previos,

¹ La cursiva es del texto original.

pero pretende innovar con la oferta de un enfoque para la discusión cuyos interrogantes, si bien parten de lo literario, abren la puerta a reflexiones de tipo cívico, a pensar críticamente sobre la vida social y sus bases democráticas.

2. Metodología

El presente estudio se inserta en el paradigma cualitativo, como sus precedentes investigadores. El diseño del enfoque se encuadra dentro de una investigación de mayor envergadura desarrollada en tres fases de trabajo de campo. De carácter evaluativo, en ella se ha empleado el modelo CIPP (Stufflebeam y Shinkfield, 1995), compuesto por cuatro evaluaciones: contexto, entrada, proceso y producto. Se escogió este tipo de investigación por ser adecuada a los fines perseguidos: comprobar la validez de un programa aplicado en centros educativos. Las diversas evaluaciones permitieron el perfeccionamiento de dicho programa, llegando a la versión definitiva concretada en el enfoque que se va a exponer en este artículo.

La pregunta de investigación formulada en este estudio fue: ¿cómo podría el alumnado de Educación Primaria extraer aprendizajes de los álbumes referidos a contenidos de educación cívica? De ella se deriva el siguiente objetivo: comprobar la eficacia del empleo de los álbumes para el avance en la adquisición de contenidos de Ciencias Sociales relacionados con las competencias sociales y cívicas, representados en un soporte ficcional, así como de formas literarias propias de este soporte.

2.1 Contexto y fases de la investigación

Dos centros de Educación Primaria, de una sola línea y titularidad pública, ubicados en la Región de Murcia (Centro 1) y Andalucía (Centro 2) participaron de la aplicación del programa, que se desarrolló en tres fases (Tabla 1). Un total de 587 estudiantes de Educación Primaria, de todos los cursos, se implicaron en la lectura de los álbumes.

Fase	Curso	Centro	Sesiones (45-50 minutos)
Primera	2015/16	Centro 1 (experiencia piloto)	6
Segunda	2017/18	Centros 1 y 2	6
Tercera	2018/19	Centro 1	3

Tabla 1. Fases y contexto de la investigación

Las dos primeras fases sirvieron para comprobar la idoneidad de las primeras actividades planteadas, apoyadas en las ofrecidas en el corpus académico existente, que solían incluir una lectura en voz alta por parte de quien dirige la sesión, seguida de una serie de tareas orales, escritas

o gráficas con las cuales se da respuesta a lo leído/escuchado (Arizpe y Styles, 2004; Colomer, 2012; Courtland y González, 2013; Evans, 2015; Phipps, 2016).

En la tercera fase, que es de la que se hablará en este artículo, tomaron parte 157 estudiantes (Tabla 2).

Curso	Niños	Niñas	Total
Primero	14	12	26
Segundo	12	14	26
Tercero	12	15	27
Cuarto	17	10	27
Quinto	13	13	26
Sexto	15	10	25

Tabla 2. Alumnado participante en la 3ª fase del trabajo de campo (Centro 1)

En un primer momento los contenidos de educación cívica abordados eran los relativos a la aceptación y respeto de la diversidad, la resolución pacífica de conflictos, y el pensamiento crítico. Pronto se observó que sin el último no pueden darse los primeros, por lo que se constituyó en nuclear e integrador de los otros dos.

En las dos primeras fases del trabajo de campo se obtuvieron respuestas por parte del alumnado ajustadas a lo deseable, en los diferentes instrumentos de recogida de datos (cuestionarios sobre paratextos, y sobre elementos del texto; ficha de análisis sobre mecanismos empleados en el álbum para estimular el pensamiento crítico; y producciones gráficas y escritas poniéndose en el lugar de los personajes). Asimismo, tanto el grupo de discusión con el profesorado del Centro 1, como el método Delphi empleado con el del Centro 2, arrojaron una valoración positiva del programa. Sin embargo, se apreció que los resultados eran susceptibles de mejora, ya que las actividades propuestas parecían no dejar suficiente espacio a la argumentación y producían redundancia en las contestaciones.

Se decidió entonces considerar los parámetros de la lectura dialógica. El valor de las discusiones, como revela Rincón (2012), no reside solo en el discurso resultante, sino también en el proceso mismo de llegar a él. Las estrategias de análisis empleadas, los andamiajes que el propio alumnado se proporciona entre sí, los conocimientos previos poseídos, emergen en la conversación.

2.2. Diseño del enfoque

Con este enfoque se pretendía reorientar la intervención de las primeras fases, reduciendo el aura de trabajo escolar y facilitando al profesorado un modo de actuación claro pero flexible. Al adoptar la conversación mayor protagonismo, los docentes se convierten en mediadores de lectura. Munita y Manresa (2012) detallan las cinco funciones de la mediación que el profesorado asume en la

discusión de este tipo: ayudar en la búsqueda de indicios textuales significativos; ayudar en la construcción y fundamentación de sus argumentaciones; relacionar la discusión con otros libros y saberes previos; ofrecer metalenguaje para hablar sobre libros; y reformular, sintetizar y sistematizar lo dicho para hacer progresar la discusión y para fijar conceptos y contenidos. En el enfoque propuesto, van a tener especial relevancia las dos primeras funciones. La segunda, además, tiene relación directa con el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico. Ya que:

El mediador ayuda al lector no sólo a interpretar el sentido de las historias sino a entender la manera en la que están contadas, pues “obliga” a indagar y a reflexionar sobre la función de ciertos recursos literarios o visuales en la narración. (Munita y Manresa, 2012, p. 127)

Aparte de los citados Munita y Manresa (2012), para el diseño se han tomado como referentes el enfoque Dime (Chambers, 2017), y el método *CT&BT* (*Critical Thinking and Book Talk*), de Mary Roche (2015). Chambers (2017) confía en el potencial de análisis crítico del alumnado, que se manifiesta cuando pone sus pensamientos en interrelación. Roche (2015), por su parte, hace más hincapié en la propia interacción comunicativa: turno de palabra y expresión del acuerdo o desacuerdo con el resto. Ambos autores exponen una serie de preguntas para iniciar la conversación.

El enfoque se concreta a partir de estos modelos de discusión y de la síntesis de los instrumentos

Con la inclusión de tal actividad, el enfoque recoge las tres habilidades críticas señaladas por Cassany (2017): lectura, escritura y pensamiento. Este nuevo diseño del programa posibilita, además, recuperar las cinco cualidades definitorias del pensamiento crítico expuestas por Klooster (2001).

para recogida de datos utilizados en las etapas previas de aplicación del programa: cuestionarios sobre paratextos (cubierta y contracubierta) y elementos del álbum (personajes, acciones, etc.); así como ficha de análisis sobre los mecanismos empleados en las obras para la promoción del pensamiento crítico. El resultado es un conjunto de preguntas abiertas que son el núcleo de la conversación. Este modelo de intervención se compone de una introducción y tres fases, que pueden tener lugar en una única sesión, o ser distribuidas en varias. De hecho,

Chambers (2017) propone un espacio de un fin de semana entre la lectura y la conversación sobre un texto.

La lectura dialógica con el enfoque diseñado se desarrolla en gran grupo, y tras la misma se sugiere una actividad de redacción individual, que permita consolidar los aprendizajes. Planteada ya en las fases previas del trabajo de campo, en ella el alumnado se posiciona en el lugar de los personajes del

álbum leído. Según el curso esta tarea se apoya más en el dibujo o en la escritura, aumentando la complejidad conforme se avanza en la etapa educativa. Con la inclusión de tal actividad, el enfoque recoge las tres habilidades críticas señaladas por Cassany (2017): lectura, escritura y pensamiento. Este nuevo diseño del programa posibilita, además, recuperar las cinco cualidades definitorias del pensamiento crítico expuestas por Klooster (2001).

A continuación, se describe pormenorizadamente el diseño definitivo del enfoque, indicando qué ha de hacer la persona que dirige la sesión:

Introducción (previo a la lectura)

- Se muestra la cubierta, contracubierta del álbum y guardas, y se pregunta qué se ve en ellas. Se escuchan las respuestas. No se hacen correcciones (se puede orientar con nuevas preguntas).
- Se pregunta de qué puede tratar la historia y qué les hace creer eso. Se escuchan las respuestas sin realizar correcciones.
- Quien dirige la sesión lee el álbum en voz alta. Durante la lectura, se permite la participación del alumnado (expresión de ideas, opiniones, expectativas), además se pueden proponer preguntas sobre lo que se dice en el texto y lo que se muestra en las ilustraciones.

1. Fase de inicio (tras la lectura)

Se sugiere a quien aplique el enfoque la adopción de los siguientes modelos (uno de ellos, o en combinación) para iniciar la conversación sobre el texto:

Propuesta de Aidan Chambers (Dime)

¿Qué os ha gustado?

¿Qué no os ha gustado?

¿Qué os ha desconcertado?

¿Con qué otra lectura o experiencia lo relacionaríais? (búsqueda de patrones)

*(Para fomentar la argumentación se añade la pregunta “¿cómo lo sabes?”, así se devuelve al alumnado al texto)

Propuesta de Mary Roche (*CT&BT*)

¿Tiene alguien alguna pregunta sobre la historia?

¿Tiene alguien algo interesante que decir sobre la historia?

En esta introducción y primera fase se podría decir que el diálogo se produce sobre todo entre el texto y cada participante de la discusión. No obstante, quien dirige la sesión puede procurar el avance hacia el diálogo entre discentes, recurriendo a la quinta función de mediación de Munita y Manresa (2012).

2. Fase de desarrollo (tras la lectura)

Quien dirige la sesión continúa con las siguientes cuestiones:

Parece que en este libro los personajes tienen un problema, ¿cuál es?

¿Cómo son los personajes? ¿Se parecen entre sí? ¿Cómo lo sabéis? ¿A los personajes les gusta, no les gusta, o les da igual lo de ser diferentes (o lo de ser iguales)?

¿Hay algún personaje que se crea diferente por algo que ha pasado en el libro? ¿O que los demás digan que es diferente (puede decirlo el propio álbum)? ¿Creéis que es de verdad diferente? ¿Ha pasado algo en la historia que haya hecho que ya no sea diferente y se vuelva como los demás? ¿O que ahora piense de otra manera sobre ser diferentes?

¿Cómo han resuelto el problema que tenían? ¿Qué ha hecho este/os personaje/s? ¿Y los otros? ¿Han hablado en algún momento para resolverlo? ¿Os gusta cómo lo han resuelto? ¿Todos los personajes están de acuerdo con la solución?

¿Hay algo que no nos hayan contado en el libro, sobre lo que pasa en él? ¿Esta historia termina, hay un final? ¿Por qué lo habrá hecho así quien ha escrito el libro? ¿Esperabais que pasase eso en la historia? ¿Qué creíais que iba a pasar?*

**Estas preguntas son orientativas, cada docente ha de adecuarlas a su alumnado. No necesariamente hay que hacerlas todas, ni en ese orden. Dependerá tanto del alumnado como del texto que se ha manejado. Por otra parte, estas preguntas se formulan solo oralmente, y no se proporcionan al grupo.

3. Fase de cierre (tras la lectura)

Quien dirige la sesión propone una cuestión que sirva para extraer conclusiones:

¿Qué podemos aprender con este libro?

Las fases dos y tres suponen la expansión del diálogo grupal, la plenitud del modelo triangular de Ellis y Mourão (2021). Por otra parte, a partir de la Fase de desarrollo se introducen aspectos novedosos respecto a los estudios previos. El primero de ellos sería la concreción de las preguntas, que sin contrariar su carácter abierto, permite al alumnado identificar con claridad aquello en lo que debe focalizar su atención. La primera pregunta requiere que se ubique en la situación conflictiva que el álbum propone, reconociéndola. Tras esto los interrogantes se vertebran alrededor de tres dimensiones: la diferencia/diversidad; la resolución de conflictos; y las elipsis visuales/textuales del

álbum. La formulación de las cuestiones pretende la realización de inferencias, la expresión de opiniones argumentadas, y el planteamiento de hipótesis, tanto sobre lo narrado como sobre la intencionalidad del autor/a. El segundo aspecto innovador se presenta en la Fase de cierre, en la que se espera que el alumnado trascienda el texto.

Los interrogantes de estas dos últimas fases se ajustan a la tipología expuesta por Kalogirou y Malafantis (2012) a partir de Burke (2010). Por ejemplo, las preguntas relativas a cuál es el problema y a cómo son los personajes serían de índole fáctica o verificable, mientras que cuestiones tales como si todos los personajes están de acuerdo con la solución dada podrían etiquetarse como inductivas. Asimismo, otras tendrían carácter analítico, como la de qué creáis que iba a pasar [en la historia].

2.3 Procedimiento

El desarrollo del enfoque en la tercera fase del trabajo de campo se organizó del siguiente modo (Tabla 3):

	Objetivo	Actividad	Instrumento de recogida de datos	Agrupamiento
1ª sesión	Familiarizar con el enfoque	Lectura y conversación sobre álbum de temática similar al seleccionado	Notas de campo	Gran grupo
2ª sesión	Aplicar el enfoque al álbum seleccionado	Lectura y conversación sobre álbum seleccionado	Grabación de la discusión y transcripción	Gran grupo
3ª sesión	Fijar aprendizajes	Redacción de texto poniéndose en el lugar de los personajes	Producciones del alumnado	Individual

Tabla 3. Organización de las sesiones en la tercera fase del trabajo de campo

Todos los datos recogidos se analizaron con el programa Atlas.ti. La selección de los álbumes para cada curso de la etapa siguió criterios de actualidad, accesibilidad, calidad, adecuación a los participantes e idoneidad para los fines perseguidos. Los títulos son *El país de las pulgas* (Alemagna, 2011), para primer curso; *Por cuatro esquinitas de nada* (Ruillier, 2005), para segundo; *Los conquistadores* (McKee, 2004), para tercero; *Los Huguís en El jersey nuevo* (Jeffers, 2015), para cuarto; *Felicio Rey del rebaño* (Tallec, 2015), para quinto; y *El enemigo* (Cali, 2008), para sexto.

3. Análisis y resultados

La identificación de las manifestaciones de pensamiento crítico en las sesiones de lectura dialógica se ha articulado en torno a dos dimensiones, ambas con una serie de códigos. Este proceso de

categorización se ha realizado a partir del análisis de la transcripción de las grabaciones en audio, obteniendo 30 códigos en total.

La primera dimensión está vinculada al propio texto y a cómo el alumnado reacciona ante la diversidad, los conflictos y la ausencia de sentido crítico de los personajes. En la Tabla 4 se presentan los códigos más relevantes de esta dimensión.

Categoría	Códigos
Aceptación de la diversidad	<p>D1.1. Percepción de la diferencia: reconoce que hay personajes diferentes en el texto, y cómo se exhibe tal diferencia.</p> <p>D1.2. Identificación de la reacción ante la diversidad: percibe si hay rechazo o aceptación de la diversidad en el álbum, incluyendo si hay una evolución de una actitud a la otra.</p> <p>D1.3. Opinión favorable a la diversidad: se muestra a favor de la diferencia, rechazando la uniformidad.</p>
Resolución de conflictos	<p>D1.4. Reconocimiento del conflicto: se percata de la presencia de un conflicto entre los personajes, que debe ser resuelto.</p> <p>D1.5. Rechazo de la violencia: se posiciona en contra de las resoluciones violentas, por sus consecuencias para los personajes.</p> <p>D1.6. Valor del diálogo para resolver el conflicto: resalta el diálogo como la forma más adecuada de resolución.</p>
Pensamiento crítico	<p>D1.7. Toma de conciencia del engaño: percibe cómo unos personajes engañan a otros para conseguir un beneficio particular.</p> <p>D1.8. Rechazo a las imposiciones: se muestra disconforme con las imposiciones de todo tipo de unos personajes sobre otros.</p> <p>D1.9. Importancia de tener criterio: se da cuenta de que sin criterio los personajes son fácilmente manipulables. Contrapone la capacidad para tomar decisiones por uno mismo.</p>

Tabla 4. Códigos para la 1ª dimensión. Reacciones del alumnado ante lo narrado

La segunda dimensión está ligada al modo en que se producían las intervenciones en la discusión. De entre todos los códigos resultantes destacan (Tabla 5):

Códigos
D2.1. Divergencia respecto a lo opinado por otras personas: el alumnado expresa su desacuerdo, de forma argumentada, con respecto a otras opiniones.
D2.2. Explicación extensa: el alumnado argumenta sus ideas, yendo más allá de la respuesta breve o monosilábica.
D2.3. Intercambio basado en el conocimiento previo: el alumnado, a la hora de plantear sus ideas, se apoya en lo que ya sabe sobre la temática de los textos (por experiencia, por conexiones intertextuales, por vínculos extraliterarios, etc.).

- D2.4. Reajuste de ideas tras contraste: el alumnado modifica y precisa sus opiniones tras ponerlas en contacto con las de otros y descubrir que deben ser reajustadas.**
- D2.5. Recogida de intervenciones ajenas: el alumnado recupera ideas de otras personas del grupo para ampliarlas, rebatirlas...**
- D2.6. Aprendizaje extraíble: el alumnado expresa qué aprendizajes pueden recabarse tras la lectura del álbum.**

Tabla 5. Códigos para la 2ª dimensión. Intervenciones durante la discusión

Para ejemplificar estas dimensiones y algunos de sus códigos, se reproducen en primer lugar varios fragmentos de las conversaciones sostenidas en los diferentes cursos (Tabla 6). En estas citas se puede apreciar que los códigos se interrelacionan.

Códigos	Cita de ejemplo
D1.1. Percepción de la diferencia D1.3. Opinión favorable a la diversidad	Alumna 13: Pues lo que no me gusta es que todos fueran igual Coordinadora: Que todos fueran iguales, eso no te ha gustado. Pero luego eran diferentes, ¿no? Alumna 1: Siguen siendo iguales, porque tienen el mismo jersey Coordinadora: Ah, pero dicen que son diferentes Alumna 13: Pero no lo son (4º curso)
D1.5. Rechazo de la violencia	Alumna 17: A mí lo que menos me ha gustado ha sido cuando estaba diciendo uno, vale, pues tú eres un plátano, tú eres... porque eso es Alumna 26: Insultar Alumna 17: Insultos (1.º curso)
D1.8. Rechazo a las imposiciones D2.3. Intercambio basado en el conocimiento previo	Coordinadora: ¿Pero ha echado a las amarillas y a las blancas? Varios: ¡A las negras! Varios: ¡Racista! [Se refieren al personaje de Felicio] [...] Alumno 5: Que la oveja esa es como Donald Trump Coordinadora: Es igual que Donald Trump. ¿Por qué dices que es como Donald Trump? Quiero oír a vuestro compañero, y creo que el resto también querrá oírlo porque estaba diciendo una idea que no ha dicho antes nadie Grupo: ¿Qué? Coordinadora: Cree que se parece a Donald Trump. ¿Creéis que se parece? Grupo: [risas] Varios: Es Donald Trump (5º curso)
D2.2. Explicación extensa D2.5. Recogida de intervenciones ajenas D2.4. Reajuste tras contraste	Alumno 18: Placas, y, pues aquí... pues tiene como... sangre en la mano Alumno 20: No es sangre, es una... [...] Coordinadora: A ver, mirad, 18 ha dicho que tiene sangre en las manos, 20 dice que no. ¿Por qué pensáis que...? Alumno 20: Porque son como una especie de estas, de... Coordinadora: No, pero en las manos, fíjate en las manos, las manos Alumno 20: Ah, las manos. Ah, es que no se... ¡Es verdad, lleva sangre! Alumno 18: Creo que acaba de matar a alguien Coordinadora: ¿Es la sangre de otra persona? Alumno 20: El enemigo ha matado a alguien con mucha sangre en las manos. Es un enemigo (6º curso)

Tabla 6. Ejemplos de manifestaciones de pensamiento crítico

Respecto a la diferencia/diversidad, en los álbumes suele presentarse en los personajes a partir del color, las formas, la posesión de un atributo, o bien de modo sutil siendo construida en el discurso pero no visible. A veces es contrastada de forma irónica con la igualdad clónica para que sea más evidente, como ocurre en *Los Huguís en El jersey nuevo* (Jeffers, 2015), leído en 4º curso. La uniformidad suele provocar rechazo en el alumnado, sobre todo si se detecta como imposición o falta de criterio. Así se observa en primer curso, cuando un personaje espera que el resto sea como él:

Alumna 23: Porque es que las pulgas no tienen que ser iguales que la pulga gorda, porque si no cada, si no van a ser todas iguales y a mí tienen que ser diferentes

Alumna 26: Sí, porque todas igualicas no son muy bonitas

Coordinadora: ¿No? Es mejor... ¿te gustan a ti más de colorines?

Alumna 26: Sí

Aunque no todo el alumnado alcanza el mismo grado de pensamiento crítico, el intercambio y acceso a las ideas de quienes son más capaces de leer entre y detrás de las líneas tiene una fuerza generativa en el resto. En el fragmento que se reproduce a continuación, correspondiente a 6º curso, se pone de manifiesto. Un primer estudiante plantea una hipótesis sobre lo que está ocurriendo en la narración, otro recuerda lo que se dice en el manual entregado a los soldados protagonistas del álbum (“es una bestia despiadada”), y más tarde realiza una afirmación que emerge de una inferencia (“ni él tampoco”). Mientras, otros dos discentes extraen conclusiones, que se entretienen con lo dicho por sus compañeros y lo leído/visto. Este breve diálogo revela la doble cualidad individual y social del pensamiento crítico (Klooster, 20021):

Alumno 14: Porque los jefes son los malos, le engañan a... Que los jefes son los malos, los jefes son los que han hecho que uno se equivoque, se confundan entre los dos y dispare, con el propósito de divertirse ellos viendo cómo se disparan, engañando y poniendo el mismo manual a cada uno para que crean que el otro es así

Alumno 20: Es una bestia despiadada

Coordinadora: Vamos a ver

Otro alumno: No hay ninguno malo ni ninguno bueno

[Cuando el personaje encuentra el manual, y lo rechaza porque miente.]

Alumno 19: Es el mismo manual

[El soldado asegura que no ha matado a mujeres ni niños]

Alumno 20: Ni él tampoco [refiriéndose al enemigo]

Por otra parte, estos niños y niñas son capaces de reconocer las variadas tipologías de violencia evidentes en los textos, sin necesidad de que se muestre una batalla o agresión física. Asimismo, en cuanto a las imposiciones, de las conversaciones parece derivarse que al alumnado le resulta más fácil detectar su existencia cuando se conectan claramente con actos violentos y con rechazo a la divergencia o diversidad. Así, el grupo de tercero tuvo más dificultades para percibirlos en su álbum, *Los Conquistadores* (McKee, 2004), que el de quinto con el suyo, *Felicio Rey del rebaño* (Tallec, 2015). Estos obstáculos se evidencian en cómo interpreta el citado grupo de tercero el intercambio cultural entre el ejército conquistador y la población pretendidamente conquistada del pequeño país. Piensan que al General le parecerá bien y que su enfado se debe a no poder divertirse como sus soldados. Aunque se intenta que profundicen en la cuestión, solo un alumno identifica la causa, pero no consigue que su argumentación tenga la suficiente repercusión o continuidad en el resto:

Coordinadora: Y han venido nuevos. Pero se ha enfadado el General, no sé, no sé

Alumno 15: Se ha enfadado porque él como quería invadir ese pueblo, ellos no le han hecho caso al jefe, entonces ha traído otros

Alumna 3: El jefe se ha enfadado porque se portaban mal, y ha traído a otros

Alumno 22: Que el General les está diciendo a un grupo que se vaya para allá y a otro que se vaya para allá

Alumna 1: Deja allí a los soldados para saber lo que están haciendo y vigilarles, y ellos se van porque ya están cansados de estar allí

En ocasiones, se advierte que el pensamiento crítico se combina con el creativo, proponiendo soluciones alternativas para resolver el conflicto. Es el caso de segundo curso, cuando sugieren formas de que el protagonista pueda entrar en la casa con el resto de personajes:

Alumna 6: Que la única manera, o es cortárselos como ha dicho alumno 12, o que se arrugue y que se meta

[...]

Alumno 3: Que también se puede enrollar y pasar

[...]

Alumna 1: Que a lo mejor sus amigos círculos pueden intentar que lo pase, porque se ponen aquí y aprietan

Finalmente, el desacuerdo es un motor para la argumentación y el reajuste. La expresión de una opinión divergente obliga a dar razones para convencer al resto. El intercambio implica la introducción de variaciones en la idea inicial o la generación de nuevos argumentos para persistir en ella, como ocurrió con el grupo de sexto. El grupo de segundo también fue escenario de divergencias, con un alumno que se negaba a aceptar el pacto narrativo, lo que obligó al resto a pensar críticamente sobre el hecho literario:

Alumno 11: Que no es una casa, que es un papel

Alumno 7: Es un papel, pero lo usan como casa

Alumna: 2: Es un recortado

[...]

Alumno 11: Que no es una casa, que es un folio

Maestra: Es una casa, alumno 11, es un cuento

Alumno 21: ¿No ves que son como unos círculos, y un cuadrado recortado?

Alumna 1: Es de fantasía

4. Discusión y conclusiones

Como ya había sido puesto de relieve en las investigaciones que conforman el marco teórico, el enfoque dialógico ofrece indudables oportunidades de desarrollo del pensamiento crítico en el alumnado. Conversar sobre los álbumes permitió en este estudio respuestas más extensas y argumentadas por parte de los niños y niñas participantes. La creación de un clima de confianza, en el que todas las aportaciones se tenían por valiosas, provocó una expresión libre y segura de las opiniones. Se observó que no había temor en aportar una idea que contradijera las de otros, siempre de forma razonada, así como tampoco lo había en rectificar cuando el contraste evidenciaba la necesidad de hacerlo. Estos son aspectos clave para el correcto despliegue de la discusión en torno a los álbumes, y, claro está, para el progreso en el pensamiento crítico.

El hecho de compartir las ideas hace que unos puedan apoyarse en las de otros, ampliándolas, rebatiéndolas, descubriendo detalles que habían sido obviados, llegando a un pensamiento común más complejo que aquel que se produce de manera individual (Rincón, 2012). No obstante, la falta

de hábito con respecto a este tipo de actividad, hace que las conversaciones sean en algunos momentos más de discusión y acumulativas, que exploratorias (Mercer, 1997). Se ve especialmente en los primeros cursos, donde el egocentrismo infantil todavía está muy presente. El hábito se crearía con una mayor frecuencia en las discusiones, y este sería uno de los déficits de este trabajo. Otro es la aplicación independiente en cada curso. Lo ideal sería una investigación longitudinal que pudiese mostrar el efecto acumulativo, como se ha visto en otros estudios (Evans, 2015).

De los resultados se extrae también la conclusión de que el pensamiento crítico es multiforme, yendo desde la puesta en jaque de la uniformidad a la toma de conciencia sobre la manipulación, pasando por el posicionamiento contra la atribución ilegítima del poder. Obviamente, la selección de los álbumes incide en la variedad de respuestas posibles. Y para seleccionar bien hay que conocer bien. Este conocimiento profundo es clave para tener confianza en una correcta guía de la discusión (Chambers, 2017; Roche, 2015).

Siguiendo con esta cuestión, las dificultades van a surgir de la necesidad de variar la perspectiva en la concepción de las dinámicas de aula. Implantar la discusión literaria en el proceso de enseñanza/aprendizaje requiere de reflexión sobre la práctica docente y disposición al cambio. Tres pueden ser los obstáculos que se presenten en las primeras aplicaciones: no crear oportunidades reales para que el alumnado converse sobre los álbumes; forzar las intervenciones y emitir juicios de valor; y falta de seguridad, que se traduce en un temor a no saber realizar las preguntas adecuadas, a no saber guiar al grupo, etc.

El enfoque dialógico se plantea, tras los resultados obtenidos, como una estrategia adecuada para avanzar tanto en la dimensión social del pensamiento crítico, gracias a la discusión en gran grupo, como en la individual, por la tarea posterior de escritura. Tarea que para Klooster (2001) sería la mejor para promover el citado pensamiento.

Pese a sus innegables limitaciones, esta investigación contribuye a evidenciar el potencial de la lectura dialógica para promover el sentido crítico en Educación Primaria. Dando cuenta de que en esta etapa también es posible hacerlo, y de que los álbumes son un recurso idóneo para ello.

5. Referencias

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Developing children's critical thinking through wordless book

Desarrollar el pensamiento crítico de los niños a través de libros sin
palabras

Desenvolupar el pensament crític dels nens a través d'un llibre sense
paraules

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Abstract

In wordless book the text is absent and the weight of the narrative has only the images (Arizpe, 2013; Gibson, 2016). In the classroom, wordless books can be used by small groups of students or individual students, who are encouraged to make suggestions about the content of each picture in the book. It is a complex process that requires the development of children's critical thinking and consequently the activation of a number of cognitive skills, such as processing and analysis, formulation of assumptions, reasoning, conclusion and evaluation (Facione, 1990c, 2000; Facione & Facione, 1992, 1994, 2007; Facione, Facione & Giancarlo, 1997; Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995; Wason-Ellam, 1989). This article suggests ways teachers use wordless books in order to develop First Grade students' critical thinking skills and expand their vocabulary.

Keywords: wordless book, critical thinking, vocabulary

Resumen

En el libro sin palabras el texto está ausente y el peso de la narración sólo tiene las imágenes (Arizpe, 2013; Gibson, 2016). En el aula, los libros sin palabras pueden ser utilizados por pequeños grupos de estudiantes o estudiantes individuales, a quienes se les anima a hacer sugerencias sobre el contenido de cada imagen en el libro. Es un proceso complejo que requiere el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico de los niños y, en consecuencia, la activación de una serie de habilidades cognitivas, como el procesamiento y el análisis, la formulación de suposiciones, el razonamiento, la conclusión y la evaluación (Facione, 1990c, 2000; Facione & Facione, 1992, 1994, 2007; Facione, Facione & Giancarlo, 1997; Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995; Wason-Ellam, 1989). Este artículo sugiere formas en que el profesorado usa libros sin palabras para desarrollar las habilidades de pensamiento crítico de los estudiantes de primer curso y expandir su vocabulario.

Palabras clave: libro sin palabras, pensamiento crítico, vocabulario

Resum

En el llibre sense paraules el text està absent i el pes de la narració només té les imatges (Arizpe, 2013; Gibson, 2016). A l'aula, els llibres sense paraules poden ser utilitzats per grups reduïts d'estudiants o estudiants individuals, als que se'ls anima a fer suggeriments sobre el contingut de cada imatge del llibre. És un procés complex que requereix el desenvolupament del pensament crític dels infants i, en conseqüència, l'activació d'una sèrie d'habilitats cognitives, com el processament i l'anàlisi, formulació de supòsits, raonament, conclusió i avaluació (Facione, 1990c, 2000; Facione & Facione, 1992, 1994, 2007; Facione, Facione & Giancarlo, 1997; Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995; Wason-Ellam, 1989). Aquest article suggereix maneres en què el professorat utilitza llibres sense paraules per desenvolupar les habilitats de pensament crític dels estudiants de primer curs i ampliar el seu vocabulari.

Paraules clau: llibre sense paraules, pensament crític, vocabulari

1. Introduction

Wordless books or silent books are a special category of picture books from which the text is absent and their content becomes known only through images. They break the stereotypes of reading and suggest new ways of understanding the story of the book. In wordless books the illustration has the weight of the narrative (Arizpe, 2013; Gibson, 2016). They are based on the attention readers/viewers show in details and interpretations of spatial planning, layout and composition of illustration, in order to construct meaning only through images (Nodelman, 1988, 1991; Sipe, 2008). At the same time, they enhance narrative invention, cultivate fictional skills and release children's spontaneity and imagination (Jonston, 2001).

Wordless books could be considered an ideal tool for developing oral and written skills (Smith, 2004). They are extremely useful tools in cultivating literacy skills. The absence of the text makes wordless books accessible to children at all stages of emerging reading (Jalongo, Dragich, Conrad & Zhang, 2002).

Reading wordless books, leads the reader/ viewer to promote visual literacy (Economidou, 2016). Furthermore, it contributes to the acquisition of metalanguage, which is fundamental for the development and enhancement of the reader/ viewer's ability to think critically (Housen, 2002; Pantaleo, 2016).

In the process of meaning making through images the viewer converts the visual information into verbal. Words, phrases or even compound sentences are formed in his mind. So, the term "reader" can be used in the case of books without words. From the above finding it can be concluded that the process of decoding an image is a complex process and requires the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary by the viewer. This vocabulary will help the viewer to transform the image information into a logical and coherent narrative (Nodelman, 1988). However, reading images is a complex and

energetic process. It demands a viewer, who will use his previous knowledge and experiences in order to capture the meaning of the book's story through the pictures (Nodelman, 2008).

Nowadays wordless books are used more and more by teachers in the classroom. They are "read" by small groups of students or individual students, who are encouraged to make suggestions regarding the content of each picture in the book. Image meaning is a complex process that requires the

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development of children's critical thinking and consequently the activation of a number of cognitive skills, such as processing and analysis, hypothesizing, reasoning, conclusion and evaluation (Facione, 1990c, 2000; Facione, Facione & Giancarlo, 1997; Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995; Wason-Ellam, 1989). Through this paper ways are suggested which teachers use wordless books and activities are planned in order to develop First Grade students' critical thinking skills and expand their vocabulary.

We hope that this proposal will be a challenge for teachers to integrate wordless books in the educational process with the aim of the students' critical thinking development and vocabulary expansion.

2. The use of wordless books in educational process

The use of wordless books helps to create an attractive context in the classroom that develops students' critical thinking skills and encourages verbal interaction between them. The detail and vibrancy in the images enhance observation and promote the use of an equally vivid vocabulary by children (Norton, 1999).

Because of the lack of written text, wordless books create students' desire to promote their communication skills and use language (Norton, 1999). Using wordless book students express themselves, communicate and generally develop oral skills (Fields & Spangler, 2000; Norton, 1999). As children find out the sentences in order to interpret the images, they understand that the plot of the story is related to the sequence of images and realize that pictures are "read" from left to right (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 2001; Tomlinson & Brown, 2002).

Wordless books give children an opportunity to make sense of the pictures, to use the knowledge gained from other stories they have heard or read and create their own story (Yellin & Blake, 1994). As the story of wordless books evolves only through pictures, the child who "reads" these books first

makes some assumptions in order to interpret pictures, then connects them and finally comes to some conclusions (Yellin & Blake, 1994, p. 195).

Wordless books are suitable for students who have not fully mastered the mechanism of reading because the meaning making of these books does not depend on the students' ability to read a written text (Ellis & Preston, 1984; Galda & Cullinan, 2002). "Reading" wordless books, children are encouraged to formulate many different answers in a discussion in which students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can participate as well (Cassady, 1998; Perry, 1997). So, wordless books become an ideal tool in teachers' hands transforming classrooms into inclusive spaces (Early, 1991).

In most wordless books the story is usually short. Picture interpretation is a complex process because there is no text through which the viewer could easily take information about the plot of the story (Early, 1991). As the story depends entirely on the images, the viewer draws all the elements needed for the understanding of the story through the images. In order readers to understand the visual and narrative conventions of wordless books, they have to be able to analyze specific elements such as the plot, the setting, the description of the characters and the point of view. In order students to understand the aforesaid elements, they observe the pictures carefully. They focus on the details of the images (Galda & Cullinan, 2002) which emphasize on body language and the facial expressions of the characters that are depicted (Glazer, 2000). Careful observation of the images and the following discussion in the classroom provide the basis for the development of children's critical thinking (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Wason-Ellam, 1989).

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3. Critical thinking

Critical thinking dates back to the Greek philosophy. Especially, it was rooted in Socratic questioning. Socratic method is based on the logical analysis of data, in control of the validity of the experiences and in the formulation of objections that control the acquired knowledge (Matsagouras, 2002).

Dewey (1910, 1933, p. 6) defined critical thinking as a "consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends". Glaser (1941, p. 5) described the critical thinking skills as "the methods of logical inquiry and

reasoning". According to Matsagouras, 2001, p. 77) critical thinking is the "cognitive function that activates selectively and combinatorially cognitive skills, logical reasoning and metacognitive strategies with the help of which the individual processes data in a logical way, distancing himself from his personal beliefs and prejudices to reach valid and logical conclusions, findings, judgments, beliefs and choices of action".

Critical thinking is one of the most essential cognitive skills that someone can develop. Freire (1973, 1993) argued that the ability to think critically helps people to be active citizens in society and empowers individuals "to reflect actively on issues that are relevant to their own lives" (Fisher, 2001, p. 2). Nowadays critical thinking has been a crucial goal of higher education (Paul, 1993). It is generally defined as an individual's ability (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and a complex competence consisting of skills, knowledge, and dispositions (McPeck, 1990). Ennis (1987, p. 18) defined critical thinking as "a reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused upon deciding what to believe or do". According to Halpern's definition (1985) critical thinking is the kind of thinking involved in formulating inferences, solving problems, making decisions and calculating likelihoods. Critical thinking skills are considered vital for student in order to face the challenges of adult life (Paul, 1993) and for this reason the development of students' critical thinking has been an essential goal of education (McMillan, 1987).

The importance of critical thinking for educational evaluation and teaching was the reason for the

The A.P.A. Delphi Report (1990) describes in detail the skills and sub-skills of critical thinking and gives relevant examples (Facione, 1990c, 2015). Facione identified the core skills that make up critical thinking: a) interpretation, b) analysis, c) evaluation, d) inference, e) explanation and f) self-control.

creation of an interdisciplinary team by US and Canadian scientists in the late 1980s. The task of the experts of this group was to participate in a research, on behalf of the American Philosophical Society, for the purpose of studying critical thinking. The results of the research were published in 1990 in a report known as the Delphi Report, authored and moderated by interdisciplinary team work by Peter Facione, a professor at Loyola University in Chicago. According to the expert critical thinking skill is

the process of intent and self-regulating reasonable decision. The A.P.A. Delphi Report (1990) describes in detail the skills and sub-skills of critical thinking and gives relevant examples. Facione (1992/ 2020) identified the core skills that make up critical thinking: a) interpretation, b) analysis, c) evaluation, d) inference, e) explanation and f) self-control. These are the same skills that include in the most important academic collaboration activities (Facione, 1992/ 2020). Figure 1 is a representation of the consensus of experts in the field of Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Pedagogy and Education.

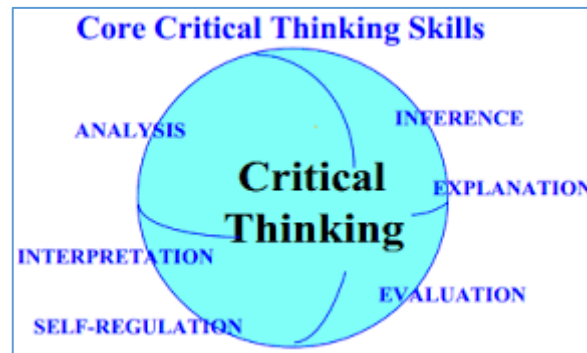


Figure 1. Core skills of critical thinking. Source: Facione, 1992/ 2020.

According to the expert group's statement of consent, interpretation is defined as the ability of the individual to understand and recognize the importance of experiences, information, situations, facts, judgments, beliefs, claims, rules, criteria and procedures. The basic skills of interpretation are: a) categorization, b) decoding of concepts, and c) rendering meaning (Facione, 1990a, 1992/ 2020).

Experts have defined analysis as the ability of an individual to recognize the relationships between statements, questions, concepts, descriptions or other forms of representation that aim to express beliefs, opinions, judgments, opinions or experiences. The main skills of the analysis are: a) the consideration of ideas, b) the identification, and c) the analysis of arguments.

According to the experts, explanation is the ability of an individual to articulate the result of his reasoning through persuasive arguments and present in an understandable way the concepts, methods, presumptions and hypotheses on which the arguments have been based. The main skills of the explanation are: a) the reporting of the results, b) the justification of the procedures, and c) the presentation of the arguments (Facione, 1990a, 1992/ 2020).

Besides, inference is related to the individual's ability to search for and locate information that is necessary in order to create valid conclusions and make assumptions. The main skills of inference are considered: a) the search for data, b) the connection of alternative hypotheses, and c) the drawing of conclusions.

Evaluation is related to an individual's ability to assess the reliability of statements and reports that describe person's views, perceptions, judgments, beliefs, or experiences by assessing the logical strength that lies between descriptions, statements, questions or other forms of representation of thought. More specifically, it concerns the individual's ability to assess the appropriateness of arguments on a problem, issue or event.

Finally, self-regulation is the most important cognitive skill as it allows the critical thinker to improve his thinking. It concerns the ability of the individual to monitor cognitive activities by applying analysis and evaluation skills in order to challenge, confirm, validate or correct one's reasoning or one's own inferential judgments (Facione, 1990a, 1992/ 2020).

3.1. Critical Thinking Skills acquisition

Critical thinking has developed into a movement, already from the last decades of the last century (Matsagouras, 2005; Trilianos, 2002). Three of the basic assumptions of the critical thinking movement are the following (Matsagouras, 2005):

- a) In addition to the neurophysiological infrastructure of the brain, the quality and effectiveness of thinking are also influenced by the person's cognitive strategies and attitudes and the knowledge he has acquired. Both cognitive strategies and attitudes, as well as knowledge are direct influences from the teaching-learning process.
- b) Cognitive skills are instructive and they can be immediately improved and upgraded with the help of the teaching-learning process.
- c) All subjects offer opportunities for the development of various aspects of critical thinking, such as inductive and deductive reasoning, formulation of a series of inferences, logical proof, dialectical controversy and evaluation.

Critical thinking skills can be improved through teaching (Abbott & Wilks, 2005; Halpern, 1993, 1996; McGregor, 2007). According to Matsagouras (2005);

“Critical teaching is any form of teaching which, within a framework of active participation of students, develops data collection and processing activities, which mobilize the higher cognitive functions of students and lead to the formation of concepts, judgments, generalizations, processes and patterns of world interpretation” (p. 138).

Critical elements of critical thinking are logical reasoning, which include inductive and deductive reasoning, cognitive skills, as well as diagnostic elements. These include structural data analysis and cognitive skills of overcoming data and evaluation.

According to the Delphi Report (Facione, 1990c), the teaching of critical thinking should aim to develop critically minded individuals. It's means that, individuals could be able to successfully develop critical thinking skills, both in other areas of study (knowledge transfer) and their daily life. The teaching of critical thinking skills should not be random, but rather be based on a specific curriculum and be accompanied by an assessment of their degree of acquisition and development. An internationally

accepted way of assessing the level of development of critical thinking skills is questionnaires. If teachers want to intensify their effort and improve the level of knowledge of critical thinking skills and assess the development of critical thinking skills, they can manage this process diagnostically after relevant teaching.

Critical thinking skills can be developed by explicit instructions (Gardner, 2009; Higgins, et al., 2004; McGuinness, 1999). Particularly, Silvia Pantaleo (2016, p. 2) in her article, discussed “how the explicit instruction of visual art and design of picturebooks/ picturebooks’ visual art and design can develop students’ critical thinking skills”. The students need instruction in order to interpret, compose, and create visual communications (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011). They must learn “that it is essential to see, not merely to look” (Macaulay, 1991, p. 419). Learning about the value of viewing helps students view “images with a critical eye” (Santas & Leaker, 2009, p. 182) and think about images more deeply (Pantaleo, 2016).

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4. Theoretical framework

The purpose of this paper is to suggest activities that explore and promote the development of First Grade students’ critical thinking skills and expand their vocabulary. In order to engage children in “purposeful thinking that requires both critical and creative thinking” (Paul & Elder, 2005, p. 5) we propose activities through which students could be able to “figure out” how elements of visual art could be used by artists to communicate meaning in picturebooks. In order to facilitate reasoning, the students need to create “thoughts about the artwork in tandem with monitoring and assessing their thinking according to specific criteria” as accuracy, clarity, relevance precision and logic (Pantaleo, 2016, p. 3).

Besides, the classroom teachers can apply these criteria when they interact orally with pupils during discussions and when they talk with them about their writing. They follow a specific process and protocol called the visual thinking strategies curriculum (VTS) to facilitate a pupil-centered discovery process which involves pupils examining, discussing, and reasoning about images. The intent of VTS is “to build visual literacy” skills (Yenawine 2013, p. viii). The VTS process which originated in 1991 at Museum of Modern Art in New York consists of 3 questions:

- What's going on in this picture?
- What makes you say that?

- What else can we find?

Studies on VTS conducted by Housen (2001, 2002) revealed that students who participated in VTS program “used significantly more supported observations and speculations” (Housen, 2002, p. 116) when they responded to a work of art. DeSantis and Housen’s findings (2009) indicated that Grade 8 students have developed their critical thinking skills supported by VTS process. Finally, the three years study on the impact of VTS (DeSantis & Housen, 2009, p. 6) on Grades 3–5 students revealed that “even though control students started out ahead, the experimental students significantly outperformed them in both aesthetic and critical thinking growth”.

We expect that the students will take the opportunity to understand the benefits of looking carefully at wordless book; to discuss what they observed and what are their thoughts; “to learn to support their observations and ideas with evidence; and to understand that elements of visual art can often be interpreted in a variety of ways” (Pantaleo, 2016, p. 4).

Explicit instruction about elements of visual art can improve students’ knowledge and vocabulary; “enrich their responses, and increase their abilities to comprehend, interpret and systematically analyze what they see. This understanding and meta-language are fundamental to developing and enhancing students’ abilities to think critically” (Pantaleo, 2016, p. 15). *Dos pajaritos* (Dipacho, 2010) was the wordless book, which is considered to provide an adequate framework for the development students’ critical thinking abilities.

Our proposal recognizes the role of the image in the development of children's critical thinking and apply Pantaleo’s findings (2016). Pantaleo argued that students' critical thinking can be developed

Our proposal recognizes the role of the image in the development of children's critical thinking and apply Pantaleo’s findings (2016). Pantaleo argued that students' critical thinking can be developed through the analysis and interpretation of wordless book, which is considered “work of art”. Besides the “Critical Thinking Development Model”, which has been proposed by Gail Smith (2004), was adopted.

through the analysis and interpretation of wordless book, which is considered “work of art”. Besides, the “Critical Thinking Development Model”, which has been proposed by Gail Smith (2004), was adopted. Through her model (Figure 2), Smith describes the steps that teachers could follow to encourage their students to understand the behavior of the protagonists of the story. In addition, she proposes activities and suggests ways in which teachers could implement wordless books in order to develop students’ critical thinking

skills.

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| Step 1: Activation of prior knowledge and prediction the history of the book |
| Step 2: Submission of opinions and discussion |
| Step 3: Writing a text (optional) |
| Step 4: Analysis and description of the character's action/behavior |
| Step 5: Extension/written language production (optional) |

Figure 2. Critical Thinking Development Model (Smith, 2004)

Each of the above steps includes activities aimed to encourage students: a) to activate prior knowledge that will help them to predict the story of the book; b) to participate in discussions freely expressing their views on issues concerning the content of the book verifying or not their initial predictions; c) to write a text consisting of one or more sentences that will accompany the pictures; d) to describe and then justify the actions, motivations and characters' thoughts and finally; e) to produce a text that will outline the characters of the story.

5. The wordless book *Dos Pajaritos*

The wordless book *Dos pajaritos* has been designed by the author and illustrator Dipacho. The book was published by Lumen Publications in 2010. Through its colorful images the story of the book describes two small migratory birds from SW Europe that share the branches of a flowering tree. The involvement of only two heroes, the simplicity of the scene and the gradual description of the actions and desires of the birds in a leading role make the choice of this book suitable for the development of children's critical thinking on issues related to understanding the behavior of the characters. Initially, the birds' life on the tree flows calmly.

Gradually, the two birds are overwhelmed by feelings of greed, jealousy, arrogance and start competing one another gathering too many things –electrical appliances, household and decorative items, cars, bicycles, musical and gymnastic instruments, etc.– on the branches that host them. Eventually the branches break from the excessive load of useless items for the owners. The two birds desperately try to hold from the bare trunk of the once flowering tree. These narrative birds are the creation of adult thought, which in an advisory role indirectly attempts to control the behavior of young children. Apart from taking the form of a humanized hero, they also address adults. They are models to be avoided and criticize the weaknesses, passions, and shortcomings of adults (Gavriilidou, 2013).

The picture book *Dos Pajaritos* (Dipacho, 2010) is a visual text. It is more open to interpretation, puzzling the reader and being approached differently by different readers, in different time (Moriarty, 1996). Based on a) the above aspect along with the assumption that the image, as a work of art, is not just a point, but an open text with meaning (Moriarty, 1996), which is part of a system of points that speaks to us secretly (Uspenskij, Ivanov, Toporov, Pjatigorskij, & Lotman, 2003, [1973]), and b) that the reader/ viewer is called to make sense of it by activating his critical thinking skills (Pantaleo, 2016), the wordless book *Dos pajaritos* (Dipacho, 2010) has been chosen to foster First Grade students' critical thinking skills. As *Dos pajaritos* (Dipacho, 2010) is the result of inspiration and the creation of an artist/illustrator, undoubtedly it could be characterized as a work of art (Pantaleo, 2016).

The wordless book “*Dos Pajaritos*” (Dipacho, 2010) has been chosen to foster First Grade students’ critical thinking skills. Because of this kind of books are the product of the inspiration and the creation of an artist/ illustrator, “*Dos Pajaritos*” (Dipacho, 2010) undoubtedly could be characterized as a work of art (Pantaleo, 2016).

The idea that images are mainly open texts, that are subject to personal interpretation, (Moriarty, 1996) is an important parameter that was seriously considered in the design of this proposal. The finding of Eco (1989) showed that the reader plays an important role in the interpretation of opensource texts, is exploited in order to foster children's critical thinking skill. Finally, this proposal is expected to contribute to the salience of visual communication in the creation of a complex and highly creative interpretive process (Moriarty, 1996).

6. Presentation of activities

Step I: Activation of prior knowledge and prediction of the history of the book

Before applying the Gail Smith's Model (2004), students could have been initiated into the following elements: 1) colour; 2) line; 3) typography; 4) framing; 5) physical aspects of picturebooks; 6) point of view; and 7) perspective. The meta-language about the focus elements could be reviewed continuously throughout the intervention.

- Specifically, the first step begins before “reading” the book and focuses on activating the prior knowledge of the students in the classroom. Initially the teacher presents the cover of the wordless book *Dos pajaritos* (Dipacho, 2010) to children. Then he/ she reads the title of the book and asks students to submit their views on the scene depicted on the front cover (Kalogirou & Vissaraki, 2005). He/ she encourages students to predict the story of the book and asks the following questions:

- How do the two birds spend their time?
- What do you think their relationship is?
- The two birds share the branches of a tree. What are the names of the people who share the same house or apartment?
- How do you think the roommates' relationships are?
- Have you (or someone you know) ever had a similar relationship with your roommate?

The above questions encourage students to identify with the characters in the story and relate what they see to their experiences. These questions activate the development of children's critical thinking skills because they contribute to the understanding of the actions and behavior of the characters in the story. In addition, the discussion in the classroom gives students the opportunity to anticipate and understand the plot of the book's story (Pantaleo, 2016).

Step II: Submission of opinions and discussion

When the previous step is completed, the book is presented to the class plenary by the teacher. If the classroom has the appropriate equipment, teacher will present the pages of the book on a projector. Children are divided into small groups 4 or 5 pupils per group. They are encouraged to engage in a discussion about what they saw through the illustrated pages of the book. If students are unfamiliar with wordless books, teacher will explain to them that the book is different from some other books they have read, because there are no words to read in it and the author tells the story only through the images.

- The teacher gives the appropriate time to children to work in groups and then to present to the plenary of the class the story they have understood. Then the teacher shows to the plenum the selected pictures depicting the branches of the tree loaded with various objects and asks the children the three VTS questions (Yenawine, 2013) giving to them the opportunity to describe the pictures in their own words, to think critically and to justify the motives of the actions or the feelings of the book heroes. What's going on in this picture?
- What makes you say that?
- What else can we find?

The teacher then re-examines the students' predictions regarding the content of the book and helps them verify their predictions or not. Students are encouraged to make comparisons in order to find out what they thought when they looked at the cover and in what conclusion they came to when they saw the pictures of the book (interpretation). The discussion about the wordless book story helps children to grasp the meaning of the story by observing and connecting what they have seen through the pictures with their prior knowledge (analysis), making predictions about what will happen or what could have happened (inference) (Facione, 1990).

Step III: Written text

The teacher encourages children to write a text that may consist of one or more sentences, which would accompany the pictures in the book. Because each page of a wordless book has many images¹, it is a good idea for children to write a sentence if there is only one picture. If there are more images/scenes on each page, they could write a separate sentence for each image of the page. Undoubtedly, writing a sentence for each image is a simpler process, because interpreting an image requires a smaller number of ideas. In *Dos pajarito s* (Dipacho, 2010) it is recommended that students write a sentence for each page.

Alternatively, it is recommended to use sticky notes with written text for each illustrated page (McGee & Richgels, 1990). Sticky notes allow groups to change the text, to separate and merge text and images. This process contributes to: a) the construction of the meaning of the book's story as a product of text and image collaboration and b) the development of children's vocabulary (Housen, 2001, 2002; McGee & Richgels, 1990; Pantaleo, 2016).

Step IV: Analysis and description of the character's action/ behavior

In order to describe the actions, motivations and thoughts of a character, the teacher shows students selected illustrated pages and asks them to describe the actions of the characters in the book. Students describe the images looking for some connection between the character's actions. The teacher

¹ These images that appear sometimes in a frame and sometimes without a frame, show a narrative sequence. They depict a different moment and all together compose the meaning of the whole page of the book (Martinidis, 1990).

randomly writes down these actions on a reference board and prompts children to group them based on some characteristics. For example, the actions described by the verbs: leaves, returns, brings, reappears... could be grouped together as they describe the little birds' effort to collect as many things as possible on their branches. Then the teacher encourages students to perceive the characters' behavior or actions as part of a repetitive pattern. Recognizing the pattern in the actions of the book's characters develops young students' critical thinking skills (evaluation) (Smith, 2004).

In *Dos pajaritos* (Dipacho, 2010) winged heroes are often depicted looking at each other and then flying and returning carrying another useless thing. Students may include the words "jealous" or "feels jealous" in the list of heroes' actions. The book also includes images depicting things without any useful value for the protagonists of the story (e.g., toilet bowl, bicycle, car, etc.).

Children may not use the word "junk" to justify the vanity of birds, which are engaged in a "hunt" for junk with disastrous consequences for themselves and their nest. It is the same mania that overwhelms people that makes them dependent on material goods. It's a pathological relationship with material goods and a constant effort to satisfy the insatiable thirst of material bliss. However, the teacher can help students to justify the deeper reasons that led the heroes of the story to adopt this behavior (inference) (Smith, 2004).

Then the teacher encourages students to challenge, confirm, validate or criticize the strategies, inferential judgments (self-regulation) of classmates in order to improve students' thinking. It concerns the ability of the student to monitor cognitive activities by applying analytical and evaluative skills (Facione, 1990a, 1992/ 2020).

The teacher can use various strategies in order children to understand and then describe the actions and behavior of the characters (Kalogirou & Vissaraki, 2005). Some playful activities that could be done in the classroom are represented below. These activities could be adapted by teachers based on the needs and level of their students.

Activity title	Activity description
Let's draw...	Students draw a scene to describe an action of the heroes in the story. Then they present what they painted explaining their choices.
Who will sit in the investigative chair?	A child impersonates the "character" and sits in the investigative chair. Then the classmates ask him/her questions related to motivations that led him/her to the specific behavior.

Come and play role-playing games...	Children in groups perform with their body a scene from the book that depict an action or emotion of the character. Each group presents its topic in plenary and explains why it chose it. The members of the other groups try to guess the content of the representation. Through the action and the movement children experience heroes' emotional state and explain the motivations that incite them to carry out in an uninterrupted pursuit of consumer goods.
Giving a different ending to the story...	Applying the technique of dramatization children try to give a different ending to the story. They are divided into two groups: a) the actors who articulate the emotions of the heroes with face and body expressions, and b) the narrators who describe in words the emotions of the heroes.
Searching for the right word...	Teacher encourages students to use the right words in order to think and describe the reasons that led the heroes to specific actions and behaviors. The search for descriptive words enriches children's vocabulary and leads to the understanding of the special characteristics that make up the character of the heroes.

Table 1. Activities in the classroom

7. Discussion

This article describes the process of developing First Grade students' critical thinking based on the "Critical Thinking Development Model" by Gail Smith (2004). To do so, we used the wordless book *Dos pajaritos* (Dipacho, 2010).

The book was selected based on certain criteria, such as the age of the children who were asked to approach it, the simplicity and clarity of its content, the authenticity of the story and the limited number of concepts that it negotiates. The book captures in a unique way the feelings of greed, jealousy, arrogance and competition that dominate the protagonists of the story. The above characteristics contribute to the implementation of Smith's model (2004) in educational process. Finally, the book helps students to develop their critical thinking skills to understand the heroes' actions.

Teachers who apply traditional teaching in their classroom focus more on knowledge transfer and less on cultivating critical thinking skills. Furthermore, they do not use strategies for developing critical thinking in their daily interaction with students and among the students. Selecting appropriate books in combination with applying appropriate strategies teachers promote critical thinking skills and enrich

students' vocabulary. In general, the analysis of multimodal texts, such as wordless books, facilitates students in receiving and decoding the history of the book and helps in receiving messages and building knowledge around the visual codes (Chatzisavvidis & Gazani, 2005).

The function of the wordless book is utilized by the present educational proposal with the aim of enriching First Grade students' vocabulary and the development of their critical thinking skills. The image is no longer a means of transmitting information but a place of meanings making. The child is not treated as the recipient of visual messages, but as an active reader of these meanings (Kostantinidou-Semoglou & Theodoropoulou, 2005).

Regarding the image analysis by the student, visual "grammar" explores the relationship between two different types of communication, speech and image. This grammar refers to the relationships that are structured between persons, spaces and objects that are depicted and the relationships that develop with the viewer and the structure of the images (Kress, 2000).

This educational proposal is not a recipe that the teacher will be able to apply in the classroom without making the necessary adjustments to the level and needs of his/ her students. Cultivating critical thinking skills is a difficult, complex, laborious, and time-consuming process (Abrami, et al., 2008; Knight & Page, 2007; Kuhn, 2000; van Gelder, 2005). It cannot be achieved by mechanistic processes, simple knowledge transfer, repetitive practice and problem-solving recipes. It must be a constant and permanent goal of daily teaching practice. Nowadays, more and more researchers, educators and technocrats endorse that the practices, which promote critical thinking skills, would be integrated into everyday teaching and learning (Asterhan, 2013).

The proposal emphasizes the role of the school in promoting the student's critical thinking skills. The school must provide the opportunities in order to prepare properly and adequately cultivate critical thinking skills. This requires an appropriate organization of the learning environment, so that the student would be able to compare, categorize, evaluate arguments based on evidence, discover relationships between data, argue using supportive tools, such as wordless books. Wordless books are supportive tools, which through appropriate practices contribute to the enrichment of vocabulary and the cultivation child's critical thinking skills such as interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, and self-regulation (Facione, 1990c, 2000; Facione &

Wordless books are supportive tools which through appropriate practices contribute to the enrichment of vocabulary and the cultivation child's critical thinking skills such as interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation and self-regulation (Facione, 1990c; Facione & Facione, 1992, 1994, 2007; Facione, Facione & Giancarlo, 1997, 2000; Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995; Wason-Ellam, 1989).

Facione, 1992, 1994, 2007; Facione, Facione & Giancarlo, 1997, 2000; Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995; Wason-Ellam, 1989).

Wordless books are excellent teaching tools in the hands of teachers in order to approach concepts related to the behavior of the protagonists of the story - and not only - because their use always requires children to think critically based on their own experiences (Giannikopoulou, 1996; Siorikis, 2013; Smith, 2004).

We hope that this teaching approach will be a challenge for teachers who are going to implement Smith's model (2004) and integrate wordless books in the educational process with the aim of the students' critical thinking development and vocabulary expansion.

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Educación para el desarrollo: aprendizaje socioafectivo en el aula de Lengua y Literatura

Development education: socio-affective learning in the Language and Literature classroom

Educació per al desenvolupament: aprenentatge socioafectiu a l'aula de Llengua i Literatura

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Resumen

Educación para el desarrollo se ha convertido en una oportunidad para que los países y sus sociedades emprendan un nuevo camino con el que mejorar la vida. En este artículo, se presenta una experiencia en la asignatura de Lengua Castellana y Literatura donde se trabaja la importancia de lo afectivo en el marco de las relaciones de pareja a través del estilo de comunicación educativa y los métodos participativos. Estas enseñanzas están encaminadas a promover conocimientos, actitudes y valores capaces de generar una cultura de la igualdad y la solidaridad comprometida con la promoción del desarrollo humano. El proyecto educativo se compuso de varias fases. En la primera, se representó la obra teatral *Relacionados* y con ella se participó en el octavo encuentro de teatro juvenil (Trobada de Teatre Jove) organizado por la compañía Inestable y el Instituto Valenciano de la Juventud (IVAJ). La empresa Noviembre Films grabó el proyecto y se retransmitió a través de canales virtuales a otros centros e Institutos de la Comunidad Valenciana. En una segunda fase, un grupo de bachillerato participó en la jornada virtual que se organizó para que los jóvenes conozcan y disfruten de la actividad teatral, en la que grupos de teatro de educación secundaria exhiben sus obras. Los resultados de esta actividad artística y pedagógica resultan alentadores para continuar profundizando en un tipo de aprendizaje socioafectivo. En definitiva, esta propuesta metodológica explora otras posibilidades pedagógicas para que el profesorado de secundaria enseñe a través de la participación activa.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje socioafectivo, teatro, educación secundaria, lengua y literatura.

Abstract

The field of education for emotional development has become an opportunity for countries and their societies to embark on a new path to improve their quality of life. This article presents a pedagogical project as part of the subject of Spanish Language and Literature in a high school setting, where the importance of the affective element is worked within the framework of romantic relationships through educational communication and participatory methods with theatre as a common element. This experience is aimed at promoting knowledge, attitudes, and values capable of generating a culture of equality and solidarity and committed to promoting human development. The project is

composed of two phases. In the first one, the theatrical piece, *Relacionados*, was performed during the eighth summit of youth theatre (Trobada de Teatre Jove) organized by the Inestable company and the Instituto Valenciano de la Juventud (IVAJ). The company November Films recorded the project, and it was broadcast through virtual channels to other secondary schools of the Valencian Community. In a second phase, a high school group participated in the virtual day that was organized to promote theatre for young people, in which Secondary Education theatre groups exhibit their works. The results of these artistic and pedagogical activities present an increase in the development of socio-affective learning. In short, this proposal explores alternative pedagogical possibilities for secondary school teachers to educate through active participation.

Key words: Socio-affective learning, Theater, Secondary, Language and Literature.

Resum

Educar per al desenvolupament ha esdevingut una oportunitat perquè els països i les seues societats emprenguen un nou camí amb el qual millorar la vida. En aquest article, es presenta una experiència en l'assignatura de Llengua Castellana i Literatura on es treballa la importància d'allò afectiu en el marc de les relacions de parella a través de l'estil de comunicació educativa i els mètodes participatius. Aquests ensenyaments estan encaminats a promoure coneixements, actituds i valors capaços de generar una cultura de la igualtat i la solidaritat compromesa amb la promoció del desenvolupament humà. El projecte educatiu es va compondre de diverses fases. En la primera, es va representar l'obra teatral *Relacionados* i amb ella es va participar al huité encontre de teatre juvenil (Trobada de Teatre Jove) organitzat per la companyia Inestable i l'Institut Valencià de la Joventut (IVAJ). L'empresa Noviembre Films va gravar el projecte i es va retransmetre a través de canals virtuals a uns altres centres i instituts de la Comunitat Valenciana. En una segona fase, un grup de batxillerat va participar en la jornada virtual que es va organitzar perquè els joves coneguen i gaudisquen de l'activitat teatral, en la que grups de teatre d'educació secundària exhibeixen les seues obres. Els resultats d'aquesta activitat artística i pedagògica resulten engrescadors per continuar aprofundint en un tipus d'aprenentatge socioafectiu. En definitiva, aquesta proposta metodològica explora altres possibilitats pedagògiques perquè el professorat de secundària ensenye a través de la participació activa.

Paraules clau: aprenentatge socioafectiu, teatre, educació secundària, llengua i literatura

Extended abstract

This decade will mark a turning point in regard to education for emotional development. New citizens are being educated following the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework, with the intention of having them participate actively in society to implement the objectives of human dignity, solidarity, empathy, diversity, dialogue, and a culture of peace. Education, therefore, confronts the challenge of teaching these new citizens. This project proposes social-affective learning as an ideal tool for implementing these values in the classroom.

To this end, the teacher created and adapted a play (*Relacionados*) to the requirements suggested by the Inestable group, in which it was essential for students to identify with the language of the play and with the interpersonal stories. The first phase of the project had high school students perform in this play. The aim of the project included work on linguistic issues required in the Spanish Language and Literature curriculum, but also sought to consolidate a social message that would promote freedom and equity in couple relationships. The goals align with the objectives for education in emotional development by UNESCO. The second phase of the project linked a group of high school students with other high school groups, through their participation in the Teatro Joven de Castellón meeting that took place on May 19, 2021. A space was set up in the educational centre and the

necessary means were used so that a virtual contact could be made with the aim of sharing feedback on three theatrical performances.

The main goal of this combined didactic proposal is to develop students' emotional intelligence so that they can offer real and valid solutions to everyday and relational situations. This project considers that a socio-affective learning methodology must be understood as a process, which is built by the student and their peer group, and through which a cooperative, empathic, peaceful, and caring identity can be developed.

The project was presented as part of the curriculum of the subject of Spanish Language and Literature in a public High School in the Valencian Community (Spain), IES Violant de Casalduch, in their third term during the 2020-2021 academic year. All participants were selected were coursing their junior year of high school (first year of Bachillerato in Spain). The participants of the theatre play were selected from two groups and were a total of six, while the students who participated in the theatre day were selected in a non-random way from a mixed group of classes and were constituted by 22 students, aged between 16-17.

This action-research project presents a didactic strategy to the educational community and contributes to the systemic reflection on transversal education in the Spanish Language and Literature classroom, with a view to improving and changing both personal and social skills of young people. Additionally, it has promoted interdisciplinary practices by incorporating reading, dramatization, and debates in relation to the performing arts and in collaboration with the Inestable project and other educational and institutional entities. The results of this project support the effectiveness of generating synergies to seek a common goal. In this case, the theatrical performance, the theatrical viewing and the feedback sessions represented a collaboration with a performing art collective and the IVAJ (Valencian Institute for Youth), connecting educational institutions of the Valencian Community, resulting in collaborations between high schools, teachers, students, and subjects. Therefore, this project also illustrates a strategy to build bridges to improve educational and social realities, by motivating, innovating and transforming.

Finally, regarding the initial objectives based on Sustainable Development Goals, it is possible to assert that teamwork, solidarity, empathy, and equity between interpersonal and partner relationships were promoted by these activities. These results fostered student motivation and generated a reflection on the value of theatre to acquire knowledge and share this knowledge with peers. Incorporating this type of projects into educational communities has the potential to transform students into better professionals capable of facing new challenges.

1. Introducción

El estudio académico sobre problemas actuales, como el cambio climático o la pandemia mundial por Covid-19, han puesto de manifiesto la clara necesidad de enfocar los esfuerzos educativos en el alumnado como individuos y fomentar una docencia que promueva experiencias educativas que les ayuden a lograr el éxito educativo y un desarrollo efectivo en el mundo (López y Pérez, 2017). Así, el teatro en la educación secundaria destaca por ser un medio muy adecuado para integrar los contenidos curriculares y es especialmente interesante en la asignatura de Lengua Castellana y Literatura porque genera nuevos ambientes de aprendizaje y constituye un lenguaje total en el sentido de interrelación con otras artes (Motos, 2009; Pareja-Olcina, 2021a, 2021b, 2021f). Por tanto, fomentar el teatro como estrategia educativa es relevante tanto para la investigación de la literatura juvenil como para la formación de futuros educadores y profesores. El objetivo que se persigue con este artículo es el de ofrecer una propuesta de innovación docente aplicable a la asignatura de Lengua Castellana y Literatura que permita desarrollar la inteligencia emocional del adolescente para que sea capaz de ofrecer soluciones reales y válidas a situaciones cotidianas y relacionales. Para que esta propuesta de innovación docente no se quede en un nivel teórico, sino que se convierta en un proceso de aprendizaje vivencial para los futuros profesores, se ha diseñado una experiencia de aula en la que forman parte agentes internos (el propio alumnado y la profesora de Lengua Castellana y Literatura) y agentes externos (encuentros juveniles, el Instituto Valenciano de la Juventud, el proyecto Inestable y el Teatre de la Joventut) con el objetivo de crear sinergias con todo el entramado social del entorno teatral y motivar para la cooperación. Las explicaciones adicionales de los antecedentes contextuales y la metodología empleada del estudio se elaboran en las siguientes secciones.

el teatro en la educación secundaria destaca por ser un medio muy adecuado para integrar los contenidos curriculares y es especialmente interesante en la asignatura de Lengua Castellana y Literatura porque genera nuevos ambientes de aprendizaje y constituye un lenguaje total en el sentido de interrelación con otras artes

2. Contexto

2.1. Marco teórico

El teatro es una herramienta fundamental para actuar en el aula con adolescentes y ensayar destrezas lingüísticas como la entonación, la expresión, la escucha atenta y activa o el razonamiento verbal. Tomàs Motos considera estas estrategias teatrales en el aula de secundaria un instrumento didáctico eficaz para desarrollar competencias básicas (2009). Es

decir, a través de la práctica teatral el adolescente interioriza aspectos clave para el desarrollo como el trabajo en equipo, el orden, la locuacidad, la persistencia, la expresión corporal y, en definitiva, la comunicación interpersonal e intergrupala (Boud & Molloy, 2015; Durán, 2014; Motos, 2013; Navarro, 2007). Así, la educación y el aprendizaje de la Lengua Castellana y Literatura se convierte a través del teatro en una experiencia práctica.

Motos y Navarro (2003) insisten en esta vivencia del aprendizaje a través del cuerpo como

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elemento comunicador, pues potencia la percepción sensorial de todo lo que nos rodea y es la clave en la construcción de personas más sensibles y receptivas. En este sentido se puede trabajar la atención del alumnado, en un momento en que las prácticas con dispositivos móviles ha generado adolescentes con problemas de concentración. El teatro también favorece destrezas comunicativas (expresividad oral, dominio fonético,

ampliación del vocabulario...). Sin embargo, coincidimos con Tomàs Motos y Antoni Navarro en que un punto esencial de la experiencia dramática radica en dotar al adolescente de inteligencia emocional, pues, el teatro permite desarrollar emociones y encontrar las herramientas necesarias para controlarlas.

Antoni Navarro (2013) se centra en la vinculación entre inteligencia emocional y las prácticas dramáticas, que permiten al estudiante sentir que está viviendo algo único gracias a la estimulación de los sentidos y el trabajo en equipo. Además, el teatro confiere al adolescente habilidades para superar miedos, inseguridades y complejos que tendrán un impacto significativo en todas las facetas de su vida y, por último, fomenta la creatividad y estimula el pensamiento divergente.

Por su parte, organismos internacionales como la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO) han resaltado la necesidad de trabajar aspectos como la dignidad del ser humano, la solidaridad, la empatía, la diversidad, el diálogo y una cultura de paz. Actitudes necesarias para crear desarrollo y mejorar la calidad de vida (UNESCO, 2012) y para lograr estos objetivos se propone la educación como el único promotor que puede acelerar los avances de desarrollo sostenible:

La educación permite que las personas, en particular las mujeres, vivan y aspiren a tener una existencia sana, plena de sentido, creativa y resiliente. Refuerza su voz en los asuntos comunitarios, nacionales e internacionales. Les brinda nuevas

oportunidades laborales y vías de movilidad social. En pocas palabras, la educación tiene efectos importantes en muchos otros sectores y merece ser un pilar esencial (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15).

Una de las claves para conseguir este desarrollo se relaciona de forma directa con el fomento de la igualdad. Por eso uno de los objetivos propuestos por la UNESCO tiene que ver con lograr la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres y el empoderamiento de todas las mujeres y niñas (2014, p. 6). Los países miembros de este organismo, entre ellos España, se van adaptando de forma progresiva a estos objetivos, así la regulación legislativa más reciente en España, la ley de educación actual (LOMLOE, 2020) adopta un enfoque de igualdad de género a través de la coeducación y fomenta en todas las etapas el aprendizaje de la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres, la prevención de la violencia de género y el respeto a la diversidad afectivo-sexual, introduciendo en educación la orientación educativa y profesional del alumnado con perspectiva inclusiva y no sexista. En este sentido el aprendizaje socioafectivo tiene una importancia reseñable en la educación para el desarrollo porque le permite, al estudiante, experimentar los conflictos de los demás, vivir su situación personal y comprender las reacciones y efectos que tienen en su vida cotidiana (Saez, 2007, p. 253).

Para cumplir con el objetivo principal de este artículo es fundamental incorporar recursos didácticos que tengan como punto de partida el teatro, la dramatización, la música, la lectura y el debate. Diferentes estudios de investigación de la última década (Álvarez y Morán, 2016; Cutillas, 2005; Jorba *et al.*, 2000; Motos y Navarro, 2003; Nuñez y Navarro, 2007; Pérez, 2011; Sánchez, 2016; Vieites, 2015) ya demuestran la idoneidad del teatro como un instrumento eficaz que permite desarrollar competencias básicas en esta área de aprendizaje. Aunque también cuenta con detractores (Araque, 2009) que entienden el teatro como una propuesta adicional, que únicamente favorece el entretenimiento en el aula.

Si hacemos una comparativa de estudios publicados, encontraremos que las propuestas de investigación sobre el valor pedagógico del teatro superan en número a los detractores. En general prevalece un modelo en el que se aconseja la dramatización dentro de la asignatura de Lengua Castellana y Literatura, y no como una mera actividad complementaria a través de extraescolares (Bowell y Heap, 2001). El teatro entre adolescentes es doblemente productivo, esto es así porque los jóvenes están en una edad en la que la pertenencia al grupo es decisiva y, en este sentido, la dramatización favorece dinámicas motivadoras para el aprendizaje. Para Julián Pérez (2011, p.173) estos trabajos grupales ayudan a los jóvenes a conocerse mejor, trabajar en equipo y tolerar las diferentes actitudes. Tampoco debemos desestimar el valor

pedagógico del teatro en la asignatura de Lengua Castellana y Literatura y es que, a través de su práctica, fomentan las habilidades cognitivo lingüísticas necesarias para lograr un aprendizaje significativo basado en la comprensión lectora y audiovisual. A lo que cabría sumar el debate posterior (Iñiguez, 2017; Uzunöz y Demirhan, 2017).

3. Metodología

Este trabajo presenta una propuesta de innovación docente en el marco de la investigación-acción educativa en la construcción de saber pedagógico por parte del docente investigador, con el objetivo de encontrar un sistema de enseñanza que mejore el rendimiento académico y la motivación del alumnado y, para ello, utiliza un método de evaluación cualitativa “que produce datos descriptivos: las propias palabras de las personas, habladas o escritas y la conducta observable” (Taylor y Bogdan, 1987, pp. 19-20) e implica consideraciones éticas, como por ejemplo, la confidencialidad de los datos y el respeto por las opiniones de los sujetos. En cuanto a las técnicas de recogida de información, se ha tenido en cuenta el resultado final de la representación y su impacto en los estudiantes participantes a través de una entrevista abierta e informal (Taylor y Bogan, 1986) a los actores y al grupo que participó del encuentro teatral.

3.1. Objetivos

El objetivo que se persigue con este artículo es el de ofrecer una propuesta de innovación docente aplicable a la asignatura de Lengua Castellana y Literatura que permita desarrollar la inteligencia emocional del adolescente para que sea capaz de ofrecer soluciones reales y válidas

la metodología de aprendizaje socioafectiva debe entenderse como un proceso, que construye el estudiante y el grupo de iguales, y con el que se pretende elaborar una identidad cooperativa, empática, pacífica, solidaria...

a situaciones cotidianas y relacionales. En este sentido, la metodología de aprendizaje socioafectiva debe entenderse como un proceso, que construye el estudiante y el grupo de iguales, y con el que se pretende elaborar una identidad cooperativa, empática, pacífica, solidaria... En el marco teórico encontramos diferentes denominaciones para referir este tipo de aprendizaje basado en lo afectivo y emocional. Así, Waajid, Garner y Owen (2013) lo denominan “aprendizaje socioemocional”, Seal, Nauman, Scott y Royce-

Davis (2011) lo definen como “desarrollo socioemocional”, María de los Ángeles De La Caba (1999) prefiere “educación afectiva” y Ojalvo (2016) “educación socioafectiva”. Este último destaca el valor de este tipo de aprendizaje cuando se quieren desarrollar cuestiones morales vinculadas a la ética de la conducta, la empatía y la relación con el otro y, en este sentido, lo define como el:

Proceso educativo intencionado, sistemático y permanente cuyo objetivo es potenciar el desarrollo social, ético y emocional, a partir de la interacción social, en el marco de una cultura y valores deseados, como expresión de la unidad de lo cognitivo, afectivo y valorativo del desarrollo de la personalidad integral y auto-determinada, para facilitar la convivencia, el bienestar personal y social (Ojalvo, 2016, p. 2)

De esta propuesta también se desprenden objetivos secundarios que resultan complementarios al currículo y a la realidad en la que se produjo la práctica:

- Desarrollar en el estudiante las capacidades para producir y analizar mensajes orales y escritos.
- Adaptar estas herramientas a un contexto de distanciamiento social por covid-19.
- Crear sinergias con otros centros educativos e instituciones que se interesan por la práctica teatral con adolescentes.

3.2 Contexto

A la hora de escoger el nivel adecuado para llevar esta práctica al aula, son muchos los estudiosos que han valorado la etapa de secundaria como la más adecuada para desarrollar estas estrategias e innovaciones educativas (Bueno y Pérez, 2008; Gargallo, 2003; Martínez *et al.*, 2001). Además, las investigaciones también recomiendan llevar a cabo esta instrucción educativa en los contextos reales de aprendizaje, es decir, integrándolas en el currículo y dentro de la jornada normal (Bernard, 2000; Gargallo, 1997, 2003, 2009). Por otro lado, el área de Lengua Castellana y Literatura es el ámbito idóneo para implementar esta metodología (Pareja-Olcina 2021c, 2021d, 2021e), porque este proyecto fomenta una de las claves del currículo: lectura, entonación, expresión y disfrutar a través de la lectura y talleres dramáticos.

En este sentido se da prioridad a métodos participativos: la representación teatral, ya que permiten vincular contenidos a su aplicación práctica, ofrece a los estudiantes la posibilidad de vivir la experiencia teatral, estimula la creatividad y el autoaprendizaje y motiva a los estudiantes. Por otro lado, las tertulias realizadas en la jornada del IVAJ favorecen posturas críticas, personales y comprometidas ante los temas dramáticos que se tratan en su centro educativo y en otros Institutos de la Comunidad Valenciana (Viñas, 2012).

El proyecto se trabajó en la asignatura de Lengua y Literatura Española en un centro público de la Comunidad Valenciana (España), IES Violant de Casalduch, en el tercer trimestre durante el curso 2020-2021. Los participantes de la obra teatral han sido seleccionados de dos grupos de primero de bachillerato, con un total de seis jóvenes, mientras que los estudiantes que

participaron en la jornada teatral han sido seleccionados de forma no aleatoria de un grupo mixto de primero de bachillerato constituido por 22 estudiantes, con edades comprendidas entre los 16-17 años.

3.3 Obra escogida: *Relacionados*

Relacionados es una obra teatral juvenil publicada en 2019 y con experiencias de aula (Pareja-Olcina, 2021a, 2021b). La trama de la obra trata las relaciones más íntimas que se dan en la pareja. El paradigma que plantea *Relacionados* es hasta qué punto las relaciones que han mantenido sus progenitores afectarán a sus relaciones futuras. En este sentido, un grupo de personajes adolescentes presentará la estructura familiar en la que viven y cómo les afecta: un divorcio, un abandono y violencia verbal. Estos tres personajes quieren superar las relaciones de sus padres, querrán algo mejor, pero es innegable el punto de partida de cada uno de ellos. El personaje femenino que desarrolla Laura, una de las protagonistas, ofrece a sus lectores una muestra de empoderamiento, ya que pese a su legado familiar (basado en la violencia doméstica) decide ponerse en primer lugar y no tener una relación sentimental basada en la dependencia emocional.

3.4 Propuesta didáctica: representación teatral

Para llevar a la práctica el proyecto, la docente creó y adaptó esta obra teatral a los requerimientos sugeridos por el grupo Inestable, en la que fue fundamental que los estudiantes se identificaran con el lenguaje y las historias interpersonales, con el objetivo de trabajar cuestiones lingüísticas propias del currículo de Lengua Castellana y Literatura, pero también se buscó afianzar un mensaje social que potenciara la libertad y equidad en las relaciones de pareja. La temática, por tanto, fue acorde a los objetivos para la educación en el desarrollo de la UNESCO, y que ya estaban descritos en el inicio de este artículo. Por su parte, en España la viabilidad de este proyecto está justificada y queda recogida en la Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, que cambia el artículo 34 de la Ley de educación sobre la «Organización general del bachillerato» por el que se modifica el apartado 1 del artículo 35 y queda redactado en los siguientes términos:

Las actividades educativas en el bachillerato favorecerán la capacidad del alumno para aprender por sí mismo, para trabajar en equipo y para aplicar los métodos de investigación apropiados. Asimismo, se prestará especial atención a la orientación educativa y profesional del alumnado incorporando la perspectiva de género. (LOMLOE, 2020).

El reparto de los papeles en la obra se fijó según la características, disponibilidad y actitud de los estudiantes. La elección de los personajes, por tanto, se decidió de manera conjunta y la docente creó un grupo de WhatsApp para asignar tareas, dividir trabajos y hacer un seguimiento de los ensayos. La obra se ensayaba en los patios que todos acordaban de manera conjunta, ya que al estar la obra constituida solo por seis alumnos se planteó fuera de las sesiones de clase. El 26 de abril de 2021 la empresa de edición de vídeo Noviembre Films acudió al centro educativo para grabar la obra de teatro. En otras circunstancias la obra habría sido representada en un teatro, pero ante la situación de pandemia por covid-19 el objetivo fue el de distribuir el vídeo en las jornadas que organizaba el IVAJ a distintos centros de secundaria de la Comunidad Valenciana y también les dio la oportunidad a los estudiantes que participaron en la obra de compartir sus experiencias con otros jóvenes y resolver sus dudas en cuanto a la organización del proyecto y la dramatización. Finalmente, el vídeo quedó recogido en una página web para que su impacto y trascendencia no se quedara únicamente en esta jornada teatral.



Figura 1. Adolescentes grabando una escena de “Relacionados”.

3.5 Propuesta didáctica: encuentros teatrales juveniles

Para llevar a cabo esta propuesta metodológica basada en el aprendizaje socioafectivo a través del teatro, resulta apropiado insertar esta actividad en proyectos educativos de mayor envergadura e impacto. Es por esta razón que esta actividad se sumó a la octava Trobada de

Teatre Jove (Encuentro de Teatro Juvenil) que en esta edición, por la situación de pandemia por covid-19, se planificó íntegramente de forma virtual.

Este proyecto educativo impulsa encuentros que tienen su origen en el grupo teatral Inestable y que suponen una oportunidad para que los jóvenes conozcan y disfruten de la actividad teatral, en la que grupos de teatro de Educación Secundaria de la Comunidad Valenciana exhiben sus obras. Además de las representaciones, las personas participantes se forman en talleres con profesionales de las artes escénicas y de la pedagogía; conocen y conviven con otras personas que también viven el teatro y, en general, las artes escénicas, a través de la danza, la música, la plástica o la expresión corporal. Se trata de una cita tanto de jóvenes que hacen teatro como de sus docentes que quieren reivindicar la educación artística y su valor pedagógico.

En estas jornadas los estudiantes realizan representaciones y participan en talleres impartidos por profesionales de la pedagogía y de las artes escénicas.

Por tanto, esta segunda fase del proyecto tiene que ver con la dinamización de un grupo de bachiller a través de su participación en la jornada del Encuentro de Teatro Joven de Castellón que se realizó el 19 de mayo, para ello se habilitó un espacio en el centro educativo: el salón de actos, y se utilizaron los medios necesarios para que se pudiera realizar un contacto virtual con retroalimentación. El Encuentro se hizo mediante la plataforma WebEx y se proyectó en una pantalla de grandes dimensiones. El aula cumplía con todos los requisitos de seguridad por covid-19. Es decir, mesas separadas con una distancia de metro y medio, todos los participantes llevaban mascarilla y ventanas y puertas abiertas para ventilar el espacio.

La jornada se planificó a través del visionado de los trabajos escénicos de tres centros de la provincia de Castellón, así como el *feedback* y el contacto virtual entre alumnos de los diferentes institutos públicos. La dinámica de la intervención consistió en una presentación de la Trobada por parte del comité organizador, una explicación de las vicisitudes en la creación y representación de la obra *Relacionados*, la visualización de tres obras de teatro (a través de un directo en YouTube: <https://youtu.be/QYrjYV3y5mo>) y un debate en vivo a través de Webex. También los adolescentes llevaban sus dispositivos móviles y podían hacer preguntas y chatear en directo a través de los comentarios de YouTube y otras redes sociales disponibles como Instagram o Twitter.

4. Resultados e impacto de esta intervención

Los resultados de la representación se recopilan a través de entrevistas abiertas e informales y la observación participante moderada como docente-investigador. Esta información quedó

recogida en un cuaderno de notas en el que se captaron impresiones sobre esta práctica teatral y su impacto en el grupo de adolescentes participantes. Por tanto, estos resultados pretenden captar el significado que ha tenido esta práctica metodológica en los adolescentes, de modo que los resultados se obtienen de una forma flexible y no estructurada. Esto es así porque esta propuesta pretende captar el significado que tiene esta experiencia en los jóvenes y esta metodología permitía la conversación investigativa de forma amistosa con los participantes, aclarar sus dudas o reconducir las preguntas en función de sus respuestas. Para obtener información se llevaron a cabo tres entrevistas grupales que se pueden dividir en dos grupos: proyecto didáctico 1, la experiencia dramática de los actores y el proyecto didáctico 2, la experiencia del encuentro teatral organizado por el IVAJ.

- La primera entrevista se realizó a los integrantes del grupo de teatro una vez acabó la grabación de la obra (se tomaron notas de sus respuestas). La segunda se hizo a estos mismos estudiantes cuando finalizó el proyecto y pudieron ver la proyección de su trabajo. Las preguntas las realizaba el equipo organizador de la *Trobada21* y alumnado de otros centros que habían visionado la obra y esta información quedó registrada a través de la plataforma Webex. A estas preguntas cabe sumar las de la investigadora que se recogieron de forma escrita (notas fruto de la entrevista oral y abierta).
- La última entrevista se dirigió a los participantes de la jornada teatral del IES Violant de Casalduch. Al final de esta jornada todos los participantes valoraron la experiencia dramática con una frase que decía: “para mí el teatro es...” y esta información quedó registrada a través de la plataforma Webex. A continuación, la investigadora también les preguntó y registró, a través de notas, su impresión como espectadores.

4.1 Resultados del proyecto didáctico 1: grupo teatral

- Los integrantes entienden el teatro como una oportunidad para representar roles ajenos a su personalidad. Esta apreciación les ha permitido empatizar con otras personas que piensan y actúan de forma diferente y les ha dado la oportunidad de explorar nuevas formas de conducta. A modo ilustrativo: una joven que suele tener una personalidad apocada, al interpretar a un personaje agresivo, ha podido integrar algunos modos de conducta diferentes a la suya y encontrar un equilibrio entre ambas. Por otro lado, uno de los actores que representaba un rol similar a su personalidad se ha interesado por continuar esta práctica representando otros personajes con un carácter más fuerte y desenfadado. Al respecto la actriz C opina lo siguiente: “ es una

experiencia muy guay, que mola mucho meterte en el papel del personaje y ha sido una forma chula de leer un libro y de interiorizar (los personajes)”.

- Esta actividad les ha ayudado a superar miedos intrínsecos de esta edad: hablar en público y exponerse a otros. Y, como resultado, han ganado en seguridad en sí mismos. A través de la observación como docente hemos comprobado cómo esta seguridad se ha visto reflejada en otras exposiciones orales de la asignatura. Y a través de la técnica de la entrevista hemos visto que la actriz B opina que le ha ayudado a superar “la vergüenza delante de una cámara y a representar algo que no parece falso, porque a veces vemos en islas¹, que yo digo: qué mal lo están haciendo, y yo decía: pues yo voy a intentar hacerlo bien y me ha costado bastante saber que estaba delante de una cámara y que eso lo iba a ver más gente”.
- La propuesta lectora: *Relacionados*, les ha ayudado a entender su proceso vital y a ser empáticos con otras situaciones familiares. El actor A opina que “te enseña un poco cómo son los problemas que tienen los adolescentes a esta edad y, también es interesante porque [...] es una manera distinta de aprender sobre las cosas y eso es muy chulo”. También esta lectura les ha permitido identificar relaciones de pareja insanas, así la actriz B opina que “el libro presenta una relación tóxica y estos hechos tú antes no lo habías visualizado como algo tóxico entonces te das cuenta”. La actriz D comenta a este respecto que “al leerlo lo ves tú mismo, porque si te pasa a ti, pues, no lo sueles notar. Y lo ves desde fuera y dices: pues sí, te das cuenta de que te está pasando algo y no lo sabías”. El actor A llama la atención sobre expresiones que no se suelen detectar como problemas relacionales y que él descubrió con la obra: “no puedo vivir sin ti, no me puedes hacer esto” y la actriz C señala a modo de conclusión que “necesitar no es querer [...] y que hay que aprender a quererse a uno mismo antes que querer a otra persona”.
- Han podido ser testigos de cómo funciona un sistema de grabación y eso les ha ayudado a entender las prácticas audiovisuales en series, películas y programas de televisión. Es interesante destacar la sorpresa que produjo el hecho de grabar una toma desde diferentes perspectivas y enfoques y que fruto de ese trabajo (cuatro horas) tan solo se mostraba una pequeña parte en el resultado final. En este sentido, han podido

¹Se refiere al programa de telerrealidad “La isla de las tentaciones”, producido por Cuarzo Producciones y emitido en España por Telecinco y Cuatro.

comprobar la guionización de otros programas televisivos que se presentan como *Reality shows* y ser conscientes de la realidad adulterada que presentan.

- Las entrevistas arrojan los siguientes resultados sobre su habilidad expresiva y lingüística. El actor A opina que ha aprendido “cómo enunciar y entonar las frases y luego, también, cómo te mostrabas, cómo actuabas, los gestos que ponías”.
- Uno de los actores protagonistas descubre, a través de la representación, su interés por la dramatización y decide que esta práctica estará presente en su vida, aunque lo practique de forma lúdica.
- Una joven (D), que ya estaba interesada por la dramatización, afianza este interés y se lo plantea como carrera profesional. Por eso cree que la dramatización “es algo que hay gente que no sabe que le gusta y gracias a eso (las propuestas educativas dramáticas) puede meterse en ese mundillo y le gusta”.
- Desde la perspectiva de la observación, ha mejorado su capacidad para improvisar y resolver conflictos. Durante la grabación se dieron algunas situaciones inesperadas (espacios de grabación, climatología, escenografía...) y aprendieron a resolverlas de forma conjunta, aportando ideas y ofreciendo soluciones. De forma que les ha permitido trabajar la adaptabilidad a las circunstancias, entendiendo que los cambios y su flexibilidad a ellos es esencial para finalizar cualquier tarea que emprendan.
- El proyecto teatral les ha ayudado a practicar la organización y la gestión del tiempo, al tener que ajustarse a unos plazos de trabajo.
- En todos los casos esta actividad ha mejorado su autoestima, ya que han recibido felicitaciones por parte del equipo de grabación, el claustro de profesores y su grupo de iguales (tanto en las jornadas como en el centro educativo). Esto es así porque el IES Violant de Casalduch y la docente hicieron publicaciones en redes sociales sobre esta actividad y un grupo de espectadores amplio pudo comprobar su valía interpretativa.

4.2. Resultados del proyecto didáctico 2: jornada teatral (*Trobada21*)

Para poder llevar a cabo esta jornada, tres centros educativos conectaron virtualmente en tiempo real de 10.00 a 13.00 horas.

- El público asistente valoró estas jornadas teatrales como un espacio de ocio y disfrute dentro de su jornada lectiva.

- Otro punto reseñable de la actividad es que, tanto los actores como los espectadores, son adolescentes y este hecho facilita la interacción digital. Es decir, estaban más disponibles a comunicarse por redes sociales y agradecían que este tipo de interacción no fuera penalizada sino valorada.
- Los espectadores mostraron interés por las obras dramáticas que presenciaron y que se representaban por su grupo de iguales, pero quedaron impresionados al ver a sus compañeros y compañeras de clase actuar. La valoración de su intervención fue muy positiva, aplaudieron y valoraron el trabajo que habían realizado. Esto dio como resultado un aumento de la consideración personal que los actores y actrices tenían sobre sí mismos.
- Las redes sociales y las plataformas virtuales han demostrado que se pueden realizar encuentros teatrales adaptados a las restricciones por covid-19.
- El adolescente espectador, que no sentía interés por actividades teatrales o dramáticas, ha descubierto que, con la temática adecuada, el teatro es una actividad muy interesante que merece la pena descubrir. Al respecto, todos los participantes estaban dispuestos a repetir la actividad en futuras convocatorias.
- Se fomenta la interdisciplinariedad con otros centros educativos y su alumnado.
- Las valoraciones finales del estudiantado participante relacionaba el teatro con una actividad divertida, que les ayudaba a expresar emociones y que favorecía la reflexión.
- Desde la perspectiva de la observación, el uso de redes sociales ha propiciado que los jóvenes pregunten más que en una situación presencial. Desde el año 2008 se ha acudido a representaciones teatrales con público adolescente en la provincia de Castellón y, al finalizar la obra, los actores les ofrecían la oportunidad de hacer preguntas. Sin embargo, el público rara vez participaba o, si lo hacía, era con una o dos preguntas. En esta ocasión los espectadores podían participar durante la representación con sus dispositivos móviles a través de redes sociales y, en este sentido, se sentían más cómodos para participar. Posiblemente, una de las razones sea que sienten menos vergüenza a intervenir de forma virtual que presencial y esto les da la oportunidad de hacer más preguntas.

En ambas experiencias los adolescentes encontraron un espacio para contar sus experiencias sentimentales y reflexionar sobre las actitudes que habían tenido, el resto de la clase

(especialmente los actores, que son los que más habían integrado la obra) les recomendaban soluciones saludables para estar en una relación de pareja.

5. Conclusiones

El impulso que han tenido los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) de Naciones Unidas, que se reflejan en la Agenda 2030, y que tienen como prioridad crear culturas inclusivas, es decir, sociedades colaboradoras y respetuosas con la diversidad y la diferencia marcará un punto de inflexión con respecto a la educación para el desarrollo y la educación emocional. Se espera de estos jóvenes en formación que sean capaces de participar de forma activa en la sociedad para hacer efectivos los objetivos de dignidad del ser humano, solidaridad, empatía, diversidad, diálogo y una cultura de paz que marca la UNESCO. La educación, por tanto, tiene el reto de formar ciudadanos que estén a la altura de actitudes más colaborativas y respetuosas y, en este sentido, el teatro se ha convertido en la herramienta idónea para trabajar en el aula el marco socioafectivo.

Se espera de estos jóvenes en formación que sean capaces de participar de forma activa en la sociedad para hacer efectivos los objetivos de dignidad del ser humano, solidaridad, empatía, diversidad, diálogo y una cultura de paz que marca la UNESCO.

Este proyecto de innovación educativa plantea a la comunidad educativa una estrategia didáctica y contribuye a la reflexión sobre la educación transversal en el aula de Lengua Castellana y Literatura, con vistas a la mejora y al cambio -tanto personal como social- de los jóvenes. De igual manera ha favorecido una práctica interdisciplinar al trabajar la lectura, la dramatización y el debate de las artes escénicas en colaboración con el proyecto Inestable y otras entidades educativas e institucionales. Este hecho supone un ejemplo para la comunidad académica, ya que siempre es eficaz generar sinergias para buscar un objetivo común, muestra de ello es el resultado del encuentro organizado por el IVAJ, que ha sabido poner en contacto exposiciones dramáticas en centros educativos de la Comunidad Valenciana, en el que el proyecto final es el resultado de varias colaboraciones entre Institutos, docentes, alumnado y asignaturas. De forma que esta metodología, además de jugar un papel importante en la enseñanza de Lengua Castellana y Literatura, se ha encaminado a tender puentes, mejorar, motivar, innovar y transformar las realidades educativas y sociales.

En cuanto a los objetivos se ha conseguido fomentar la práctica teatral en un momento de distanciamiento social y medidas higiénico sanitarias derivadas de la pandemia por covid-19. La lectura, la dramatización y la participación de todo el grupo, bien como agente activo (actores) bien como espectadores nos ha permitido tratar en el aula la temática de *Relacionados* sobre la

empatía, la equidad entre las relaciones interpersonales y de pareja, fomentando un rol basado en el bienestar personal y no en la dependencia emocional.

El trabajo presentado constituiría una primera fase de investigación en torno a este tema y es que se propone a la comunidad científica que se siga investigando en esta línea para obtener resultados cuantitativos a través de encuestas estructuradas. También parece necesario ampliar la muestra, lo que permitiría un acercamiento en profundidad sobre el impacto que el teatro en el aula puede tener en los adolescentes.

A modo de conclusión, el teatro favorece la motivación del alumnado y es una vía para adquirir conocimiento y compartir con el grupo de iguales una serie de valores educativos. Este trabajo ofrece a la comunidad educativa una propuesta que se inserta en el currículum académico de una asignatura instrumental, con el objetivo de ofrecer una metodología que promueva la inclusión del arte teatral en las programaciones, con el fin de integrar las diferentes disciplinas y permitir al adolescente vivir la educación en un papel protagonista.

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Comic reception revisited. A revision of gender-based reading practices (at school)

Reconsiderar la recepció del còmic. Una revisió de les pràctiques basades en el gènere (a l'escola)

Reconsiderando la recepción del cómic. Una revisión de las prácticas basadas en género (en la escuela)

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Abstract

Comics are often regarded as an optimal medium for learners with reading difficulties. Based on empirical research on reading socialization in school and during leisure time, this article displays that comic books have other educational opportunities to offer.

Instead of making the (re)medialization of gender in comics the starting point of a supposedly boy-specific reading promotion, which (institutionally) reinforces the pictorially depicted gender binarity both on the level of reading practice and on the level of reading content, various practical teaching possibilities are shown to promote gender literacy with comics in education. The article argues for reflection and new non-binary reading education paths that adequately take into account the hybrid mediality of comics and the segment's recent developments in the market (for example in feminist comics).

Key words: comic, gender, critical literacy, media socialization

Resum

Els còmics es consideren sovint com a mitjà per a joves i/o són utilitzats per aprenents amb dificultats de lectura. Tot basant-se en recerca empírica sobre socialització lectora a l'escola i temps d'oci, aquest article mostra que els còmics tenen d'altres oportunitats educatives que oferir.

En lloc de fer la (re)-medialització de les identitats de gènere als còmics el punt de partida d'una suposada promoció de lectura específica per a joves, la qual (institucionalment) intensifica la binarietat del gènere representat, tant a nivell de la pràctica lectora, com a nivell del contingut de la lectura, es mostren diverses possibilitat d'ensenyament pràctic per tal de promoure la literacitat de gènere amb còmics a l'educació. L'article defensa reflexionar-hi al voltant amb aprenents i també al voltant de nous camins educatius de lectures no binàries que prenguen en consideració la medialitat híbrida dels còmics i dels desenvolupaments recents del mercat al segment (com per exemple, els còmics feministes).

Paraules clau: còmic, gènere, medialitat, promoció de la lectura, socialització de la lectura.

Resumen

Los cómics se consideran a menudo un medio para jóvenes y/o son utilizados por aprendices con dificultades de lectura. Basándose en investigación empírica sobre socialización lectora en la escuela y tiempo libre, este artículo muestra que los cómics tienen otras oportunidades educativas que ofrecer.

En lugar de hacer la (re)-medialización de las identidades de género en los cómics el punto de partida de una supuesta promoción de la lectura específica para jóvenes, la cual (institucionalmente) intensifica la binariedad del género representado, tanto a nivel de la práctica lectora, como a nivel del contenido de la lectura, se muestran diversas posibilidades de enseñanza práctica para promover la literacidad de género con cómics en la educación. el artículo defiende reflexionar acerca de este tema con alumnado y acerca de nuevos caminos educativos de lectura no binarias que tomen en consideración la medialidad híbrida de los cómics y de los desarrollos recientes de mercado en el segmento (como por ejemplo, los cómics feministas).

Palabras clave: cómic, género, medialidad, promoción de la lectura, socialización de la lectura.

1. Introduction

In (reading) literacy tests, boys perform worse than girls, even though it is debatable to what extent this is primarily due to the test methods and evaluations (Philipp, 2013). Philipp and Sturm state that it is not possible to clearly prove that boys and girls have different levels of literacy and warn against forcing an overly gender-specific promotion of literacy (Philipp & Sturm, 2011, 88). They emphasize that, with a view to mediation processes, it might be worthwhile to move away from a purely "sex" perspective and focus more on the "gender" character of reading and writing development. The following article aims to start at this point by questioning in what way comics can be said to have a tendency towards a male readership.¹ Thus in section 1, empirical and media-pedagogical findings as well as descriptions based on reader biography of the gender-specific reading of comics in school and free time are presented. Section 2 then takes a look at the subject matter by identifying gender constructions and authorship in comics as a possible starting point for the developments outlined. This leads to the didactic problem of whether and to what extent comics should actually be launched as a suitable subject for inclusive or youth-specific reading promotion. Two fundamental didactic reading questions are connected with this: Is there an "original" male/female interest in reading and how can (and should) reading promotion respond to this: affirmatively or compensatively?

For the use of comics in the classroom, fundamental reading didactic questions arise: Is there a male/female interest in reading them and how can (and should) reading promotion react to this: affirmatively or compensatorily?

¹ This was already strongly argued by Witty, 1941a and b in his surveys of comic book readers; but one also finds these assumptions in current introductions to reading didactics (Garbe, 2020, p. 85).

Against this background, different didactic potentials and consequences of the use of comics in gender-sensitive literacy promotion are discussed in section 3.

2. On the reception of comics in the context of school and leisure worlds of reading media

2.1 On the sex specificity of comic readings

In a recent study (TaMoLi) in Germany and Switzerland², survey data were collected quantitatively and qualitatively from 2,173 students and 116 teachers on texts, motivations and activities in literature classes at lower secondary level. The study showed that students distinguish between what they would like to read at school and what they would like to read in their free time - in other words, there is already a context-related functional differentiation of reading in place.

With regard to graphic narrative and gender, the following findings emerge:

rank	Teachers*	Students, gender-mixed*	
	<i>Text selection^a</i>	<i>Free time reading preferences^b</i>	<i>School reading preferences^b</i>
1	d) Political/community criticism (64.8%)	i) SciFi, Fantasy (46.9%)	d) Political/community criticism (25%) i) SciFi, Fantasy (25%)
2	m) Youth problems (29.8%)	j) Adventure (43.1%)	
3	q) Modern novels (28.2%)	h) Crime novels (40.8%)	g) Horror (24.3%)
4	r) Classical literature (24.7%)	a) Comics (40.2%)	h) Crime novels (23.9%)
5	k) Historical (22.2%)	g) Horror (36.6%)	a) Comics (22.6%)
6	n) Poetry (20.8%)	l) Love (30.9%)	m) Youth problems (21.1%)
7	j) Adventure (16.9%)	c) Sports (28.4%)	e) Science, technology (20.3%)
8	f) Nature (10.1%)	o) Drama (23.1%)	k) History (19.9%)
9	l) Love (9.9%)	m) Youth problems (21%)	j) Adventure (19.5%)
10	h) Thrillers (6%)	q) Modern novels (20.9%)	c) Sports (18.6%)
11	i) SciFi, Fantasy (4.7%)	k) Historical (15.7%)	q) Modern novels (18.3%)
12	o) Drama (4.5%)	b) Music or musicians (15%) s) Fairy tales, legends (15%)	p) Biographies (17.8%)
13	g) Horror (1%)		r) Classical literature (16.8%)
14	p) Biographies (0.8%)	e) Natural sciences, technology (13.5%)	b) Music or musicians (16.4%)
15	c) Sports (0.6%)	f) Nature (13.4%)	f) Nature (16.2%)
16	s) Fairy tales, legends (0.6%)	d) Political/community criticism (12%)	o) Drama (14.7%)
17	e) Natural sciences, technology (0.4%)	p) Biographies (11.9%)	s) Fairy tales, legends (13.8%)
18	a) Comics (0.2%)	n) Poems (6.3%)	l) Love (13.1%)

Table 1. Quantitative findings on reading worlds in lower secondary school (Siebenhüner, Depner, Fässler, Kernen, Bertschi-Kaufmann, Böhme & Pieper, 2019, p. 56)

² Results of the study are available at <https://www.literaturunterricht.ch/>.

Within the differentiations between school and leisure reading, comics are one of the few items which rank high among learners in both domains of interest. This is by no means true to the same extent for other texts: The reception of texts that are critical of politics and society ranks first among learners' school preferences, while in the leisure domain they are almost at the bottom of the list. Conversely, topics such as romance and sport occupy top places in the leisure sector, but for school these are not considered as conceivable reading topics. From a gender perspective, it should also be mentioned that

In German-speaking countries there is empirical evidence of a high interest in reading comics among male adolescents, which is, however, hardly considered in school reading practice.

48.5% of secondary school students in the study expressed an interest in comics for leisure time, 28.8% also for school; in both domains of interest, comics come first among male children and adolescents in leisure time and at school (Siebenhüner et al., 2019, p. 1). In contrast, a significant difference can be observed among girls: 32.1% attest to an interest in comics in their leisure time, but only 16.4% at school, which is not that low in relation to the maximum value for reading preferences at school. This is confirmed by older findings which likewise observed a significantly higher interest in comics among boys (Schwippert, Bos, & Lankes, 2004). Of course, the selection of gender-oriented reading cannot be justified solely on the basis of students' interests. Nevertheless, a gender gap can be identified here, which becomes even more pronounced when the selection of teachers with a view to gender-coded literature teaching practices is added for comparison. For, according to the teachers, the interests of the learners represented an essential category in making text selection decisions at the secondary level. However, the findings with reference to formats of graphic storytelling show that teachers do not realize this goal: Compared to all other categories favored by students in leisure time and school, comics rank far behind at 0.2% in text selection (Siebenhüner et al. 2019, 56). This difference may also explain teacher stereotypes about girls reading avidly and boys reading less (Retelsdorf, Schwartz & Asbrock 2015; Muntoni & Retelsdorf, 2018): A reading medium that is particularly popular among boys does not find its way into school literature teaching practice; not least because comics may not yet be perceived as (sophisticated) literature.³ With a view to the described increased preference for comics by boys and the intrinsic motivation to read that is developed comparatively earlier among girls (Philipp, 2011, p. 7), this is a serious factor, because the downward trend in reading motivation in the course of reading socialization can hit boys even more severely. Teachers may waste potential at secondary level here, especially in the area of motivation, which can be verified as a categorical difference in reading development.

³ This can possibly also be explained historically, as comics in Germany were in international comparison subject to a pejorative public valuation for a very long time (see Grünewald 2014).

In German-speaking countries, there is empirical evidence of a high interest in reading among male adolescents, which is, however, hardly considered in school reading practice.

2.2 On the limits of gender stereotyping in comic reception

Of course, which comics students and teachers actually have in mind under the term "Comics" is not irrelevant for the significance of the cited study. Nor does this clarify the significance and function of comics in the diverse spectrum of reading and media activities of secondary school students, which is why I would like to further differentiate these preliminary findings in the following. Comics are specifically introduced and selected in the media socialization process by the different instances (family, school, peer), so I think that this can result in gender-specific differences with regard to reading development.

Studies by the Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest (Media Education Research Association Southwest) show, that comics already play an important role in children's media structures, comic book heroes and characters are even identified as possible "idols" by six- to twelve-year-olds of both sexes (MPFS, 2018, p. 21). In this context it is noteworthy that among children of this age group, *Greg's Diary* by Jeff Kinney has been the most frequently read book for years (MPFS, 2018).⁴ However, this phenomenon cannot only be explained by the medium itself, but seems to be much more justifiable in terms of the anti-heroic presentation of characters and the associated different forms of identificatory reading as well as serial storytelling.⁵ The media educator Claudia Wegener emphasizes the importance of comics in children's media socialization, especially with a view to the phenomena of convergence: literary models, film adaptations and computer games are often closely connected (Wegener, 2018, p. 156). Furthermore, comics are also part of the socio-spatial structure of media socialization in the 'socio-ecological center (parental home, school...), as well as in the periphery. Thus, in addition to serial popular phenomena such as *Greg's diary*, *Asterix* and *Tintin ComicCon* and the fan culture around mangas are also part of a diverse media-ecological and socio-spatial localization (Wegener, 2018, p. 160). Wegener assumes that the individual (and thus also gender-specific) use of comics "[...] is determined by the interpretation that adolescents themselves experience and develop in the course of their socialization, but on the other hand also by the intention with which comics are inserted into the respective spaces of growing up" (Wegener, 2018, p. 161). Among other things, she focuses on the fact that there are generation-specific media practice cultures which, in the parents' generation (and thus in the media ecology center), span a range of comic media

⁴ Unfortunately, in the JIM study on the 12-19 age group (in contrast to previous years), reading preferences are no longer differentiated; the study only refers to questions about analogue and digital reading, which do not appear to be meaningful for comics, as they are easily accessible in both formats.

⁵ It should be noted at this point, that the hero is not just an "average" 11–14-year-old, but a male character.

educations from protective and nurturing to aesthetic-culture-oriented, critical-emancipatory to subject- and action-oriented (Tulodziecki 2018, p. 186), which then have a co-constructive effect on the reception of comics. This socio-spatial location in childhood and adolescence appears essential with regard to comic reception (similarly Grünewald 2014) and also determines gender-related reading practices. Parental stereotypes of reading and reading practices have been shown to play an important role here (Muntoni & Retelsdorf, 2019). Cedeira Serantes (2019), who conducted 17 "in-depth interviews" with teens and young adults who would describe themselves as "readers of comics for pleasure," also emphasizes the function of comics as a link in the media landscape in which young people move:

Comics reading emerges as a sophisticated practice that shares elements with other media practices but that also has unique characteristics that make it especially suitable for and compatible with some of the conditions young people live under in contemporary society. The participants [of the study, CF] describe a complex medium that challenges and comforts them, that is accessible but is also intricate and that deserves time and attention; [...] This media landscape creates more possibilities for readers to experience a text, to create meaning and memories, and to study why and how each technology and narrative is integrated and experienced. (Cedeira Serantes, 2019, S. 85)

What seems to be decisive is the co-construction of socio-spatial localizations in media socialization. Therefore, gender-specific definitions are constituted by the subjectivation (following Butler, 1997) of media biographical development.

2.3 Subject and subjectivation: media-relatedness of gender-based reading socialization

Within the framework of reception studies on comics (among others Hofmann & Führer, 2017; Führer, 2020 a; Führer, 2020 b) I have therefore repeatedly asked primary and secondary school students as well as university students to produce autobiographical texts that also describe their relationship to comics. In the following I present two of these self-descriptions at crucial transitions in schooling (and reading socialization) - from primary to secondary school and from lower secondary school to upper secondary school - in order to be able to specify and entangle the preceding remarks in the form of a subject analysis. The cases condense observations that can be made comparatively by going through the developmental trajectories of reading biographies. They do not claim to be statistically representative, they are oriented towards the subjectivation research (Geimer, Amling & Bosančić, 2019) in the paradigms of interpretative social research (Rosenthal, 2018) and biographical research (e.g. Garbe, 1993; Graf, 2007). The examples help to understand the relation or the tension between normative media orders (and more or less hegemonic subject norms) and the habitus of the actors.

Erik, a student in a grade 4 class in transition (2nd semester) to secondary school (gymnasialer Bildungsweg), writes about his experiences with graphic narratives:

I don't read comics that often, I read more books. [I read comics, CF] Sometimes when I'm bored. I used to look at books when I was a child and not at comics. Currently I don't read that many comics. The only comics I like are The Fantastic Four.⁶

What is interesting about this statement, is the categorical distinction between comics and books, which is often found in this age group. On the one hand, this may show the idea that comics are in booklet form (or digital?). On the other hand, these statements also indicate how few genres are present in this phase of reading socialization. At this age, reading biographies are strongly constituted by media forms, less by genres which function trans medially and could allow more precise indications of preferences. Erik is no comic reader for passion, but he does not fundamentally reject comics. The comic series explicitly named by Erik, *Fantastic Four* was first published in 1961. It initiated the now famous Marvel Universe. The connection to a media network (here in the form of films from the Marvel universe) and seriality appear in the data material as a media habitus that favors comic reception.

Ava, an 11th grade student at a general education high school (Allgemeinbildendes Gymnasium) writes:

For many young people, comics are part of everyday life, but I am not one of them. I do like to read in my free time, but I never read comics. However, if you look at the basic structure of a comic, i.e. pictures with text, or rather action is depicted in pictures, I have to say that I have read one kind of comic in my life, and that is picture books. When I was younger I used to look at them with my family and they would read them to me. Later I read "Greg's Diary", and I also know comics like "anime" and "mangas", but I haven't read them. Until now, I haven't really been able to get excited about comics. Nowadays, however, more and more comics are being made into films, such as Superman or Riverdale, of which I also watch the film version.⁷

⁶ Original text in German: Ich lese nicht so oft Comics sondern mehr Bücher. [Ich lese Comics, Autor] Manchmal wenn mir langweilig ist. Ich habe mir Bücher als Kind angeschaut und keine Comics. Aktuell lese ich nicht so viele Comics. Die einzigen Comics, die ich mag, sind die von den Fantastischen Vier.

⁷ Original text in German: Comics gehören für viele Jugendliche zum Alltag, doch ich bin keiner davon. In meiner Freizeit lese ich zwar gerne, aber ich lese nie Comics. Wenn man jedoch den Grundaufbau eines Comics, also Bilder mit Text, bzw. die Handlung wird in Bildern wiedergegeben, betrachtet, so muss ich sagen, dass ich in meinem Leben doch schon eine Art Comic gelesen habe nämlich Bilderbücher. Diese habe ich als ich jünger war zusammen mit meiner Familie angeguckt und mir wurde daraus vorgelesen. Später habe ich mal „Gregs Tagebuch“ gelesen, und ich kenne auch Comics wie „Anime“ und „Mangas“, die ich allerdings nicht gelesen

The fact that Ava does not like reading comics tends to fit into the dichotomous picture of the gender distribution norms of comic readers (TaMoLi). Ava's reflection on her non-interest in comics should be emphasized: She says she has references to graphic narration about reading situations she experienced as a child and she "knows" comics and their film adaptations. The widespread use of certain comic content in other media shows how normative media orders also break through gender binary of comic reception.

Theses that comics have the potential to encourage boys in the course of reading development because they are close to a world of reception that is less oriented towards realism (empirically studied

Subjective preferences for graphic narrative are characterised by a variety of functions in the media and reading socialisation process, the transmediality of comics, and references to and effects of seriality. This orientation can be favoured by genre-related strong emotional activations due to the psychosemiotics of comics

by Andringa 2004, among others) or that they even accommodate boys' lower reading abilities cannot be condensed as a hegemonic subjective norm on the basis of quantitative and qualitative research I have examined so far. Subjective preferences for graphic narration are characterized by a variety of functions in media and reading socialisation process, transmedial references and effects of seriality. Genre-specific high emotional and in part subjective activations caused by

the psychosemiotics of comics (e.g. funnies, superheroes, mangas)⁸ can favor this alignment.

Since comics are not only processed in the context of cultural norms in media socialization, but are also bound to the media themselves, gender-specific differences also result from these norms. For this reason, in addition to the reception-related disposition, the medium of comics itself will now be examined more closely. For this purpose, the gender concepts negotiated in them will be presented and it is discussed what this means for the acquisition of gender and media literacy.

3. (Re-)Medialization of Gender in Comics and Graphic Novels

By now, the strong gendering of the medium of comics and its represented content has been intensively addressed in comic research (Sina, 2016; Aldama, 2020). Selected aspects are now used to discuss the strong gendering of the medium of comics and its depicted content.

habe, aber bis jetzt konnte ich mich leider noch nicht wirklich für Comics begeistern. Heutzutage werden aber auch immer mehr Comics verfilmt, wie z.B. Superman oder Riverdale, deren Verfilmung ich auch schaue.

⁸ The latter observation has already led to the fact that these genres are also evaluated as fruitful for bibliotherapeutic approaches (Oskamp, 2017). Packard (2006) explains the affective meaning of comics in this way: a moment of the reader's self-awareness at the moment of reading is simultaneously attributed to the character depicted.

With regard to the action comics with superheroes frequently mentioned by the students in the reading biographies (and not only for these), a distinction must be made between pictorial representation and social reality in the processes of representation.

[...] Representations of the woman often serve as a mirror and projection surface for the man who creates them. As a dream image, imagined fantasy, fetish, cover memories, these representations vicariously express his power, his creativity and his cultural products. This means, however, that as a representational image, the woman is present; as a represented subject and producer, she is absent.⁹

Especially action and superhero comics are made by male comic artists (!) who specifically target stereotypical overdrawn because it is part of the genre-specific gendering of visual languages in comics:

Everyone knows that it is girly to prefer sentimental, communication-based comics [,] and that it is macho to like action comics with superheroes and aliens. In terms of visual language, comics for boys prefer to depict movement, while comics for girls focus on emotions.¹⁰

Packard et al. (2019) further highlight in their monograph on comic analysis that the gender category must always be considered in dialogue with other structural categories of comic production, reception and aesthetics (Packard et al., 2019). They illustrate this pointedly with a comic strip by Hochstädter (Figure 1) (p. 155 ff.):



Figure 1. Comic strip by Hochstädter (2010, p. 70, cited in Packard et al., 2019, p. 155).

⁹ Original text in German: “[...] Repräsentationen von der Frau dienen hier oft als Spiegel und Projektionsfläche für den sie erschaffenden Mann. Als Traumbild, imaginierte Phantasie, Fetisch, Deckerinnerungen bringen diese Repräsentationen seine Macht, seine Kreativität und seine Kulturprodukte stellvertretend zum Ausdruck. Das bedeutet nun aber, als Repräsentationsbild ist die Frau anwesend, als repräsentiertes Subjekt und Produzentin ist sie abwesend” (Sina, 2016, p. 72).

¹⁰ Original text in German: “Jede_r weiß, dass es girly ist, sentimentale, kommunikationsbasierte Comics zu bevorzugen[,] und dass es macho ist, Actioncomics mit Superheld_innen und Aliens toll zu finden. Im Hinblick auf die visuelle Sprache werden in Comics für Buben bevorzugt Bewegung dargestellt, während Comics für Mädchen sich auf Gefühle konzentrieren” (Martindale 2011, p. 342 cit. after Packard et al. 2019, p. 157).

In Hochstädter's comic strip, the constitutive interrelationship between gender and genre is thematized and ironized: The way the characters' clothes change from panel to panel changes not only the typification of the characters, but also their respective genre assignment and the stereotypical gender roles associated with it. In the Western, adventure and science fiction genres, conventional dichotomies of gender are restaged in the visual language (and produced in the sense of genre-specific addressing).

There is a binary organized repetition of gender-coded, conventionalized bodies and cultural characteristics (clothing, etc.): While the male figure is drawn with a prominent angular face, an Adam's apple, short hair, stubble and broad muscular shoulders, the figure on the left is marked as female with the help of long hair, cleavage, soft round facial features and narrow shoulders. In the second panel, the figures are assigned to a definite gender not only by their anatomical features, but also by their clothing and headgear within the binary heterosexual matrix, etc. (Packard et al., 2019, p. 156)¹¹

The performativity of gender orders is emphasized by the repetition of the figure arrangement, the typography or even the relationship between image and text. Thus, the invariability of the role attributions or the image statement is further emphasized by the fact that it is stereotypically the female connoted figure that addresses the male counterpart.

Packard et al. (2019) point out that there are cultural variations, for example in manga, in which gendered addresses are already produced qua genre (Packard et al., 2019, p. 157).

On the one hand, the mediated gendering of comics may explain gender-specific reading interests, but on the other hand, it is also a potential starting point for media awareness regarding gender.

4. From "boys' reading promotion" to gender literacy

Instead of making the (re)medialization of gender identities in comics the starting point of a supposedly boy-specific reading promotion, and thus to (institutionally) reinforce the pictorially represented binary on both the level of reading practice as well as on the level of reading content, the following approaches present alternative ways of reading didactics within and outside of school settings. In the

¹¹ The first panels are only listed as examples to specify the context. One could make similar observations by analogy for panels 3 and 4. For example, in panel 4 it is Ellen Ripley from the Alien film series who is shaved bald in order to shield her from the male gaze (and here, very specifically, from potential rape) in the men's prison. In this respect, the conventional dichotomy remains intact.

following the focus lies on gender-sensitive as well as gender-neutral approaches to reception of comics in the classroom (instead of a gender-specific approach).

4.1 Re- and deconstructions of (re-)mediated gender

In gender-sensitive reading didactics, comics and graphic novels exemplarily allow conventionally "established norms" and stereotypes in media to become visible and to be questioned accordingly (Sina, 2016, p. 81). For example, if one examines comics of adolescence, which deals conventionally with young people's search for identity, one can re- and deconstruct the comic-specific interweaving of gender and mediality already in covers of current coming-of-age comics (fig.2). In the following, this will be exemplified by two graphic novels, which in their marketing and layout certainly claim to have aesthetic pretensions. Boulet and Bagiu's *Blank Slate* is about a young woman who has lost her identity along with her memory. In the comic, which is kept close to reality, only basic everyday problems (relatives, friends, work, housing, past) are discussed as questions of identification. In *Vacuum* by Lukas Jüliger, on the other hand, it is a young man who experiences the intrusion of the radically indeterminate, even uncanny into his world. In the work, which oscillates on the edge of the fantastic, non-identity is negotiated not so much in a life-world dimension as in an anthropological one. There are questions of love, death, normality and madness as well as evil that form the horizon of the adolescent development of (non-)identity. A gender-sensitive deconstruction can be achieved for example through discussions about the cover (who would read this or that comic and for what reasons) or by analyzing the cover according to predefined criteria on the gender-specific contexts of visual language, genre and character performances in the (implied) fictional universe. It should be noted that communication about the stereotypical text/image performances will only be possible with appropriately developed reception skills for text and image as well as appropriately developed meta-reflexive skills.

Instead of a performative consolidation of gender norms in comic in literary education, it is worthwhile to instruct gender-reconstructive and deconstructive processes of comic reflection as well as diversity-oriented comic reading.



With regard to gender-sensitive reading didactics, it must be taken into consideration that publishers and cartoonists address gender constructs as a precondition on the part of the recipient under which these comics are read, and thus also overdraw them in the sense of the development-specific need for orientation in this phase. The outlined re- and deconstructing analyses of stereotypical or even binarity-hypertrophying comic worlds must not lead to exclusion effects regarding certain gender constructions in the classroom. Thus, with regard to the self-reflection (and cognitive maturation) of young people, it must be asked whether the addressing of these comics does not lead to (socially manufactured and emotional) binary decisions in reading culture instead of enabling diversity in (genre-specific) reading development.

4.2 Initiate gender literacy through media: Feminist Comics and gender binarity reflections

However, there are also examples in these binary constructed comics that explicitly deal with gender, identity (and sexuality), especially on the part of female comic artists, whose numbers have increased significantly in recent decades. *Girlsplaining* by Katja Klengel, for example, is deliberately kept in pink, stylistically quotes Sailor Moon comics by Naoko Takeuchi and deals with questions of the social and cultural symbolism of “the feminine” from the perspective of an adolescent. The text asks questions about the female sex in unavoidably funny everyday situations, including why vulva, menstruation and

other topics are not discussed and are tabooed in daily life. This kind of graphic narrations are mostly funny and entertaining for a specific group of female addressees, but does not penetrate deeper questions, although these may arise in follow-up communication. More unconventional are autobiographical graphic novels like Ulli Lust's *Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life* and *How I Tried to Become a Good Person* in which structure and coloring are also important narrative devices. Particularly her visualizations of bodies and sexuality are drastic and radical in their explicitness because bodies often become allegories within their fictional universe. By focusing on these modes of representation, mimetic readings, i.e. readings that understand the characters as images of reality (Gymnich, 2010, p. 256) - despite or precisely because of their autofictional narration - could be increasingly prevented and stereotypical patterns of perception or attribution could be broken in favor of diverse readings. These and other feminist comics such as *The Elephant in the Room*, *Fruit of Knowledge*, *Busengewunder* or the science fiction series *Bitch Planet* enable gender sensitization. However, in order not to be exclusionary (for the male readers) qua content again, this could be only *one* possibility among others, to do genre-contrastive-analytical work or to initiate more diverse perspectives on sex and gender by means of production-oriented tasks.

Finally, there is also a growing market of genres in the comics segment that use the potentials of comics to dissolve gender binaries more explicitly (Eckhoff- Heindl & Sina, 2020) and renegotiate gender identity both in the fictional universe and in their mediality. In his autobiographical graphic novel *Hexenblut* (Witch's Blood), for example, Suskas Lötzerich talks humorously, openly and straightforwardly about his wild youth as a punk, the injuries that life can inflict on transsexual people like him, and above all about his search for his very own sexual identity.

4.3 Stimulating fiction reflection: On comic-specific reality construction

One didactically gender neutral, identity-oriented way is to use the hybrid mediality of image and text elements in comics, which has the potential to "shake up" binary oppositions such as man/woman (Sina, 2016, p. 76.), as a basis for the examination of gender-related concepts of roles, and thus to offer a gender-diverse approach to this medium for all learners - literal, literary and cultural.

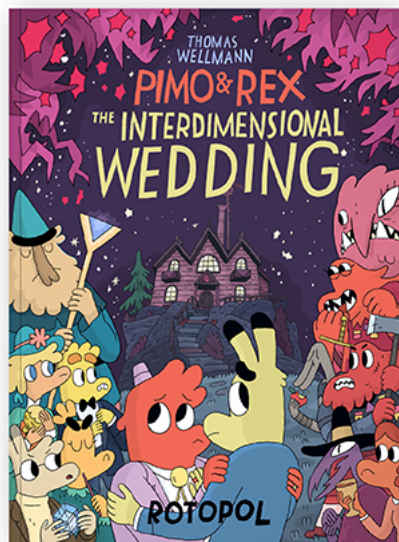


Figure 3. Cover for the sequel to the successful debut *Pimo and Rex*

Comics such as *Pimo and Rex* (Fig. 3), for instance, have cartoon protagonists who are supposed to be human beings; however, it is ultimately entirely up to the recipients how they imagine the fictional actors (and their perceptibility to their fictional contemporaries). If it is true that Pimo and Rex are not dogs, then the cartooned pictorial objects conceal their referential meaning twice over: not only that they can hardly be pinned down to a specific appearance and gender. Conversely, they show many things that do not belong to the creatures depicted in this way within the depicted world: all the characteristics that belong to dogs and thus lie more in the third symbolic space (Wilde, 2021). In contrast to a naturalizing reading that always assumes the representation of a world in fantastic, abstracted and overdrawn cartoon images that largely corresponds to ours, at least in its perceptibility, it is also possible to argue the opposite:

For the fantastic worlds of comics, manga and animation not only locally break with regularities - for example, when Rex finally leads his fiancé Leopold down the aisle or individual characters develop superhero powers - but also exhibit a particular visual ontology on a global level. After all, when it comes to cartooned animal beings and their gender, we can never be quite sure: 'Are these humanized animals or animalized humans?'

A detachment of depicted cartoon worlds from all claims of lifeworld reality and gender identities is particular to manga and anime discourse, which plays a significant role for young fan cultures, also argumentatively justifiable (Wilde, 2021). For although figurative abstraction continually invites identification (McCloud, 1994, p. 36), the pictorial plane simultaneously introduces the artificial and self-referential aesthetics of gender (Sina, 2016, p. 51).

5. Conclusion and perspective

The article was able to show that the reception of comics is gender-specific but should be addressed differently in reading didactics. Instead of a performative consolidation, it is worthwhile to instruct gender-reconstructive and deconstructive processes of media reflection as well as diversity-oriented reading and literature teaching that either accentuates different multimodal reception skills or reading engagement and text involvement through an appropriate choice of media with image-text openness or an explicit reflection.

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Printed hyper-texts in the Greek literature for children: Breaking the canon and creating a new type of implied reader

Hipertextos impresos en la literatura grega per a infants: trencar el cànon i crear un nou tipus de lector implícit

Hipertextos impresos en la literatura griega para la infancia: romper el canon y crear un nuevo tipo de lector implícito

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Abstract

The article focuses on two ground-breaking books by the renowned Greek author Eugene Trivizas, which adopt a multimedia and hyper-media logic, incorporating, apart from text and image, forms of expression that refer to the digital world of multimedia. We analyse in detail the hyper-text characteristics of the selected books, which make the process of reading a game that involves the active participation of young readers.

We argue that in view of the contemporary canon of Greek children's literature, books which adopt a linear form of narration, printed hyper-texts are examples of non-canonical literature which enrich not only the form but also the content of contemporary Greek literature for children. At the same time, because of their hyper-text characteristics, such books construct an implied reader, who is not deterred by the neoteric element of their form, with quite a few 'qualifications', to accept the initiative that is offered to them and enjoy the reading game.

Key words: hyper-texts, metafiction, interaction, implied reader, active reader, children's literature, literary canon

Resum

Aquest article se centra en dos llibres trencadors escrits pel nomenat autor grec Eugene Trivizas, el qual adopta una lògica multimèdia i hipermèdia, tot incorporant a més del text i la imatge, formes d'expressió que al·ludeixen al món digital del multimèdia. Analitzem en detall les característiques hipertextuals dels llibres seleccionats, els qual converteixen el procés de lectura en un joc que comporta la participació activa dels i les joves lectors i lectores.

Defensem que, respecte del cànon contemporani de la literatura infantil grega, amb llibres que adopten una forma lineal de narració, els hipertextos impresos són exemples de literatura no-canònica que enriqueix no

sols la forma sinó també el contingut de la literatura grega per a infants. Al mateix temps, a causa de les seues característiques hipertextuals, aquest tipus de llibre construeix un lector implícit a qui no el dissuadeix l'element neotèric de la seua forma - amb bastant "reserves" - per tal d'acceptar la iniciativa que se'ls hi ofereix i així gaudir del joc lector.

Paraules clau: hipertextos, metaficció, interacció, lector implícit, lector actiu, literatura per a infants, cànnon literari.

Resumen

Este artículo se centra en dos libros innovadores escritos per el reputado autor griego Eugene Trivizas, el cual adopta una lógica multimedia e hipermedia, incorporando además del texto y la imagen, formas de expresión que aluden al mundo digital del multimedia. Analizamos en detalle las características hipertextuales de los libros seleccionados que convierten el proceso de lectura en un juego que conlleva la participación activa de los jóvenes lectores y lectoras.

Defendemos que, con respecto al canon contemporáneo de la literatura infantil griega, compuesto de libros que adoptan una forma lineal de narración, los hipertextos impresos son ejemplos de literatura no-canónica que enriquece no solo la forma sino también el contenido de la literatura infantil griega. Al mismo tiempo, a causa de sus características hipertextuales, estos tipos de libros construyen un lector implícito a quien no disuade el elemento neotérico de su forma, - con bastantes "reservas" - para aceptar la iniciativa que se les ofrece y así disfrutar del juego lector.

Palabras clave: hipertextos, metaficción, interacción, lector implícito, lector activo, literatura infantil, canon literario.

1. Introduction

Over the years, the Greek illustrated children's book has gradually modernized its form and content following the imperatives of the current cultural expressions and norms. Particularly today, an increasing number of illustrated children's books seem to adopt a multimedia and hyper-media logic, incorporating, apart from text and image, forms of expression that refer to the digital world of multimedia (Yannikopoulou, 2007b). The handheld book remains useful. New modes of communication, though, rival the printed word (Hammerberg, 2001) and a qualitatively new relationship is instituted between the reader and the book. As Dresang claims (1999), these radical changes to the nature of the book, imposed by and related to the new technologies and the ways in which they (re)produce information, tend to lead contemporary children's books away from their traditional structures. Speaking of the contemporary Greek children's

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literature, we argue that books that adopt a multimedia and in particular hyper-media logic break the canon of the genre, not only in terms of their structure but also in terms of the alternative roles they allocate to their readers, which, as we will show, portray alternative types of implied readers.

2. Printed hyper-texts: definition and characteristics

The influence of hyper-media on the way printed literature is conceived and constructed has led to works that abolish linear reading by giving the reader or, rather, user the chance to interact with the text, thus, defining the course of the development of the story (Yannikopoulou, 1988, 209). One of the most interesting categories of such books are hypertexts. The term “hyper-text” itself, introduced by Theodor Nelson in the 60's, refers to a kind of text, read on the computer screen, which differs radically from the conventional printed text since it has no hierarchical structure, but, on the contrary, allows multiple ways of reading. It is, in other words, a multi-level text that encourages interaction with the reader (Giakoumatou, 2002). Although, according to reader-response theories (Booth, 1961; Iser, 1974; Holland, 1968; Culler, 1975), all books require active readers, there are certain kinds of books which expect from their readers to act in a specific, predetermined way, while others encourage a variety of different responses. Readers of “handheld hyper-texts” (Dresang, 1999, 63), in particular, are invited to interact with these books by making decisions during reading: they are given the chance to approach the text in a non-linear way and to select paths of reading that the authors themselves have not predetermined from the outset of the reading process.

Turning now to the specific characteristics of “printed” or “handheld” hyper-texts, we observe that “they borrow from the [electronic] hyper-text the “flexible” elements of multiple choices, nodes, links and networks” (Landow, 1977, 2 in Fokiali, 2008). As Yannikopoulou (2007a) argues, by abolishing the linear presentation of their material, such books essentially reproduce the “active domains” used by hyper-texts, that is hotspots and hyperlinks that allow the reader to have multiple choices. Thus, instead of the predominant plot, the author prefers to intersperse the main narrative points (nodes) with some nodal ones (links) that act as a hyper-text.

3. The characteristics of the printed hyper-texts examined

The two books by Eugene Trivizas that we have chosen to analyse are representative of the category of printed hyper-texts that we described above. Trivizas is a famous Greek author whose work has consistently renewed the mainstream Greek literature for children by introducing it into postmodern narrative techniques such as metafiction and intertextuality. The books we have chosen to analyse here, namely *Τα 88 ντολμαδάκια* [*The 88 Dolmadakia (stuffed vine-leaves)*] (1997) and *Τα 33 ροζ ρουμπίνια* [*The 33 Pink Rubies*] (2003) have been a breakthrough in the Greek publishing market and

have shown that the interaction of electronic hyper-media and literature can be an extremely fruitful development in children's literature.

Let us, then, examine the hyper-text characteristics of the selected books in detail. The abolishment of the linearity of reading, which is one of the main characteristics of printed hyper-texts, is achieved

The abolishment of the linearity of reading, which is one of the main characteristics of printed hyper-texts, is achieved when, at the end of each page, the writer asks a question about what is going to happen next, and then allows the readers to choose one of the proposed responses so as to move on to the next step of the narration

when, at the end of each page, the writer asks a question about what is going to happen next, and then allows the readers to choose one of the proposed responses so as to move on to the next step of the narration. For example, in *The 88 Dolmadakia* the narration of the story starts with the presentation of the little protagonist, Emma, who is alone in her house and feeds her goldfish. When suddenly the phone rings, Emma remains undecided. Then, the narrator, addressing the readers, asks them: "What do you want Emma to do? Should she pick up the phone or not?" Below this question there are two button-boxes, which contain two

alternative answers to the above question. The readers are asked to choose which one they prefer. Their choice will lead them to another page and will move the story forward. That reading process makes the influence of digital technology clear. For, in terms of an electronic hyper-text, the readers—users 'click' on one of these two buttons, which, because they act as links, refer them to another page with hypothetical buttons and links, and so on.

Apart from their original titles, these illustrated books by Trivizas also bear the same long subtitle: "A magic book with a thousand tales hidden in the same tale. A strange book that you read over and over and it tells you a different story each time". Such a subtitle highlights both the novelty of the reading process itself and the active role that is assigned to the implied reader of these books. In fact, at the beginning of each book there is a note explaining to the readers how to wander through the pages of the book and how to construct their own stories; the readers are also encouraged to interact with the illustrations of the book by coloring the black and white images that coexist with the text. The phrase "you decide", which is repeated in the editorial notes of the back covers of both books, is the key phrase that conveys the concept of a participative and energetic reader. Indeed, in *The 33 Pink Rubies*, the reader is even encouraged to cut out a cardboard figure of the protagonist of the story, provided in the last page of the book, so that they can use it during the reading process, transferring it from one page to another.

An additional innovative characteristic of both books is that they provide their readers with multiple endings of potential stories. In total, there are forty-four ending pages in the *The 88 Dolmadakia* and fifty-three in the *The 33 Pink Rubies*. Some of them are blank and give the readers the space to write their own end to the story. In the actual ending pages of the books, the readers will also come across something unexpected. In *The 88 Dolmadakia*, the ending page portrays the picture of a young boy who drives a car but has stopped before a sign that is placed in front of him by the fictional characters of the book and warns him: “Beware! Caution! This seems to be the last page of the book. But, it is not.” The driver, representing the reader who is the driving force of that playful narrative game, is literally and metaphorically driven to the end of the book, which, however, is not identified with the end of the reading trip, as would be the case in a conventional literary text. The last pages of *The 33 Pink Rubies* include a section of activities, supplemental to the main narrations. The reader is triggered to engage with these activities through references cited in the stories. For instance, a footnote on page 32 invites the reader to make use of the special cooking recipe that the princess herself followed in order to make baklava for her knight. As such, the fictional boundaries are blurred, since elements of the story are inserted into the reader’s world.

4. The active role of the implied reader

As we have shown so far, because of their hyper-text characteristics the two books under consideration assign to their implied reader non-canonical roles in the reading process. Let us, therefore, identify the ‘qualifications’ that the readers of these books should have in order to cope with such non-canonical roles, which will lead us to the identification of the implied readers of the particular books.

The implied reader, who can be also defined as a ‘model’ or an “ideal reader”, is the persona who is theoretically able to realize all the possibilities of the text: both those that the author himself may have considered, and the ones the text itself creates, ‘in absentia’ of the author. Wolfgang Iser, who introduced the concept in the sense in which we use it here, defines it thus: “the implied reader describes the pre-conditions of the text, pre-conditions that are activated and realized differently by different readers in each historical period” (1974: 281). We should bear in mind that while reading, the actual reader is called by the text itself to identify with the implied reader so as to realize its pre-conditions. This is the outcome of the reading act that every writer desires. However, this is not always feasible: for, very often the actual reader does not have the qualifications that the implied one theoretically has. As is the case when a child reads, for instance, poetry written for adults, or, conversely, the actual reader has more qualifications than the implied reader, as is the case when an adult reads literature for young children. In both cases, the identification between actual and implied

reader is not possible and the “reading event” (Hollindale, 1977: 28) is not successful (Oikonomidou, 2016).

Let us now put together one random story from the book, *The 88 Dolmadakia*, by making a series of choices on the way. Thus, we will be able to examine the function and the ‘qualifications’ of the implied reader of the particular story and also of the book as a whole. On the very first page of the book, the narrator, after introducing Emma-the central heroine, tells us that the phone rings and Emma picks it up. It is Athanasia, her best friend, on the phone and invites her to a Halloween party. But then Emma’s mother does not allow her go to the party, because on that same day they expect her aunt to visit. Emma gets so angry that she throws a fit. She keeps on shouting and screaming for so long that, in the end, she ruins everything around her and is left all alone.

Another random story, this time from *The 33 Pink Rubies*, will allow us to have a better view of the function of the handheld hyper-texts under examination.

The story starts when Rodolfos Ruleman, a poor and fearful knight, falls in love with a charming princess who is sitting on the top of a tower, feeding her canaries. He decides to enter the castle and ask the king for her hand in marriage. However, he soon finds out that he should compete with another seventy-two knights who have already arrived at the castle for the same reason. In order to win the competition, he draws purple pimples on his face and complains that he suffers from a contagious disease that turns the body limbs into eggplants. The other knights directly withdraw from the competition and the hero manages to meet the king. The latter consents to the knight’s request to marry his daughter, but he asks him which of his two single daughters he wants to marry. The knight is surprised by the fact that there is more than one princess. The king demands an answer right away, hence Rodolfos randomly goes for Elsinori instead of Elsvira. He soon realizes that Elsinori is actually an awful monster, but he decides to kiss her. With every kiss she receives, she looks even more horrible. Nonetheless, he keeps on kissing her. In the end, the monster turns into a beautiful princess, as a magic spell is broken, and the two of them live happily ever after, eating the most tasteful baklavas that the princess cooks.

By examining the two stories in detail, we can observe the ways in which the text itself constructs its implied reader, by setting specific pre-requisites to him or, to put it differently, by demanding specific ‘qualifications’ of him.

In general, when we seek the ‘qualifications’ of the implied reader of a text, we focus on the difficulties that it presents for its reader (Iser, 1978). In the case of the books we examine, we would argue that these difficulties are of five kinds. First of all, there is the difficulty concerning the language used, which is full of linguistic games such as puns, false etymologies or alliterations. The implied reader, then, seems to have the necessary knowledge of the language and the necessary fluency so as to be able to follow but also enjoy Trivizas’ linguistic games. A second kind of difficulty, directly related to the above mentioned, has to do with the kind of humour that permeates the books. Indeed, the texts are full of Trivizas’ situational¹ as well as linguistic jokes² that transfuse them with a characteristic satirical and often absurd kind of humour³ which is a distinct feature of his style. The implied reader, then, is a persona who is in a position to appreciate that kind of humour and laugh with the absurd and often far-fetched jokes of Trivizas; however, on some occasions, actual young readers, unfamiliar with satire and even less sarcasm, may not be able to identify with him.

By examining the two stories in detail, we can observe the ways in which the text itself constructs its implied reader, by setting specific pre-requisites to him or, to put it differently, by demanding specific ‘qualifications’ of him.

The implied reader is, however, in a position to handle yet another kind of difficulty that these canon-breaking books present him with. We refer to the narrative but also ideological gaps, that is, to all those elements of the stories that are not mentioned in the narrative but, as self-evident, are only alluded to. In this case the implied reader is the hypothetical reader who has the necessary kinds of knowledge and the necessary reading experience so as to fill in those gaps by making all the necessary suppositions concerning what is left unsaid. It is worth adding here that many of the textual elements that the readers have to put together in order to form their stories, are imbued with intertextual allusions: many well-known fairy-tale figures, such as dragons, vampires, princesses and dwarfs stroll around in the pages of the books under consideration. We must not lose from sight, though, that such

¹Indicative example (from *The 88 Dolmadakia*): “Emma kept on crying until she was submerged in her tears. She feared that she would drown because she did not know that if one is submerged in tears they turn into fish. And that is exactly what happened: she turned into a sardine. Her mum put her in a fish bowl and fed her on crumbs of cake. When Emma grew up and was too big to live in a fish bowl, her mum took her to the beach and threw her into the sea.”

²For instance puns such as “Struttgard” instead of “Stuttgart”, “Piperu” instead of “Peru”, or made-up names such as “Patatistan” (in Greek “potato land”) or “Lihoudistan” (in Greek “greedy land”) and so on.

³Characteristic instances of absurd humour are jokes based on the effect of excess, as we will analytically show below, or jokes based on the effect of irrelevance, as is shown in the following example: “The honorary potato-frier of the palace presented Emma with a silver horn, three sugar apples, a cuckoo clock, a parrot and a flying trough to help her get back home” (p.51).

fairy tales' figures and fairy-tale conventions are systematically reversed or exaggerated by Trivizas. A

Thus, the implied reader of these books puts aside all the rules of reading canonical literary texts and embarks on something challenging because it is totally unknown. That is, indeed, a 'qualification' of the implied reader that many actual readers may not have. It is probable that a number of young readers, accustomed as they are to canonical books, will find reading a printed hyper-text a rather frustrating task

typical example of reversal is the portrayal of the knight, the protagonist of *The 33 Pink Rubbies*: both in the text and in the illustration, his image reverses the corresponding model of the muscular and brave man of traditional fairytales: Trivizas' knight is skinny, funny and rather timid. He looks as if he needs the reader in order to get adventurous. But exaggeration, too, is one of Trivizas' favourite techniques. An example of a fairy tale convention that is intentionally exaggerated is the scene with the knight kissing the enchanted princess: he has to kiss her not once but

three times in order to break the spell. The reader is asked three times in a row whether the knight should give one more kiss to the monster or if he should run away from her. If the reader loses his courage and lets the prince run away, the story ends up with the hero being hurt or forcibly expelled from the castle and the country.

The implied reader, then, is a persona who can overcome the difficulty of the intertextual allusions and of their exaggerations and reversals, a persona who can meet the prerequisites that that specific narrative technique sets. In other words, he is a persona who has a good knowledge of fairy tales and classic works of children's literature and he can therefore fill in the intertextual gaps of the narrative, by understanding the intertextual allusions and jokes, making all the necessary connections and comparisons and drawing all the necessary conclusions.

One more aspect of *The 33 Pink Rubies*, but also of *The 88 Dolmadakia*, that presents their implied reader with a certain kind of difficulty is that in most nodal points in the two books, the reader comes across short riddles, drills or exercises that he has to do in order to proceed to the next page and continue the story in the way he has chosen. This prerequisite portrays an implied reader who has already acquired the skills to deal with them (math, grammar, etc.). For example, the reader is asked to make calculations or apply grammar rules in order to find out which is the next page that gives the story the turn he wishes.

It goes without saying that the very form of a printed hyper-text that characterizes the books we analyse presents the readers with yet another form of difficulty as it invites them to a non-canonical reading process. Thus, the implied reader of these books puts aside all the rules of reading canonical literary texts and embarks on something challenging because it is totally unknown. That is, indeed, a

'qualification' of the implied reader that many actual readers may not have. It is probable that a number of young readers, accustomed as they are to canonical books, will find reading a printed hyper-text a rather frustrating task. Because, as Yannikopoulou astutely observes, those books often inspire "a sense of wonder and insecurity in their audience. Readers often feel confused as they have to follow uncharted reading routes" (2007b, 20). Moreover, she continues, "because they confront a textual labyrinth, they often experience the frustration of an unsatisfactory reading" (Yannikopoulou, 2007b, 20).

In view of the above, we can safely argue that despite their enjoyable and playful character, the printed hyper-texts under examination present their young readers with quite a few difficulties. To put it otherwise, they 'construct' an implied reader with quite a few 'qualifications'.

To limit ourselves to the example of the above story we have created within the framework of *The 88 Dolmadakia*, let us now examine one indicative kind of difficulty that it presents to the readers, which has to do with the element of humor. When Emma, the central heroine, furious with her mother, who does not allow her to go to a party, begins to scream, we read:

all the houses collapsed, and the barber shops, and the grocery stores, and the kiosks ... The mountains blew up, the islands sank, the rivers flooded ... Everything turned into smithereens, ashes, dust. When Emma, worn out, stopped shouting, except for a telegraph post in Athens and the tower of Pisa in Italy, nothing else was left standing..." (p. 33).

The implied reader, who laughs at the joke in the above detailed description of the disproportionate disasters that take place around Emma, has the necessary sense of absurd humor so as to appreciate the excess that is the basis of that joke. In order to laugh with the above description, the actual young reader must identify with the implied one, must, in other words, have the same sense of absurd humor, which, as we mentioned above, is not always easy for young children.

But apart from the implied reader's particular 'qualification', a deeper examination of the events of the story we have composed reveals the ways in which the story itself leads him to accept specific ideologies, in other words, reveals the ideological role of the implied reader. As Stephens argues, very often the gaps of a text, which the implied reader has to fill in, are not of narrative or semantic nature but of ideological. Such gaps may refer to specific ideas, views or social practices that are not mentioned in the text because they are considered as self-evident. (Stephens, 1992:66) Thus, by inviting the reader to fill in an idea that is implied by the text, for example, that one ought to die for his homeland or that men are superior to women, the text actually pushes the reader to accept an ideology that it itself constructs and promotes (Stephens, 1992).

Now, our own composed story concerning Emma seems to follow a pattern that one can easily recognize in the everyday reality of the child-reader (control and forbiddance on the part of the adults and negative, violent reactions on the part of the child). Emma, who does not accept what her mother suggests and reacts with an angry outburst of screams, is eventually led to her self-destruction, as she is left all alone in a world that she herself has destroyed. The implied reader of the story, is led, then, to conclude, through that unfortunate ending of the heroine, that such egotistic and rebellious behavior is not simply unacceptable by the adults but is also destructive for the child itself. Uncontrolled anger, as is shown, is a feeling that breaks the healthy ties with the important 'others' for the child, such as family or friends, but also the ties with the society in general. We observe, therefore, that the reader who, through free choices, puts together the above story from the materials that Trivizas has offered him is led to accept a specific idea which is not explicitly expressed but only implied by the structure and the ending of his story. Although Trivizas avoids the overt manipulation of the reader by moral lessons, the endings of his pre-fabricated stories ask the reader to become aware of the 'self-evident' points that the story itself projects (Oikonomidou, 2016). Needless to say, though, that the ideas that are inscribed in any composed story, and which the implied reader is theoretically capable of decoding, are not self-explanatory for any actual reader. Some actual readers may not be in a position to grasp them (Oikonomidou, 2016).

5. Conclusions

In view of what we have shown above, we must stress once more the pivotal role that the two printed hyper-texts examined assign to their implied reader. Resembling the role of the user of an electronic hyper-text, it is a role clearly much more energetic and dynamic than that of the reader of a conventional book. We need to pay attention, however, to the fact that the implied reader of such neoteric books is a reader that responds adequately to a non-familiar textual structure (Rau, 2000) and accepts the fact that he is swaying in the middle of an unformed textual material to which he is the one to give form. If for the implied reader that role is self-evident, for the actual reader of such books it can be a challenge that may not always be pleasant. That challenge, however, we want to conclude, is in fact the 'breaking of the canon' of the Greek children's literature. For, in their overwhelming majority, contemporary Greek books for children insist on a linear narrative, and on a conclusive and indisputable ending, thus assigning to their readers the role of the passive recipient of the story.

One more conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of our sample is that the implied reader of printed hyper-texts like the ones examined benefits from that playful reading process in more than one way. In the first place, he realizes that the evolution of the plot of a story does not have to be linear; for, by composing the pre-fabricated materials that Trivizas provides him with into syntheses of

his own, he finds himself creating exciting stories with abrupt ‘throws’ in their plot, backslides or reversals. Secondly, through his participation in the construction of the stories, he benefits by realizing that he, as a reader, is one of the dominant factors of the reading act, and that a literary work is not the realization of the writer's divine inspiration, but a construction with rules and commitments without which it cannot be written or read (Oikonomidou, 2011).

Such benefits as the above are in effect the benefits of metafiction. Indeed, if we observe the above-

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shown difficulties that printed hyper-texts present their implied reader with and also the active role that the latter is asked to play in the reading act, we realize the fundamentally metafictional nature of such books. For, to quote Patricia Waugh, “[metafictional books] with self-consciousness and systematically draw the reader's attention to the conventions governing their organization and operation, to the very fact that they are nothing but constructions” (Waugh, 1984 in Oikonomidou, 2011, 79).

In that way, hyper-texts like the ones we have examined fulfill “the central role of metafiction, which is to raise questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (Waugh, 1984 in Oikonomidou, 2011, 79).

Recapitulating, if we take into account all the above mentioned hyper-text characteristics of the books examined and especially their metafictional character; if we also take into account the linear form of the majority of contemporary conventional Greek books for children, we can safely argue that such books like the ones by Trivizas are non-canonical. For, they construct an implied reader who, not deterred by their neoteric form, accepts the initiative that they offer him and participates in a reading process which resembles a game and which offers them a most creative role as readers.

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Literature for self-discovery. Looking into adolescence through graphic novels

Literatura per al descobriment personal. Mirar l'adolescència a través de les novel·les gràfiques

Literatura para el descubrimiento personal. Mirar la adolescencia a través de las novelas gráficas

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Abstract

Graphic novels are an appreciated and popular genre of contemporary children and young adult literature. This art form attracts young readers not only because of the dynamic juxtaposition of words and images, but also because of the complex topics it addresses. Teenagers and young adults see themselves portrayed on the pages of graphic works as they depict real, personal experiences linked to their coming of age. Graphic novels depict young male and female characters who struggle to find their personal path, come to terms with their feelings, and build their identity beyond stereotypes. This literature is particularly complex and captivating as it addresses subjects such as gender, sexuality, friendship, family bonds, social relationships, and various contemporary cultural issues. This paper offers an overview of some graphic novels for young adult readers and explores how they deal with subjects related to identity, self-discovery, and equality. Through a brief analysis of some selected works, the study seeks to compare and investigate how they portray young adults' lives and struggles. The graphic novel stands as a medium which encourages reflection, self-discovery, awareness and empowerment in a liminal and complex phase of adolescence and early adulthood life.

Key words: graphic novels, adolescence, identity, education

Resum

Les novel·les gràfiques són un popular i apreciat gènere de la literatura per a infants i joves contemporània. Aquesta forma d'art atrau joves lectors i lectores, no sols per la juxtaposició dinàmica de paraules i imatges, sinó també per la complexitat dels temes que tracta. Adolescents i joves es veuen reflectits a les pàgines dels treballs gràfics en tant que descriuen experiències reals i personals lligades al seu creixement. Les novel·les gràfiques presenten personatges joves, homes i dones, que lluiten per trobar el seu camí personal, assumir els seus sentiments i construir la seua identitat més enllà dels estereotips. Aquesta literatura és particularment complexa i captivadora en tant que aborda temes com el gènere, la sexualitat, l'amistat, els lligams familiars, les relacions socials i diverses problemàtiques culturals contemporànies. Aquest article ofereix una panoràmica d'algunes novel·les gràfiques per a joves lectors i lectores i explora com tracten temes relacionats amb la identitat, l'autoconeixement i la igualtat. A través d'una breu anàlisi d'alguns treballs seleccionats, l'estudi tracta de comparar i investigar com retracten la vida i les lluites dels i les joves.

La novel·la gràfica figura com a un mitjà que encoratja la reflexió, l'autodescobriment, la consciència i l'empoderament en una fase complexa i liminar de l'adolescència i la vida adulta primerenca.

Paraules clau: novel·la gràfica, adolescència, identitat, educació

Resumen

Las novelas gráficas son un popular y apreciado género de la literatura para la infancia y juventud contemporánea. Esta forma de arte trae a jóvenes lectores y lectoras, no solo por la yuxtaposición dinámica de palabras e imágenes, sino también por la complejidad de los temas que trata. Adolescentes y jóvenes se ven reflejados en las páginas de los trabajos gráficos en tanto que describen experiencias reales y personales ligadas a su crecimiento. Las novelas gráficas presentan personajes jóvenes, hombres y mujeres, que luchan por encontrar su camino personal, asumir sus sentimientos y construir su identidad más allá de los estereotipos. Esta literatura es particularmente compleja y cautivadora en tanto que aborda temas como el género, la sexualidad, la amistad, los lazos familiares, las relaciones sociales y diversas problemáticas culturales contemporáneas. Este artículo ofrece una panorámica de algunas novelas gráficas para jóvenes lectores y lectoras y explora cómo tratan temas relacionados con la identidad, el autoconocimiento y la igualdad. A través de un breve análisis de algunos trabajos seleccionados, el estudio trata de comparar e investigar cómo retratan la vida y las luchas de los y las jóvenes. La novela gráfica figura como un medio que anima a la reflexión, el autodescubrimiento, la consciencia y el empoderamiento en una fase compleja y liminar de la adolescencia y la vida adulta temprana.

Palabras clave: novela gráfica, adolescencia, identidad, educación

1. Introduction

This paper aims to analyse a selection of international graphic novels that deal with different phases of adolescence, from pre-adolescence to young adulthood. A sample of five works published in the last twenty years –*Blankets* (2002) by Craig Thompson; *Forget my name* (2012) by Zerocalcare; *This one summer* (2014) by Jillian and Mariko Tamaki; *Blue is the warmest colour* (2017) by Julie Maroh and *L'Âge des secrets* (2019) by Magnhild Winsnes– will be investigated. The selected works offer compelling portrayals of adolescent characters through recurrent images and narrative strands. The works have been selected from a plethora of graphic narratives for young audiences for different reasons. Firstly, they are significant examples of this literary genre, as they clearly express typical strategies used by authors and illustrators of graphic novels, establishing a modern literary canon (Calabrese, 2017). Secondly, these books are stylistically different from each other although they share a common interest in portraying adolescent identity with a realistic approach. Thirdly, they are popular works, translated into several languages, and were at the focus of different academic analysis (Stevens, 2010; Calabrese, 2017; Greco, 2019; Stefanelli, 2020). Building on previous studies on pedagogy (Dallari & Fanrè, 1977; Detti, 1984; Marrone, 2005), literary theory and comic studies (McCloud, 1993;

Eisner, 2000; Calabrese, 2017), the article explores recurrent literary trends in representing adolescence through a modern multi-layered form of storytelling.

2. Discovering graphic novels

Today young adult literature is an extremely wide and complex field that presents different forms of narration based on different techniques, methods, and art forms (Barsotti & Cantatore, 2019; Trisciuzzi, 2017; Forni, 2020b). Among the most popular and contemporary literary genres, the graphic novel stands out for its recent but exponential success that reinstated the value of comics in the public sphere (Calabrese, 2017, 7). The graphic novel is strictly related to the comic form, which constitutes the overarching form, but gives this medium new narrative possibility. The graphic novel is usually a self-conclusive work that outlines a precise story as a novel usually does. At the same time, it draws on the canons and techniques of comics in terms of format (they both develop a sequential storytelling) but rejects its serialisation. Thus, comics and graphic novels share the same code, based on the juxtaposition of visual and textual media and on the connection of artistic and literary devices (Eisner, 2000, 8; Trisciuzzi, 2017).

Calabrese offers a complete study on the graphic novel and its technical, aesthetic and thematic aspects. He draws on different academic fields, from history to literary theory so as to analyse visual and textual aspects of the graphic novel, define it and highlight its historical contrast with the comic:

The term 'graphic novel' was created in order to differentiate a new textual form from the less complex 'comics' –in other words, short, naïve narratives intended mostly for an adolescent audience– presenting itself as a literary form oriented towards a more adult audience, with a different narrative focus and more articulated editorial practices. [...] A graphic novel is a figurative book that tells a long story or many short stories, in a sequential or self-contained way, respecting the conventions typical of comics or conveying autobiographical, historical, journalistic cases (Calabrese, 2017, 8).

The relation of the two codes employed in graphic novels, that is words and images, is particularly compelling. On the one hand, as underlined by Eisner “comics communicate in a language that relies on visual experience common to both creator and audience. Modern readers can be expected to have an easy understanding of the image-word mix and the traditional deciphering of text” (2000, 7). On the other hand, this interconnection does not necessarily simplify the reading, but in some cases renders it even more complex:

[...] both linguistic components are constructed and used not to cover the whole semantic space on their own, but to serve a dialectic relationship whereby the language that comes out of it, far from being the simple sum or juxtaposition of the written word and the image, is a communicative expression structurally and semiotically new and different from the other two (Dallari & Farnè, 1977, 92)¹.

Thus, the graphic novel is a hybrid literature that exploits the potential of different literary means, positioning itself as an extremely popular medium characterized by narrative and visual complexity. Dal Lago and Giordano highlight the importance of considering the comic as an art form that deserves a different critical approach because of its specific, particular language: “[...] comics not only have the same status as 'real' art, but happily combine words and images, like poetry and music in opera [...] they create a new language, placing themselves among the most important experiments of modern art” (2006, 228)². Similarly, McCloud underscores the potential of those narratives based on the interconnection of words and images, such as comics, although this code is usually perceived as a simplistic “product of crass commercialism” (1993, 140).

In their study, Dallari and Farnè discuss the didactic and educational implications of comics (and, we could argue, of its most recent evolution in graphic novels); they also express the prejudice commonly held by school authorities against comics: “It was said that, since comics told a story, giving both the image and the word, the total confusion of the user was guaranteed, since no mental effort was required to intellectually complete the message”³ (1977, 14-15). Although some prejudice survives to date, comics and their derivatives can be a source of great learning, thanks to the synergy of images and words,

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¹ Original Italian text: “[...] entrambe le componenti linguistiche sono costruite e usate non per coprire ognuna per proprio conto tutto lo spazio semantico, ma in funzione di un rapporto dialettico per cui il linguaggio che ne esce lungi da essere la semplice somma o accostamento della parola scritta e dell’immagine, è un’espressione comunicativa strutturalmente e semiologicamente nuova e diversa dalle altre due”.

² Original Italian text: “[...] il fumetto non solo ha la stessa dignità dell’arte ‘vera’, ma coniuga felicemente parole e immagini, come la poesia e la musica nell’opera lirica [...] crea un linguaggio nuovo, collocandosi tra le più importanti sperimentazioni dell’arte moderna”.

³ Original Italian text: “Si diceva cioè che, poiché il racconto a fumetti narrava una storia, dando contemporaneamente l’immagine e la parola, era garantito il totale rimbecillimento del fruitore, dal momento che non gli veniva richiesto nessuno sforzo mentale per completare intellettualmente il messaggio”.

which works on different linguistic, semiotic and aesthetic levels and offers different interpretative cues (Dallari & Farnè, 1977; Detti, 1984; Marone, 2005). Like other literary genres, comics and graphic

The stories we read or listen construct our perception of the real world and foster specific values, ideas, archetypes and schemas. Graphic novels, too, can informally educate and help readers reflect on different topics related to adolescence, drawing on collective imaginary.

novels also demonstrate an interesting potential for indirect learning, assisting the formation of the self through the imagery they convey (Strazzulla, 1977; Faeti, 1983; Beseghi, 2017). Fiction –from literature to other media– is a narrative form that builds collective imaginary. The stories we read or listen construct our perception of the real world and foster specific values, ideas, archetypes and schemas. Graphic novels, too, can informally educate and help readers reflect on different topics related to adolescence, drawing on collective imaginary. Recently, this art form has become the focus of several academic studies that demonstrate the graphic novel's literary,

iconographic and thematic depth, making it equal to 'traditional' narrative forms such as the novel (McCloud, 1993; Stein & Thon, 2013; Calabrese, 2017; Garrison, 2020).

3. Graphic novels on and for adolescents

In general, graphic novels deal with current issues and directly address young readers' daily experiences and highlight fears, problems, dreams, feelings and perceptions of their own identities. In the sixties, coming of age became a key theme in young adult literature; books portraying adolescence conveyed authentic, real, complex experiences, providing indirect support to teen or young adult readers (Garrison, 2020). In particular, graphic novels

[...] offer young adults a unique and provocative perspective, with the combination of illustrations and text telling the story with art and symbols. The focus on visual literacy and symbolism also serves to address diverse learning and reading styles and preferences for young adults, and graphic novels offer clear connections to important curricula and standards (Garrison, 2020, 10).

Furthermore, Calabrese defines this genre as *faction*, referring to those narratives as a meeting point between fiction, or fictional universes, and facts, the real, everyday life (2017, 11). Drawing on the immediacy of comics and the narrative depth of the novel, the graphic novel manages to critically deal with contemporary, complex issues, addressing the reader directly and graphically, reporting their life experiences so as to offer stimulating readings, full of reflections and able to arouse empathetic participation and, above all, identification (Baetens & Frey, 2014, 11). Readers –despite their age–

might find themselves depicted on the pages of many graphic novels and might see, among balloons, gutters, and illustrations, life stories similar to theirs; thus, graphic novels might open up new possibilities for readers to reach self-awareness.

According to Rudine Sims Bishop (1990), books are like mirrors that reflect our image, encouraging us to observe it from an external point of view; they are like windows opening onto the world that allow us to have new life experiences. Literature, and specifically graphic novels, widens the perception of young readers and gives them experiences that, even if imaginary, have an impact on their understanding of what surrounds them (Beseghi, 2017). Literature, therefore, is a departure point of encounter and growth, an instrument of mediation, communication, personal exchange. In particular, images constitute a universal and direct language, both semantic and emotional, and surely immediate in its reception (Nodelman, 1990, 5-6): a means of communication that critically welcomes the “society of the homo videns” (Cambi, 2019, 126).

The literary process described by Bishop is of fundamental formative importance during delicate phases of life such as pre-adolescence, adolescence and post-adolescence or young adulthood (Mancaniello, 2018; Barone, 2009). These are particularly different and difficult years of both physical and psychological transformation which may lead to continuous conflicts with others and with one’s own self. Adolescence and young adulthood constitute a transition period when one searches for oneself, for one’s own identity, years of incessant experimentation and desire to reach self-awareness. Contemporary graphic novels attempt to capture the dilemmas, changes and feelings that stand at the basis of the period generically called adolescence. They offer young readers a chance for entertainment, but also a means of indirect training and reflection. Observing the fictional characters, readers have the opportunity to explore, at least in part, the complexity that characterizes their evolving identity. By reading these pages, it is possible to know each other intimately; see oneself reflected or examined through a fresh perspective; catch new glimpses of the changes that take place in teenagers’ lives, unmasking intimate problems and collective fears (Garrison, 2020).

Contemporary graphic novels attempt to capture the dilemmas, changes and feelings that stand at the basis of the period generically called adolescence. They offer young readers a chance for entertainment, but also a means of indirect training and reflection

4. A comparative analysis of five graphic novels

The analysis of contemporary graphic novels, and in particular of those dealing with adolescence or young adulthood, requires a large and complex study given the amount of works on the subject published in recent years across the world. Graphic novels, part of a flourishing market, are opening

up new thematic and graphic paths in literature. In order to understand how graphic novels portray adolescence, it is necessary to highlight some recurrent thematic motifs so as to gain insights into the issues they frequently address. Certainly, it is possible to discover some elements that recur, albeit through very different literary and visual strategies, in most of the works on the subject of adolescence.

This article presents a comparative analysis of five works on the theme of adolescence: *Blankets* (2002) by Craig Thompson; *Forget my name* (2012) by Zerocalcare; *This one summer* (2014) by Jillian and Mariko Tamaki; *Blue is the warmest colour* (2017) by Julie Maroh and *L'Âge des secrets* (2019) by Magnhild Winsnes. These five graphic novels deal with pre-adolescence, adolescence and young adulthood through the use of different visual and literary strategies, narrative strands and artistic styles.

To begin with, it is necessary to outline the main plot of the selected works. Successively, the article will move onto investigating the main themes and strategies. First, *This one summer*, by Canadian American Jillian and Mariko Tamaki, was published in 2014, and won the Caldecott Honor in 2015. It tells the story of Windy and Rose, two preadolescents who spend every summer together ever since they were little girls. The story shows how this summer is particularly different for both of them: the girls are growing up, but they are proceeding to maturation in a totally different way. For this reason, it is increasingly difficult to find moments of encounter and friendly confrontation (Abbot & Tarbox, 2017, 191-204).

Secondly, *L'Âge des secrets*, published in 2019, is a graphic novel by the Norwegian artist Magnhild Winsnes. The work could be easily compared with the previous book, *This one summer*, as they both share some key topics, although they employ different artistic devices. *L'Âge des secrets* tells the story of two young preadolescents, Hanna and Siv, two friends and cousins that are used to spending the summer together. However, this particular summer seems to be different as they are both growing up and are now experiencing new emotions, wishes, and desires. Hanna and Siv's personalities evolve, but in a different way, and they fail to keep their long-lasting friendship.

The third work examined here is *Blankets* by the American author Craig Thompson, published in 2002. The graphic novel, winner of the 2004 Eisner Awards as Best Graphic Album and Best Writer/Artist, is a famous autobiographical work in which the life of the protagonist, Craig, is told in first-person, from childhood to adulthood, with particular attention to adolescence and its love stories, doubts, uncertain feelings, and family relationships. The story is set mainly in Michigan and Wisconsin during the 90s.

Blue is the warmest colour, written by the French author Julie Maroh in 2010, has received popular acclaim thanks to its cinematic adaptation, appreciated by critics and known for its themes, including

female sexuality. The story speaks of two high school girls, Clementine and Emma, and their love story. Emma is an eccentric blue-haired girl, an unscrupulous, self-confident artist, and she is opposed to the younger, inexperienced Clementine who is intimidated by her feelings for Emma. The narration is developed through a particular narrative form: Clementine tells the story in the pages of her diary, read by Emma after Clementine's death.

The last work in the sample *Forget my name* by Italian Zerocalcare was published in 2012. Zerocalcare is one of the most appreciated Italian author/illustrators as far as graphic novels and comics are concerned. In particular, *Forget my name* outlines the life-phase that lies between adolescence and young adulthood. Like most of the artist's works, it is directly linked to themes such as work instability, the search for living spaces and a lifestyle of one's own, reflecting on goals not yet achieved, the constant comparison with peers. These topics are generally shared by many people who, despite their age, do not yet feel they entirely fit in adult society. In this graphic novel, the protagonist tries to come to terms with his own roots in order to become more aware of his future and the path he will have to take to reach adulthood.

Despite differences in style, content, life-phases depicted, the selected graphic novels share common issues related to the portrayal of adolescence and young adulthood. Thus, in what follows the paper outlines some recurrent tendencies and subjects, investigated through a comparative approach.

4.1 Interpersonal relationships

Relationships appear as one of the main features in the representation of adolescent or post-adolescent identity. Family relationships stand out as a primary element, even if they are at times conflictual and difficult: parents and teenagers often look for a meeting point that is not always easy to find, as portrayed in *Blankets*, where the protagonist has to deal with his family's different perspectives on religion. Furthermore, we should add the relationship with peers, such as friends or best friends, schoolmates, brothers, sisters, cousins, boyfriends or girlfriends. These relationships generally are not depicted as stable, but are rather presented as forever transforming and evolving, undermining emotional or love relationships, most of all during pre-adolescence (*This one summer*, *L'Âge des secrets*).

Both *This one summer* and *L'Âge des secrets* take up friendship as their central theme: the books mostly portray how long-lasting friendships often change during this difficult period of life when each single identity needs to follow its rhythm, time and find its personal space. In this context, as the two books clearly show, a friend may become a stranger; they further highlight how the process of growing up takes different forms, wrecking childhood friendships. By contrast, *Blankets* focuses mainly on family relations: among the main themes explored in the book, the work develops the complex relationship

with the boy's parents and their strict religious education. Moreover, the book presents the protagonist's relationship with his younger brother, usually referred to by the protagonist-narrator through several childhood memories, bringing to light both their bond and the frequency of family misunderstandings. *Blankets* also presents love relationships: love appears as a fresh personal experiment, an emotion to be understood and experienced, even if preponderant, invasive, and hurtful. In addition, we should not forget negative relationships, such as intense confrontations with peers; for instance, episodes of violence or bullying (Forni, 2020a).

4.2 Reflection on big issues

These graphic novels are marked by elements of great reflective depth such as death, faith, and religion. Adolescents and young adults as protagonists feel the need to find their own way with regard to religious beliefs and spirituality: they are young people who want to find meaning in their existence. A key theme developed in *Blankets* is the matter of faith and religion: Craig, who grew up in an extremely religious family, would like to find his way and understand if he is willing to accept the religious teaching of his parents (Stevens, 2010). In particular, faith is intertwined with love issues: having fallen in love with Raina, Craig does not understand whether or not his desire for the girl is legitimate, whether or not it is compatible with the ideals imposed on him by his parents. The work is therefore a spiritual narrative, but also a physical, loving, sexual storytelling: the first experiences with the girl lead the protagonist to strike a delicate balance between his beliefs and his feelings, setting a new path towards adulthood. *Blankets* also explores themes such as the discovery of masculinity, bullying, disability, divorce, and school problems.

The meaning of one's own existence becomes the focus of the narratives when the characters have to deal with death, for example the loss of a grandmother, a friend, or an old acquaintance. Death works as a catalyst as it unravels hidden meanings of life: experiencing the loss of a relative or a friend, adolescents perceive the inconsistency of life, its fragilities, its turning points. Death usually forces young protagonists to suddenly grow up, experience adult feelings and take on adult responsibilities.

For instance, in *Forget my name*, the literary expedient that activates the narrative is the death of the protagonist's grandmother, a key point in the life of the protagonist that will force him to move onto a new life-phase, that of adulthood. Numerous flashbacks that directly refer to childhood and adolescence are deployed in order to illustrate more vividly the feelings and ideas that characterize

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the difficulties of entering adulthood, introduced by a traumatic event such as the loss of a relative that played a key role during the character's childhood. Through death, childhood is metaphorically broken and has to end: the vacuity of life forces the protagonist to face adulthood. In *Blue is the warmest colour* death is a central topic and the catalyst for the narration as well: characters have to deal with the protagonist's death right from the very beginning.

4.3 Gender, sexuality and bodies

Many of these graphic novels deal with identity issues related to gender and sexuality: the boys and girls represented are characters in the process of becoming someone, characters seeking their own place in the world in terms of gender (Beseghi, 1987; Garrison, 2020, 12). These characters, therefore, often play with gender norms, experiment and try to understand what is culturally allowed, what is appropriate, what needs to be deconstructed so as to allow them to feel comfortable. Teenage characters, in their constant discovery of the world, offer to young readers new possibilities, new perspectives on gender norms and sexual identity or orientation. Their experimentation with their respective culture allows them to test new points of view and re-evaluate or even question long-lasting social norms.

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Often, graphic novels on adolescence present the theme of the body. This phase of life involves continuous physical changes, and this literature can gently grasp the fear of experiencing bodily change, combined with the desire to find one's own style, one's own personalised but socially shared concept of beauty. For instance, in *This one summer*, the two girls are shown as opposites considering their physical appearance: Rose, a few years younger, has a stockier body, black, ruffled hair and playful eyes while Windy looks like a long-limbed, light-haired girl with melancholy eyes. The book faces the discovery of the girls' identities and their femininity, introducing them to a wider context

where first love interests are represented, and first doubts about their bodies are accurately portrayed (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Winsnes, M. (2019). *L'Âge des secrets*. Paris: Sarbacane, p. 12.

Similarly, in *L'Âge des secrets* the two female protagonists are depicted being interested in new games or activities that differ from typically children's interests: they start having love stories, slight sexual interests, they explore their gender identity and their femininity both physically and psychologically. However, Hanna appears to be a little girl, as compared to her cousin, who clearly wishes to become a woman as soon as possible. For example, Siv wishes her breasts to start growing, constantly monitoring her physical changes excitedly.

Blue is the warmest colour deals with topics such as the construction of female identity, sexual orientation, and marginalized sexualities (lesbian/bisexual identity in this specific case), offering an in-depth analysis of two different models of adolescents and their opposite approach to life-struggles, doubts, passions, and desires. Reading her diary, Emma discovers Clementine's anxieties, fears, uncertainties, her doubts about her sexual orientation –Emma always thought she was heterosexual before meeting the blue-haired girl– her most intimate sexual desires, her pain when the love-story ends. In particular, the story dwells on the torments of the girl who explores her sexual orientation in relation to various issues, including the possibility of being a victim of homophobic violence. The

graphic novel develops a long path toward self-understanding and acceptance, taking the risk of being one's own self. The graphic novel/diary explores

[...] the adolescent girl's experience of taking risks in forming an adult identity that feels both satisfying and real. [The story] features a young woman consumed with discovering what love costs and what it is worth [...] also offers a glimpse of a young woman negotiating her fears and desires and opting to take the risk to find out (Miller, 2017, 40).

Risk, according to Michelle Miller, is a typical and 'healthy' characteristic of the adolescent: taking risks is necessary to explore, to change; taking risks leads to awareness, surpassing social labels. However, cultural norms hold back the young protagonist and narrator: in a culture where homosexuality is generally linked to unhappiness, Clementine, in *Blue is the Warmest Color*, wonders if it is possible to combine her orientation with serenity. She would like to live an ordinary life, work in a school, be accepted by her family, but many difficulties lie ahead, so much so that she repeatedly calls herself "happy but anxious". On the contrary, Emma is portrayed as a character who makes her sexual orientation her strength: "Emma is able, through her queerness, to form a community. Her queerness becomes not only her sexuality, but also the grounds upon which she builds a satisfying adult identity" (Miller, 2017, 44).

4.4 Change and loneliness

Change is one of the key issues in the works under study and it often relates to loneliness. Books on and for adolescents usually focus on moments of passage such as the summer or moving from one place to another, which metaphorically relates to adolescent conditions. Readers will often find a constant presence of silence, a constant lack of written words to allow the evocative power of some images to prevail; in this way, the sense of loneliness or inability to express certain emotions that typically characterise adolescence is emphasized even without the help of literary forms.

In *This one summer*, the story takes place, as the title suggests, in summer, a moment of passage between two school years. In this context, the numerous fears about becoming adults are silently illustrated. For example, Windy has to face her parents' divorce, an issue that forces her to deal with adult problems, to be constantly gloomy, thoughtful, and frightened. Summer is spent at the seaside, and the sea is shown as a place of solitude, where Windy can swim and get lost in her own thoughts, a place where she can isolate herself from the world and explore her intimate feelings, discovering her dreams and needs. An interesting fact is that the sea is perceived by the two girls as an opposite setting: if Rose loves to swim and have fun, Windy seems to prefer to float on the edge of the water and to alienate herself.

In the same vein, in *L'Âge des secrets*, Siv changes her attitude. For example, encouraged by her new group of friends, she starts lying to her parents in order to spend the night out with her peers. Hanna, her long-lasting best friend, appears to be in a different phase of her life, still anchored to childhood: she feels out of place, she isolates herself as she cannot understand her friend's new behaviour. Siv goes out with older friends, dreams to have a love story, and her innocent behaviour turns into a more aggressive and wilder attitude. So, Hanna does not feel part of this new adult-like group and starts to silently break up with Siv. Siv is changing, but Hanna probably wishes to remain a little girl, or to wait to be effectively ready to start wishing for teenage adventures. The graphic novel cleverly mixes elements of childhood, for example playing in a treehouse, and adolescence, for instance smoking or dealing with opposite sex peers, illustrating the difficulties of growing up, with or without friends (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Maroh, J. (2017). *Blue is the warmest colour*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, p. 8.

Loneliness is one of the most developed topics in this literature: adolescents or young adults are often portrayed alone. In *Blankets*, the author creates huge spaces of silence, of images that manage to convey, through snowy landscapes or portraits of the young protagonist, a sense of light loneliness

and melancholy that occurs during his growth. The boy is changing and entering into adulthood, and he takes this step alone, relying on his own strength (Figure 3).

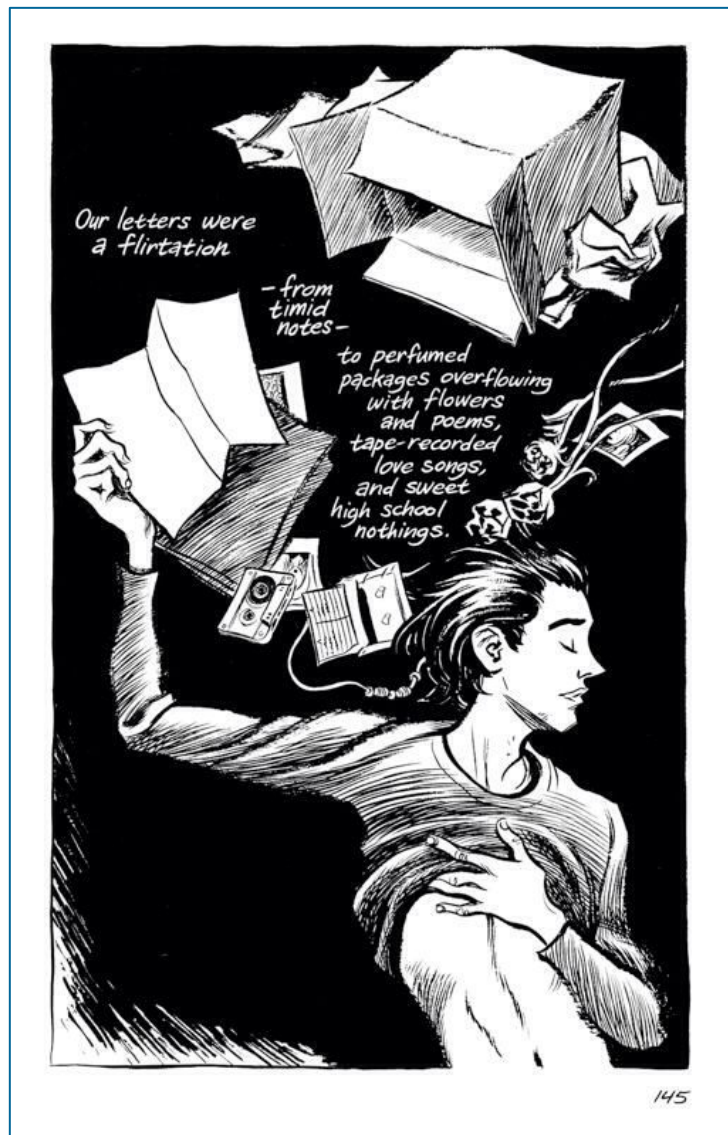


Figure 3. Thompson, C. (2017). *Blankets*. London: Faber and Faber, p. 145.

Considering *Forget my name*, the key to the author's success is simple: Zerocalcare brilliantly depicts the torments and dreams of several generations, capturing the instability exemplified through the autobiographical narrative which is fun and simultaneously pungent and politically aligned. His stories are full of anger and discontent during a long period of transition into adulthood, but the author does not usually forget (self-)irony to portray this feeling. So, growing up –in this case related to young adults dealing with 'adult' issues– is depicted as a precarious life-phase when constant comparison with their peers is at the root of insecurity and fear of becoming an adult. Again, despite the many relationships presented in the graphic novel, the key moments of the plot show the protagonist alone,

facing his own troubles and thoughts. For instance, the protagonist overthinks his grandmother's death while lying on his bed, alone in the dark (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Thompson, C. (2017). *Blankets*. London: Faber and Faber, p. 145.

Furthermore, growth and change often provide a continuous desire to explore the world outside of one's own knowledge: these stories tell the (ordinary) lives of boys and girls who want to break the rules, crave to go beyond limits imposed by family and society in order to experience the world and, consequently, to know and understand their feelings, hopes and fears. So, the journey becomes an element of self-discovery, training, and tough confrontation (Ulivieri & Pace, 2012): leaving –physically or metaphorically– home, the family nest, the known, teenagers and young adults deal with new issues, demonstrate their strengths, follow their intimate desires and, finally, better understand their roots and their future path without being guided by adult figures.

4.5 Colours

Colours play a central role as they set the dominant mood of the story or of a particular section of the story, adding depth to the narrative and encouraging specific feelings (McCloud, 2000, 190; Calabrese, 2017, 72-76). In *This one summer*, figures are characterised by a simple style and a limited set of colours that develops around different shades of blue. This choice does not diminish the feelings evoked during the narration, but figures amplify them through a hue that can perfectly convey the sense of loneliness and incomprehension often experienced by the protagonists. *Blue is the warmest colour* chooses blue as its main chromatic tone, too, related in this case to black and white or pastel colour settings (Figure 5).

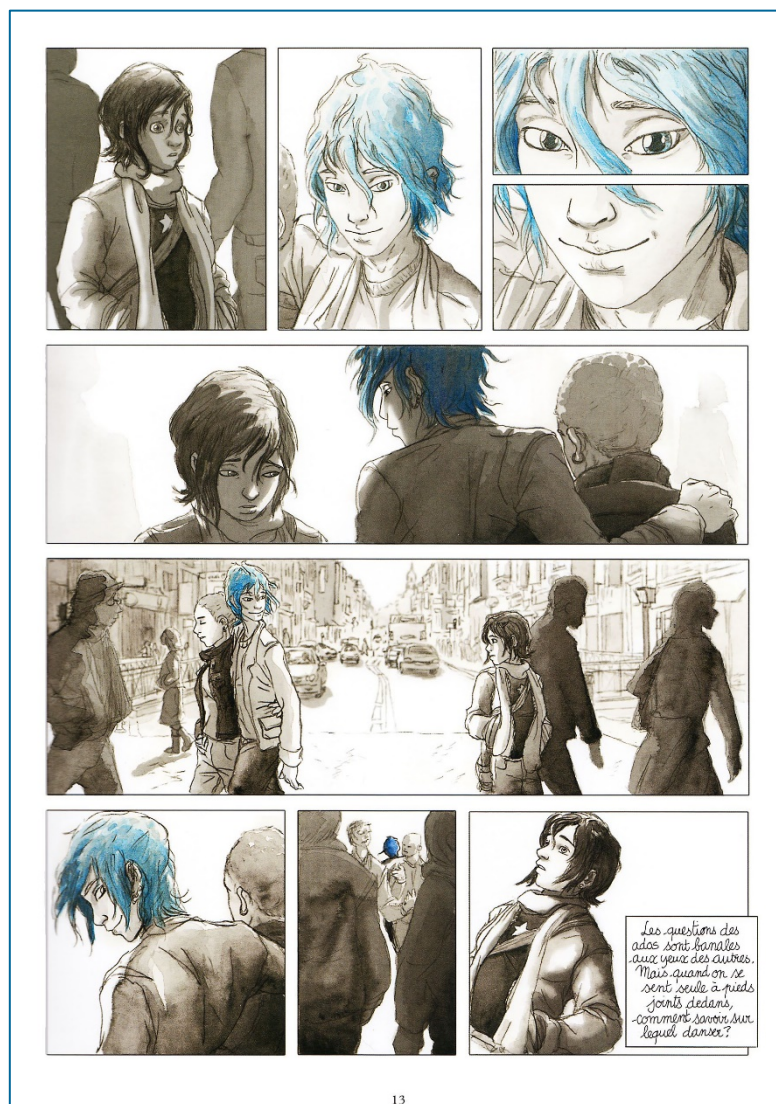


Figure 5. Maroh, J. (2017). *Blue is the warmest colour*. Arsenal Pulp, p. 13.

L'Âge des secrets, through illustrations characterised by light colours and simple features, offers an overview of how a female goes through the process of growing and self-discovery, focusing on one of the most delicate phases that characterise adolescence: pre-adolescence and those first steps that

lead to a remarkable personal transformation. These two works, *Blue is the warmest colour* and *L'Âge des secrets* use light tones and create a hushed atmosphere through the use of colour.

In addition, in *Forget my name* and *Blankets* images offer powerful visual metaphors that portray the protagonist in a phase of change and self-discovery through the use of specific colours: black and white. A choice that manages to capture different nuances of the characters' growth, where black or white prevail one over the other on different pages. Again, in *Blankets* the colour blue creates a quiet atmosphere on the cover of the book, where the colour evokes silent, snowy spaces, setting the mood for the storytelling. Moreover, as pointed out by Stevens in his analysis of *Blankets*, the use of shadows also provides further metaphorical meanings, offering a new perspective on Craig's identity (Stevens, 2010). Thus, readers, observing silently the book's powerful images, enter the protagonist's intimacy and accompany him on his way towards growth and self-discovery interspersed with obstacles and satisfaction (Stevens, 2010; Peñalba García, 2015).

4.6 Literary and stylistic choices: narrators, perspective, voices

The literary approaches and themes selected to outline adolescence in this medium seem to present recurrent trends. One of the most interesting elements of this literary form is the particular approach adopted by authors and illustrators: generally, these books do not seek to impose themselves as models, offering characters that must be imitated by young readers. On the contrary, the purpose of these works is usually to represent the young target audience, and not to model and mould it according to precise standards. This refined and important stylistic choice may encourage readers to feel directly involved and never judged during the reading process, which never becomes invasive or judgmental. In fact, the graphic novels promote the adolescent's point of view; the protagonists or, in certain cases, the first-person narrators are frequently teenagers or young adults. For example, in Zerocalcare's *Works*, the first-person narrator and protagonist shares his feelings and fears while entering adulthood. The artist's works are characterised by some essential features: the constant presence of autobiographical events related to the character-narrator-artist; his immediately recognizable graphic style; the setting in the Rebibbia district, in Rome; the Roman slang that characterises the text; the imaginary participation of comic and cartoon characters from the '80s and the '90s (Ecolani, 2020, 29). These characteristics should lead to a very niche audience, yet his books are endowed with great "transgenerational ability" (Stefanelli, 2020, 27). Moreover, his works manage to create empathetic contact and identification even in readers that do not experience the specific social context described by the author. Indeed, over the years, Zerocalcare's comics have reached a wide international audience. As Stefanelli points out: "His stories [...] are not only fragments that give voice to the

imaginary values of a generation. His work has generated concrete effects of remixing pop culture, Italian identity, youth condition and the story of our present times”⁴ (2020, 24).

Similarly, but departing from a completely different cultural background (the US), the narrator in *Blankets* tells the story in first person and moves the plot along through numerous flashbacks and flashforwards. Since in both cases the young characters themselves relay the story, the narrative becomes more truthful and more participatory. Therefore, the narrative elicits the readers’ perspective so as to encourage a wider empathetic contact and involvement. Both works could be considered as autobiographical fiction as they directly draw on the authors’ experiences. When selecting an adult or young adult narrator to convey the story in first person, the use of flashback is very common: the characters revisit their past, critically observing some episodes during their childhood or adolescence. We therefore find teenagers who recall particular moments of their childhood, young adults who reflect on their adolescence, while often remain focused on the experiences they live in the moment depicted in the narrative. Finally, considering the language used by characters in all five books, in certain cases authors prefer a direct language that is reminiscent of oral tradition and everyday communication (*Forget my name*), while in others, authors attempt to strike a balance between a poetic style and a language that attempts to imitate young readers’ language (*Blankets*, *This one summer*). In general, these works make an effort to adhere to reality and communicate a realistic view of the interaction between adolescents, even when employing a poetic tone.

5. Conclusion

Contemporary graphic novels are a cultural phenomenon, a valuable literary format that is opening up new possibilities in the field of young adult literature. Thanks to the synergy of images and words, the graphic novel turns out to be a medium that can easily develop complex stories while capturing the reader’s attention and stimulating different reflections on multi-faceted themes. Among these, adolescence and identity formation seem to be one of the most popular subjects in this artistic form. Through realistic and frequently autobiographical narratives –often accompanied by fictional, imaginative elements or settings– graphic novels relate authentic life stories.

The present paper outlined some recurrent trends in contemporary graphic novels by authors from different countries (US, Canada, France, Norway, Italy). Despite different cultural backgrounds, the portrayal of adolescent is consistent as can be seen by the thematic, literary or aesthetic similarities

⁴ Original Italian text: “I suoi racconti [...] non sono solo frammenti che danno voce alle coordinate di valori immaginari di una generazione. Il suo lavoro ha generato effetti concreti di rimescolamento tra cultura Pop, identità italiana, condizione giovanile e racconto del presente”.

found in these works. Graphic novels on adolescence and young adulthood present this life phase as universal, addressing issues such as love and family relationships, friendship, growth, bodily transformations and awareness regarding sexuality and identity. These issues are presented by a non-judgmental narrator who does not wish to present specific models to imitate, but rather to represent real dynamics and portrayals of adolescence. Adolescence and young adulthood are not described as idyllic life phases, but graphic novels on the subject specifically focus on young adult and teenagers' fears, problems, anxieties, so as to give a faithful and realistic representation of contemporary teenage identities.

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Applied Theatre in Greece: Skipping from Crisis to Crisis

Teatre aplicat a Grècia: sortejar crisis rere crisis

El teatro aplicado en Grecia: sorteando crisis tras crisis

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Abstract

This paper explores the emergence of applied and online theatre in Greece. The authors present the appearance of the term “Applied Theatre” in the Greek literature as well as three examples of “applied theatre praxis”. These applied theatre practices have been implemented in various contexts by different agencies during the country’s recent debt crisis. Moreover, online theatre is being discussed as a spontaneous reaction of theatre industry to health crisis caused by the expansion of COVID-19 virus. The paper raises concerns on theatre’s standing in the post pandemic era, focusing on theatre’s potential in times of social, political and economic adversity.

Keywords: applied theatre, online theatre, debt crisis, health crisis

Resum

Aquest article explora l’aparició del teatre en línia i aplicat a Grècia. L’autor i l’autora presenten el sorgiment del terme Teatre Aplicat a la literatura grega i també tres exemples de pràctica de teatre aplicat. Aquestes pràctiques de teatre aplicat han sigut implementades en diversos contextos per diferents agències durant la recent crisi de deute al país. A més a més, el teatre online es considera com a una reacció espontània de la indústria del teatre a la crisi sanitària causada per l’expansió del virus Covid-19. L’article expressa les preocupacions al voltant de la posició del teatre en l’era postpandèmia, i focalitza al potencial del teatre en temps d’adversitat social, política i econòmica.

Paraules clau: teatre aplicat, teatre en línia, crisi de deute, crisi sanitària

Resumen

Este artículo explora el surgimiento del teatro en línea y aplicado en Grecia. El autor y la autora presentan la aparición del término Teatro Aplicado en la literatura griega y también tres ejemplos de práctica de teatro aplicado. Estas prácticas de teatro aplicado han sido implementadas en diversos contextos por diferentes agencias durante la reciente crisis de deuda en el país. Además, el teatro en línea es considerado como una reacción espontánea de la industria del teatro a la crisis sanitaria causada por la expansión del virus Covid-19. El artículo expresa las preocupaciones acerca de la posición del teatro en la era pospandemia y focaliza en el potencial del teatro en tiempos de adversidad social, política y económica.

Palabras clave: teatro aplicado, teatro en línea, crisis de deuda, crisis sanitaria

1. Introduction

Arguing that during the last decade Greek society went through one of its most difficult periods since the establishment of the modern Greek state, would be neither irrational nor an excess. This research concerns theatrical activity during the Greek economic crisis. Theatre is supposed to be a superior artistic genre, which creatively integrates other arts (Patsalidis, 2013). It is also considered as an important socializing agent from the ancient era up to our days, which listens and reflects the social reality of its time (Goldhill, 2007; Pfister, 1988)

Before exploring theatre in crisis, a brief reference to the crisis itself and its characteristics would be useful. An influx of refugees and immigrants in the country, in addition to mass outflow of skilled local workers and scientists into more robust western economies, the so-called '*brain drain*', gave new social and political dimensions to the national economic crisis during 2008-2018. Citizens witnessed growth of depression, poverty and xenophobia along with a growing number of new taxes, homeless people, firings and suicides (Hardouvelis, 2018; Matsagkanis 2013; Sanders IV, 2018; Smith 2017).

These circumstances could explain the catholic mistrust in politics, articulated by the Indignant movement in a series of demonstrations (Avgeropoulos, 2015; Sanders IV, 2018). The above could also explain the unfortunate rising of the Golden Dawn, a Greek fascist political party. In 2010, a low-income majority, struggling to survive on the one hand and a privileged minority on the other, unaffected by the crisis continuing to increase its wealth and prosperity, comprised Greek society according to a Eurobarometer survey (Bogiopoulos, 2011).

Pammenter and Prentki (2014) consider the Greek crisis, like many other similar crises, a structural component of capitalism, created in order to transfer bank and business debts to people as well as to justify decrease of public goods, such as public health and education. In this context it gets even more difficult for theatre to be established and prosper in educational settings than it is in times of economic,

political and social stability. Grammatas (2014) places the Greek crisis in the context of a wider West-East economic conflict, which takes place in a globalized capitalist society that promotes xenophobia, defies ecology and deifies technocracy. As a solution to this problem, which influences our value system in a negative way and tends to take on "human crisis" dimensions, he proposes the immediate shift of the Educational Systems to a "New Humanism", in which theatre plays an important role. After all, theatre and drama in education are related to holistic human development (Papadopoulos, 2010).

Even though it sounds seemingly odd, art flourished during the crisis and Greek artists proved to be unexpectedly creative, defying a declining economy, austerity measures, high unemployment rates and capital controls (Tziovas, 2017). Believing in art's social potential, they overcame the harsh funding conditions and used their art as a means of promoting dialog, political reflection and social claims (Kaldi, 2013; Papaspyrou and Patroni, 2014; Zervou, 2017). In this unforgiving climate, Greek theatre gained in diversity and experimentation and it paradoxically became more affordable (Dimaki-Zora, 2020).

Theatre artists used their talent in order to expose the collective and individual decline, as well as to investigate the causes and results of the crisis.

Theatre is inherently political (Esslin, 1976; Boal, 1981). Politics always lurks in theatre, especially in certain types of it, albeit a gradual surrender to commercialism and individualism is evident since the last quarter of the 20th century (Pefanis, 2003). Applied theatre could be regarded as one of the most political modern theatrical approaches, since it draws its ideas and practices from the post-World War II educational and artistic progressive movements (Neelands, 2007; Nicholson, 2005; Prendergast and Saxton, 2009; Prentki and Preston, 2009). More precisely, applied theatre encompasses participation and transformation (Ackroyd, 2000) and it is closely related to democratic practice and active citizenship under certain conditions (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009).

It would therefore be rather unexpected from the Greek nation that pioneered in the foundations of democracy and modern west theatre (Allardyce, 1981; Hartnoll, 1980; Wilcken, 1976; History of Greek Nation, 1972), to stay unaffected by these radical theatrical shifts. After investigating the appearance of the term applied theatre in Greek academia and literature, we will present three applied theatre case studies that took place in Greece during the country's debt crisis.

2. Applied Theatre in Academia & Praxis

2.1. Applied Theatre in Academia

As indicated by Ackroyd (2000), Nicholson (2005), Thompson (2003), Prendergast & Saxton (2009), Prentki & Preston (2009) et al., applied theatre practice emerged before the akin theory. Long before the terms Applied Theatre/Drama/Performance were born in Anglo-Saxon scholarship by academics, numerous theatre practitioners were already working on settings and methods described by these terms. As Taylor points out:

Applied theatre became a particularly useful description given that it encompasses the breadth of work that theatre programs were creating inside and outside of educational settings, mostly in nontheatrical environments for different purposes-raising awareness, posing alternatives, healing psychological wounds or barriers, challenging contemporary discourses, voicing the views of the silent and marginal. (Taylor, 2003, p. xxi)

Respectively, the term “applied theatre” was introduced to the Greek literature in the first years of 21st century and there is still limited theoretical documentation related to it, whereas applied theatre practice began almost a decade earlier. So far, the translation of Christopher Balme’s book *‘The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies’* by Romanos Kokkinakis and Vicky Liakopoulou (2012) remains a basic source of information about applied theatre, written in the Greek language.

The first Greek scholar and theatre practitioner who wrote about applied theatre is Christina Zoniou (2007). She defines it as a non-professional theatre species, which shapes its identity through its intention, venue, target group and process-based rather than product-based methods. She proceeds to her own distinction of applied theatre in: a) social theatre, b) performing arts in education and c) therapeutic theatre. Social theatre focuses on activism, social transformation, adult education and intercultural education. Performing arts in education concern the use of theatre practices in formal or non-formal educational contexts. Finally, therapeutic theater uses a variety of theatre techniques for psychotherapeutic purposes (Zoniou, 2016).

The wide range of applied theatre is also pointed out by Persephone Sextou, one of the first academics who empowered health education TiE programs in Greece. In a paper which describes one of those health education programs, Sextou and Hatzinikolaou (2007) add TiE and DiE in the portmanteau of applied drama/theatre alongside with theatre in health education, prison theatre, theatre for development, heritage theatre, community theatre, reminiscence theatre and theatre in business settings.

Approaching Zoniou’s first two applied theatre categories, Fanouraki (2010) sees community theatre as part of applied theatre and highlights its focus on marginalized social groups, sociopolitical

dimension and transformative potential. She also regards Theatre in Education (TiE) as part of this community-based theatre tradition.

While applied theatre is usually suggested as an umbrella term that includes TiE and DiE, Papadopoulos

Despite the differences in every scholar's approach, the previous views lead to the common conclusion that applied theatre has a strong connection with education.

(2014) implies that applied drama is part of TiE and DiE when he refers to it as one among various methods, which the wider field of educational drama makes use of. He mentions John Somers' practice as a connection between educational theatre/drama and applied theatre/drama.

Furthermore, Avra Avdi (2011) reviewed Helen Nicholson's book *Applied Drama; The Gift of Theatre* for the *Education and Theater Magazine*. In 2014, Dave Pammenter's and Tim Prentki's announcement on the 7th International Conference on Theatre in Education *Bonds of solidarity* (Athens, 23-25 November, 2012) was translated in Greek by Betty Giannouli and Myrto Pigou-Repousi and published in the same magazine. The authors emphasize the restrictions, limits and dangers of using applied theatre within a capitalistic framework, while at the same time they are enthusiastic about applied theatre projects which aim to overthrow this framework. They also analyze the use of applied theatre for personal, social and political change and recommend that practitioners and participants should give priority to sociopolitical intervention (Pammenter & Prentki, 2014).

Whatever the terms Applied Theatre/Drama/Performance indicate in British, North American and Australian contexts, in Mediterranean and Latin American Theatre Studies, they are referred as 'Social Theatre' (Bernardi and Malini, 2017, Pagnes 2019, Thompson and Schechner, 2004). Apparently, Greece follows this tradition, too. The National Theatre of Greece, the most important state theatre of the country, officially names its cooperation with special social groups in unconventional settings 'Κοινωνικές Δράσεις', which means social actions.

In recent years though, there has been a growing research interest in the field of applied theatre, probably explained by the hesitant and fragmentary entering of the term in Greek higher education institutions.

Documentations of this interest are mainly traced in master dissertations conducted in Theatre Departments of the country's universities (Lyra 2015, Angeli 2019, Samara 2020, Stamati 2019 and Vasileiadou 2012) rather than in the universities' curriculum. Our research led to the conclusion that only two institutions, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), mention the term "Applied Theatre" in their Study Guides: Katerina Diakoumopoulou teaches 'Applied Theatre' in the postgraduate program of the NKUA and Myrto Pigou-Repousi teaches 'Special issues of applied theater: theater and youth culture in the public space' in the postgraduate program of AUTH.

The term 'social theatre' seems to prevail in Greek academia, but what is more important than terminology, is the growing social engagement of theatre studies and their adaptation to the interests of applied theater.

The term 'social theatre' seems to prevail in Greek academia, but what is more important than terminology, is the growing social engagement of theatre studies and their adaptation to the interests of applied theater.

2.2. Applied Theatre Praxis

It is worth mentioning that the related praxis has been varied and vigorous but before proceeding to our analysis of Greek applied theatre praxis, it is worth explaining why we prefer to use the term praxis rather than practice. Paulo Freire invented this notion as a way to combine theory and practice in a fruitful way and to reduce divisions between 'thinkers' and 'doers' (Taylor, 2003). That is why we agree with Taylor when he says:

Praxis is powered by an agenda, a desire to push us to reflect on our practices and refine our theoretical leanings as a step toward acting on and changing our life circumstances. Put simply, praxis denotes the action, reflection, and transformation of people as they engage with one another. Those involved in praxis can anticipate that such action, reflection and transformation should help people create a just and better world. And, this is where applied theatre can play a major role. (Taylor, 2003, p.35)

From the late 80s to the early 00s, some radical changes promoted the relocation and reconsideration of theatre in education in Greece (Kladaki, 2010). The first steps were made in 1989 and 1990, when *Θεατρική Αγωγή* (namely *Theatre Education*) was suggested by the Hellenic government as a new addition to the Hellenic National Curriculum (NC) (HELLENIC MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS 1989, 1990). In the following years, publication of a teacher's textbook on Theatre Education and reinforcement of drama teacher training by the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (HMERA) and the Hellenic Departments of Education or/and Drama, supported the integration of

drama and theatre in the National Educational System (Sextou, 2002). Furthermore, a cooperation between HAMERA, HMC (Hellenic Ministry of Culture) and Boards of Education called *Melina Program: Education and Culture* was the first large-scale and long-term national project towards investigating the role of arts within the formal education system. At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, innovations of great importance strengthened theatre's shift from its conventional settings; The informal constitution of the *Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network*, an association for the promotion of research on and practice of theatre, educational drama and other performing arts within formal and non-formal education, as well as the conduction of the first conferences on educational drama (Sakellariou, 2015).

In the second decade of the 00s, applied theatre initiatives reached their peak. Some of the most important and popular Greek theatre stages like *National Theatre of Greece*, *National Theatre of Northern Greece*, *Municipal Theatre of Piraeus*, *New World Theatre*, *Art Theatre (Theatro Technis Karolos Koun)* and *Onassis Stegi*, inaugurated a series of social actions for special target groups like children, adolescents, the elderly, prisoners, refugees, LGBTQ community and more. These actions are presented on the theatre companies' websites¹. In 2013, ~~was held~~ the first meeting of Greek Theatre of the Oppressed Activist Groups was held (Boemi, 2014). Plenty of applied theatre projects were designed and implemented during the crisis by theatre groups, in cooperation with state services and various non-profit organizations. For example, *ActionAid Hellas* and the *UNHCR Greece* made a significant contribution to raising the awareness of Greeks on refugee issues by funding and designing correspondent performances, theatre workshops and facilitator's handbooks (UNHCR Greece, 2013, 2014).

2.3. Applied Theatre in Practice. Some Examples

Three applied theatre projects that took place in the formerly described era of social instability are presented here. Despite the different contexts of the following projects, all of them are nonprofit and include a performance. The first one is a short-term Prison Theatre intervention by the *Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr)*. Then, we will discuss how a long-term collaboration between nursing homes and *Sevенеleven Theatre Company* accentuated Reminiscence Theatre in Greece. The last example displays the most abiding domestic example of Theatre in Hospitals, set up by the *New World Theatre*.

¹ Information about Greek Theatre Companies' applied theatre practices, available on the websites: <https://www.n-t.gr/en/> (National Theatre of Greece), <https://www.ntng.gr/default.aspx?lang=en-GB&page=1> (National Theatre of Northern Greece), <https://www.theatro-technis.gr/en/> (Art Theatre), <https://www.dithepi.gr/en/> (Municipal Theatre of Piraeus), <https://nkt.gr/> (The New World Theatre), <https://www.onassis.org/onassis-stegi> (Onassis Stegi).

There are different reasons why we chose to expound these projects as representative of the local applied theatre praxis. Among our criteria for selection, we should mention the engagement of these projects in a wide range of vulnerable groups, the discrepancy between their purpose, methods, duration, location and funding sources, as well as the originality of their agents. More specifically, TENet-Gr is the most remarkable representative of what we previously mentioned as performing arts in education according to Zoniou (2016). It operates in a variety of settings throughout the country and abroad, using drama as a powerful means of communication and learning. Thanks to its workshops, seminars, annual journal and updated website, which offers a brief overview of domestic developments in the prison theater sector, TENet-Gr helps both practitioners and researchers. Seveeneven can be proud of the most methodical and painstaking approach to theatre for the elderly, considering that their process has transcended the level of mere entertainment and ended up as one of the infrequent pieces of local reminiscence theatre. The New World Theatre, a mainstream theatre in Athens, inaugurated theatre in hospitals when the rest of conventional theatre stages of the country were still too busy with aesthetics and/or commercialism. After years of steadfast commitment, its team of dedicated artists managed to gain expertise and to expand their innovation.

2.3.1 Prison Theatre: Roles in Life – Roles in the Theatre

Prison theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed lie at the core of applied theatre practice and research (Nicholson, 2005; Prendergast and Saxton, 2009; Thompson, 2003). These theatre types are welcome by those who belong in the radical movement of Critical Education, because Critical Education is committed to forms of learning and action carried out in solidarity with subordinate and marginalized groups (McLaren, 2010).

Applied theatre practitioners around the world cooperate with some of the most oppressed and marginalized citizens such as prisoners, using Boal's method which is inspired by the Freirian vision of a world without oppression, a world that would treat all the people equally:

[...]The oppressed are considered pathological cases of a healthy society, which must therefore adapt these "incompetent and lazy" to its own molds, changing their mentality. These marginalized people need to be "integrated" into the healthy society they have "denied". The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not marginalized people living "outside" society. They were always inside the very structure of society, which turned them into "beings for others" ... (Freire, 1977, p.81)

The Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (<http://theatroedu.gr/>) is a non-profit association and scientific organization, whose members are volunteers. Since its informal establishment in 1998 until today, it is responsible for many novelties, as for instance the publication of *Education and*

Theater Magazine, the arrangement of theater conferences, workshops and training seminars for theatre educators, students, teachers, facilitators and marginal social groups. The workshops usually use drama in order to encourage literacy, creativity, conflict resolution and elimination of stereotypes about urgent issues such as immigration, addiction and offense. TENet-Gr is a principal exponent of what we could call Greek applied theatre.

Invited by the School Principal of the *Second Chance School (SCS)* operating in the men's prison of Korydallos, TENet-Gr designed and implemented a project entitled '*Roles in life-roles in the theater*' during the school year 2016-2017. Three members of the TENet-Gr facilitated the project; actress and facilitator of youth theatre groups Irini Koumbarouli, teatrologist and theatre-pedagogue Sonia Mologousi and sociologist and theatre-pedagogue Hara Tsoukala. They held twenty-two two-hour drama workshops from 17th of January through the 28th of June with fifteen adult male detainees. They used improvisation, devised theatre, educational drama and physical theatre in order to explore:

- Different and often controversial roles each member of the society is called to perform on a daily basis and problems arising from this multitasking effort.
- Whether it is possible or impossible for human beings to communicate effectively with each other.
- How can individuals re-approach their imagination and worldview.

The team concluded this collaboration with the theatrical event *Poteflas ore... Poteflas*, a performance with references to S. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The performance took place at the SCS on 27th and 28th of June. It was presented to representatives of state institutions, teachers and students of the school².

2.3.2 Reminiscence Theatre: How did Violas and Hyacinths bloom?

In 2013 two actors, Notis Paraskevopoulos and Konstantina Maltezou, founded the Seveneleven Theater Company motivated by the desire to make theatre according to their own aesthetics and philosophy and to use arts as a tool for achieving individual and social prosperity. Soon, the elderly attracted their artistic interest.

The company is mainly funded by charities and secondarily by its own theatrical productions and various art classes for children and adults. Paraskevopoulos, Maltezou and their volunteer partners apply a distinctive entertainment model to nursing home dwellers. This project started in 2014, when the company was involved in the pilot charity program *Adama*, launched by the *Synthesis Culture*

² From a telephone interview with Hara Tsoukala to the writers, on 19.11.2020.

Company and funded by the *TIMA Charitable Foundation*. The country was facing a financial hardship and the elderly were noticeably neglected, when Seveneleven participated in the program. According to Paraskevopoulos, Seveneleven became the most important external factor of the time to undertake interventions of recreational participatory actions in Greek nursing homes. Adama project was based on a recognized British model of entertainment and sought the mental empowerment of the elderly, beyond entertainment.

Experience gained from nursing home visits combined with research and study on health problems and characteristics of the elderly as a distinct social group, resulted in the abandonment of the original model and the development of an alternative standard method of communication and entertainment for the elderly with dementia. This is the 'thallo method', based on the 'principle of associative thinking'.

The name of the method comes from the ancient Greek verb θάλλω that means flourish. It is applied by volunteers, specially trained in using theatre as a means of enhancing human self-confidence, imagination and initiative. Each session with the seniors includes games, sensory integration activities, practices such as the 'isolated listening' and other techniques, which are analyzed in Paraskevopoulos' unreleased edition *365 Days Next to the Third Age*. Thallo method embraces mental and emotional empowerment of the elderly, a social group seriously affected by the economic crisis (Tima Charitable Foundation, 2020) and attempts to raise awareness on the degenerative brain diseases. The method ended up in a namesake project which started in 2018 thanks to a donation of *Stavros Niarchos Foundation*. The donation allowed the expansion of the project to a great deal of nursing homes in Attica. Before the government's recent (March, 2020) decision to take restrictive measures against COVID-19, thallo was also implemented in Chios, Arta and Konitsa, while it intended to spread to other places of the country.

The highlight of the project was the reminiscence theatre piece *Violas and Hyacinths*, based on autobiographical testimonies of people with dementia, hosted in the nursing homes that participated in thallo. *Violas and Hyacinths* is the title of an old Greek song that is proved to be among the most popular in the seniors, functioning as a reference point in their memory. The play was performed in 2018-2019 at *Thision*, a mainstream theatre in Athens. The aim of the performance was to raise sympathy for the elderly and to convince people to stay alert on degenerative brain diseases and diseases related to ageing³.

2.3.3 Theatre in Hospitals: Performing Solidarity

³ From a live interview with Notis Paraskevopoulos to the writers, on 12.02.2020. For more information on the subject: www.sevenerleven.me

According to Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits” (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Nevertheless, sick people and especially children are often intentionally or unintentionally excluded from social and cultural life, possibly because our globalizing culture does not embrace loss or death. Pedagogy of Loss/Death intends to familiarize human beings with concepts like end, mortality, fragility, to teach them how to develop empathy and care for the natural world or how to deal with the trauma of a sudden death (Affifi and Christie 2019, Rodriguez; De la Herran & Cortina, 2019). Arts education seems to be an effective tool for the exploration of death and loss (Affifi and Christie, 2019). Luckily, applied theatre places theatre in hospitals and theatre for health education in its principal repertoire (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009).

The *New World Theatre* is a unique case of Greek professional theater that, for eighteen consecutive years, has carried out charitable work with the label ‘*Solidarity Theatre for Children*’ (Papalexi, 2018). In 2002, artistic director Vangelis Theodoropoulos, decided to create an itinerant theatre troupe for children in hospitals.

Since then, the troupe has been conducting daily visits and performances to hospitals, institutions and other places with disadvantaged children. Solidarity Theatre for Children has so far performed for children, parents, nursing staff, teachers and other employees. It has operated in different settings of Attica, as for instance in hospitals (*Aglaia Kyriakou, Paidon Agia Sofia, Paidon Pentelis*), degraded schools, squares and refugee camps. The project has also expanded in the women’s prison of Thebes, as also in Thessaloniki and Cyprus in collaboration with *Doctors of the World*. All these years the team created twelve different theatre pieces. Some of them are based on classic fairy tales such as *Pinocchio* while most of them, like the theatre piece *It’s dawning* by Maria Papalexi, were created entirely for this purpose.

The members of the itinerary troupe have changed over the years but the project so far counts more than 2,000 performances. These productions are free for the audience but the actors are normally paid. Therefore, New World Theatre is constantly looking for sponsors. Until now, the Solidarity Theatre for Children initiative has been funded by public and private bodies, such as *Municipality of Athens, Attica Region, Onassis Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, COSMOTE* (Telecommunications Company), *ELPEDISON* (Energy Supply Company) and so on. Maria Papalexi, key executive of New World Theater, quotes a memorable moment of the project:

..we were performing in a chamber only for one child who was in the final stage of a serious illness. Although the child had lately quitted talking, he reacted to the performance, he laughed. Unfortunately, it was just a flash..⁴

3. Online Theatre: A Trend or a Rule?

As soon as the economic crisis came to an end according to the majority of financial analysts, in reality it was replaced by a new, more expansive and uncontrollable one. In 2020, the spread of the COVID-19 virus and subsequent global pandemic, threatened the global health system. From the beginning of 2020 and afterwards, several states, including Greece, imposed a strict quarantine. With a few exceptions, citizens were obliged to minimize transits and gatherings, by staying in and working from home. Educational and cultural institutions, sports centers, tourist facilities and other parts of everyday life remained inaccessible for months, leading people to unprecedented perplexity and many workers to insecurity and financial hardship that could possibly turn into a new financial crisis. To make matters worse, humanity has not yet overcome coronavirus turbulence and confronts newly imposed lockdowns. This situation certainly raises questions and concerns about theatre in the coronavirus and post-coronavirus era (Patsalidis, 2020).

Online theatre, that is to say the possibility to watch free or priced performances from your screen, is the up to now spontaneous response of the theatre industry (Timplalexi, 2020). The fact that digital technology has irrevocably invaded arts is already admitted (Davis, 2012; Grammatas, 2015) but the international online streaming campaign throughout the lockdown is something completely new. Prominent stages like *British National Theatre* and *Globe Theatre*, the French *Théâtre du Soleil* and the German *Schaubühne* made part of their digital archive available online (Karaoglou, 2020).

Many Greek theatres endorsed this tendency and became equally inventive. *Karolos Koun Art Theater* was the first company to announce the release of web and audio performances for the 2020-2021 theatre season (Kriou, 2020). Through its online platform *Remote Art Theatre*, the company managed to ensure communication with its audience. In the meantime, many artists and theatre companies adopted similar methods, as for instance Nickolas Androulakis and Elli Papakonstantinou, the directors of the live streaming online performances *Dämmerung* and *Trace of Antigone* (Kriou and Karaoglou, 2020).

Furthermore, *ENTER* by Onassis Foundation, *Forced memories* by Emmanouela Vogiatzaki Krukowski, teaching staff of *Department of Theater Studies - University of Peloponnese* and *The Quarantine*

⁴ From a telephone interview with Maria Papalexi to the writers, on 25.01.2020. For more information: www.nkt.gr

Monologues by UNHCR Greece and TENet-Gr are three projects that triggered artistic expression and creativity throughout the lockdown situation. The first project consists of original artworks, created within 120 hours under the most eccentric circumstances. Artists, invited by Onassis Foundation to preserve the memories of the lockdown condition, based their work on their houses, relatives, friends and objects and shared their productions through a digital platform. In forced memories international artists inspired by Samuel Beckett's bizarre characters, took part in a tele-video-performance, so as to share their COVID-era feelings and memories and envision the post-COVID humanity. From April to May 2020, a group of adolescent refugees participated in a series of online creative writing workshops. The workshops resulted in *The Quarantine Monologues*, a publication which illustrates health crisis' impact on the young authors.

Another effort has been recently carried out by *Poreia Theater*. Its instigator, artistic director of Poreia Theater, Dimitris Tarlow, names his idea 'cinematic theatre' and proposes it as a way to protect theatre workers from unemployment during the pandemic. What is more, this new kind of theatre is supposed to help disadvantaged people, isolated communities and foreign art lovers gain access to the contemporary Greek theatrical creation. Tarlow explains with optimism:

In this difficult and critical time, we choose to raise the bar even higher. Having worked intensively for the last six months, we are ready for another premiere, our first online real-time live streaming, with six cameras, on-site telescoping and you spectators in the auditorium. This effort is coming to create a new genre: the cinematic theater. Through this, Poreia Theater will be able to reach all the houses, in all corners of Greece, even the most remote ones, to educate and entertain, to entertain and comfort. (Tarlow, 28/09/2020)

4. Conclusion

On-line communication and on-line education have been vital aspects of our everyday life since the 80's (Vosniadou 2006) creating new prospects for learning and relationship building. Flexibility, speed and convenience make on-line communication and education appealing but certain disadvantages are also related to them, such as health problems, unequal access to computers, GDPR issues, isolation and distraction from meaning and purpose (Newby et al., 2009; Kalligeri, 2011; Gordes & Millez, 2011; Didi, 2011). What about on-line theatre?

A positive aspect of the above mentioned modifications is that they inform us about theatre's strong influence on human life. Fortunately, theatre gives the impression of being something superior to a popular hobby.

As the high online theatre viewing rates indicate (Karaoglou, 2020), people supported theatre in these difficult times not only because of their facilitated access to it, but also because they were looking for a mental escape in theatre's 'as if' condition (Schechner, 2011, 22-23), imaginary freedom, enigmatic atmosphere and therapeutic effect. A further advantage of online theatre, is the opportunity it gives to local theatre artists to broaden their audiences and make their work worldwide recognizable. Creators are forced to stay alert and search for low-cost solutions without settling for aesthetic deficit.

Let us not forget though, that these positive aspects only concern independent artists and a minority of theatre owners that can afford the technological equipment which is going to ensure their entrance to the online theatre reality. Theatre in our globalized neoliberal world depends more than ever on the rules of global market and this is the reason why it frequently adapts to the requirements of the social media and commercialism (Tzamargias, 2010). The majority of theatre stages, especially the unconventional and inquiry ones, that usually do not enjoy state or charitable fund, will probably be unable to cover their operating expenses. Without proper state support, the theatre world faces the danger of artistic lethargy and social turbulence. *Support Art Workers* initiative appeared in the pandemic, as a spontaneous reaction to the chronic devaluation of art workers in Greece. Members and allies of the initiative asked for governmental support and protested against the upcoming risk of unemployment and poverty, in case of an extended lockdown.

Perhaps the most worrying things regarding online theatre are the inevitable one-way direction from theatre scene to the distanced spectator(s) and the end of the ephemeral nature of the theatrical event. Deprived from its rituals, without feedback from the audience and the sense of here and now, theatrical experience may result in stagnation. Communication and interaction are theatre's cornerstones, especially when we talk about participatory, socially and politically engaged theatre practices like applied theatre.

In violent times like the current ones, radical theatre is harder but also more necessary to find. In this new context, applied theatre's next steps are crucial. Taking into account that coronavirus is still threatening our everyday life and Europe will probably experience new lockdown-waves, applied theatre should reassess its target groups and locations. At the same time, there is an urgent need for a fruitful connection between academia and praxis. Theatre studies should deepen applied theatre research and increase the number of applied theatre projects.

Applied theatre projects could emphasize on helping pupils and students join their coronavirus-affected educational system. They could also negotiate the contemporary struggle of doctors, nurses and other health care workers and could focus their attention to the families and friends of COVID-19 victims.

Finally, we should always keep in mind that homeless people, the elderly, drug addicts and other social victims are still out there, suffering from an older disease, our ignorance. We are witnessing a growing inclination for remote work, remote gymnastics, remote shopping and remote entertainment. If we add remote art to this list, then we run the risk of basing our future on individualism, isolation and loneliness. Technology is absolutely not to blame. But we have to agree with the quote that theatre is and should remain 'the art of the sweaty face and the stretched body' (Pefanis, 2003, 39).

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