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**Universidad de Valladolid**

FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN DE SORIA

Grado en EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA

TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

# **The Simpsons as an Educational, Literary and Cultural Tool in the English Language Classroom.**

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Soria, 30 de junio de 2015

*“Books are useless! I read one book in my life: "To Kill a Mockingbird" .*

*And do not give me any information on how to kill mockingbirds!*

*Yes, it is true that taught me not to judge a man  
by the color of their skin, but is that what it is for me? “*

*Homer Simpson*

*A todos aquellos profesores  
que me han ayudado a ser quien soy.*

*A los buenos; muchas gracias*

*A los malos; gracias.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

1. Abstract .....	4
2. Resumen .....	4
3. Introduction .....	5
4. The show of The Simpsons .....	6
5. The election of the media as resource of work .....	7
6. The election of The Simpsons for teaching English .....	10
7. The violence: The need to know to eradicate .....	12
8. The reading the connexion between the show and the literature ...	16
9. The intertextuality: The vehicle between The Simpson and the children .....	18
10. Didactic proposal based on the viewing of The Simpson .....	20
11. The crepes of wrath .....	20
a. What did the character? .....	21
b. As Monet, Manet or Van Gogh .....	22
c. Phrasal Verbs .....	23
d. Roundtable of explanations .....	24
e. The different explanations .....	25
f. Research project .....	26
g. Putting voice to The Simpson .....	27
12. The tree house of horror: The raven .....	28
a. As the yellow characters.....	29
13. Conclusion.....	30
14. List of references.....	31

## **1. ABSTRACT**

The Simpson is considered as the best sitcom of the last century. However, if we talk about education this show is badly assess. The Simpson is an adult show, but as a teacher, I believe that it has a huge potential for the teaching-learning process. The use of this show in English, the children motivation with cartoons and the benefits that this has, it would allow work the learning of English at the same time they are entertained. This sitcom has visual violence but this is a necessary aspect; to try to eradicate. Moreover it is possible knowing and learning literature with this TV show due to the big amount of intertextuality in the show. There are chapters that are incredible parodies of books or films. We as teachers have to approach these characteristics to make the teaching-learning process easier for our students.

Key-word: The Simpsons, violence, English teaching, literature, media.

## **2. RESUMEN**

La serie de Los Simpson está considerada como la mejor serie del último siglo. Sin embargo si hablamos sobre educación, este show sale mal evaluado. Los Simpson es una serie para adultos, pero como profesor, creo que tiene un potencial increíble para la enseñanza. El uso de este show en inglés, la motivación de los niños al usar dibujos y los beneficios que esto lleva, nos permite el aprendizaje del inglés al mismo tiempo que ellos están entretenidos. Esta serie tiene una violencia visual, pero este aspecto es necesario para tratar de erradicar la violencia con su ayuda. Además es posible conocer y aprender literatura con este show de TV debido a la gran cantidad de intertextualidades que aparecen en el show. Hay capítulos que son parodias increíbles de libros o películas. Como profesores hemos de aprovechar estas características para que nuestros alumnos puedan aprender más fácilmente.

Palabras clave: Los Simpsons, violencia, aprendizaje del inglés, literatura, medios audiovisuales.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

Firstly I want to express that this work and this introduction are going to be very personal of course presenting as well an objective approach to the topic discussed. I consider that the topic that I have chosen is part of me and my knowledge. During the last years I have been improving my knowledge as a teacher. But much of what I have learnt that I already knew even is a rather superficial way. For example subjects as English literature remember me chapters of The Simpsons. Novels, artists, films, poems... I could continue listing things that I have seen and I have learnt with this show. This is the reason why I have chosen this work. If I have learned from this, more people could do it.

But this show is usually qualified in a negative way, at least as far as Education may be concerned. Parents explain that violence is too much present in this Sitcom. They believe that the little yellow character, Bart, could be a bad model for their children, or the violence of Homer can be a not recommended influence. I don't understand that parents who have these ideas and in the lunch time put the news, being this, in my opinion, harder, and with many possibilities to offend the sensibilities of children.

I remember a story that my first teacher of primary told me. This story was about the life of a little prince. This little prince lived in a rich family and he was the heir of the throne. The parents of this little prince wanted that he was a good king and they provided him good education. But their parents were worried, they wanted to avoid all kind of violence, sadness or bad things from his life. For this reason they created a perfect world in their palace for the prince. He couldn't go out of the palace. One day the little boy runs away from the palace with a servant and discovered that this little world in which he lived it wasn't the real life. He discovered violence, poverty, death... A.Calle (2006) explains that since this day the prince changed her lifestyle giving up to the throne to obtain the release of her mind. For this reason he left the palace. This day, was the most important day in the Buddha's life. This story made me understand that it is necessary to know the things to assess them, and in this case, to eradicate it.

In our world we have violence, wars, poverty, mistreats, drugs... Is it a good idea to create a perfect world that one day probably explode in our children's' face? Cartoons

permit children to know the reality before they receive a strike. The Simpsons with their humour is a perfect choice to make our children understand problems of our life.

These are the reasons that encourage me to do this work. I believe that there are some life aspects that Simpson could help to understand. I am going to propose the ideas that make possible the teaching with this show and some examples of how to do it.

#### **4. THE SHOW OF THE SIMPSONS**

To know better what The Simpsons are, we need a little explanation of this famous TV set. One of the best explanations of this sitcom is presented in *The philosophy of the Simpsons* (2006). The creator of the Simpsons is Matt Groening (1954- present). This author is famous by the creation of another TV sets like Futurama or Life in Hell. He created The Simpsons and the show started appearing in a show called *The Tracey Holliman Show* as a short. But in the year 1989, these characters appeared in a TV set of 15 minutes in the Fox. This was the moment of the birth of one of the most important series of the last times.

Since the debut of this show, The Simpsons has broadcast around 570 chapters in 26 seasons. Moreover Yasmine El-Rashidi (2005) a staff reporter of the Wall Street Journal explains how the sitcom is adapted to the different regions in which is reproduced watching its impact:

The Simpsons has been dubbed into several other languages, including Japanese, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. It is also one of the few programs dubbed in both standard French and Quebec French. The show has been broadcast in Arabic, but due to Islamic customs, numerous aspects of the show have been changed. For example, Homer drinks soda instead of beer and eats Egyptian beef sausages instead of hot dogs. Because of such changes, the Arabized version of the series met with a negative reaction from the lifelong Simpsons fans in the area (taken from the internet, not page specified).

The sitcom takes place in the city of Springfield, it is a “little town” and for this reason we can recognise the biggest part of the characters. This little universe (universe because we don’t know their limits) offers whatever they need to fight with problems of nowadays.

The most important characters of the Simpsons are the components of the family that give name to the show. The Simpsons are a medium class family, in which Homer, the leader maintains economically to the rest of components. Marge is the housewife and she takes care of Homer and their three kids. Bart and Lisa go to the school and Maggie is the baby. Also we can find the sisters of Marge, Patty and Selma, who are always finding their perfect partner, they hate Homer. The grandfather Abraham lives in a home for the elderly. The mother of Homer disappeared when Homer was a baby and rarely appears in the set. The show presents a satirical view of an American middle class family.

All the chapters are in a floating timeline; the characters have always the same age but living in our present.

The themes of the sitcom are diverse and they have changed along this time. At first, in the beginning of the show, the centre of all chapters was situations that the family lived. Now however the chapters can be about whatever of the citizens of Springfield. For this reason we know all the characters of Springfield.

## **5. THE ELECTION OF THE MEDIA AS RESOURCE OF WORK**

Now I am going to explain why I have chosen the audiovisual media as a vehicle of the learning.

First we need a definition of video to understand better the explanations.

A. Tomás (2009) gives the following definition of the video:

The video is an audiovisual media that by their ability of expression and their facilities of being used, it becomes on an important didactic resource. This educational tool is very versatile because it permits to illustrate or replay about a specific content. It could arouse the interest about a topic for the supporting of the sound and the movement images (p.8).

We must understand that nowadays the audiovisual media is an essential resource that is used in the most part of the classes. For this reason children live with all these resources and know how to manage it. But not everything is perfect. There is a sector of people that are not used to coexist with them. This group of people is formed by the teachers that have lived the process of invasion of the technologies in the school. There are

teachers who understand that the technologies are now more present in class and for this reason they need to know how to use it in a correct way.

A. Tomás (2009) explains that:

The pedagogy that is done with the help of images and sounds consists in the application of all the languages discoveries of the medias to be used as a pillar of the teachers' explanations in the different areas of the curriculum and to facilitate the learning of the contents. This approached is based on the knowledge of the technique aspects with manage of the audiovisual medias and above of all in the necessary didactic formation for use these medias properly (p.8).

However, on the other hand, there are teachers that introduce the audiovisuals senseless. Doing this, they are giving the starring role to this resource, without understand that is the teacher who has the didactic function. A. Tomás said: "The video cannot replace the teacher but can be used as a motivating instrument and complement verbal explanations" (2009, p. 8). To understand this project it is necessary to understand that audiovisuals are not a transmitter of knowledge; audiovisuals are guide or a form to acquire the knowledge faster and easier.

One of the best aspects of audiovisuals is the motivation that generates in the students. Children learn better when they are enjoying with the class activities. For us as teachers we have to try to achieve real learnings. If we work in a correct way with audiovisuals we can do it.

The video makes three major contributions to teaching:

- Memory. When you read a book, your memory store the things that have been interesting or useful for you. If you listen to the radio, it would happen the same. And if you are watching photos in your laptop, it happens just the same. But what if you used the three media simultaneously? If we use videos in classroom we achieve that students probably remind easier some of these three ways improving their learning and their memory capacity.
- Motivation. Alonso Tapia (2005) explains that one of the main factors that condition our learning is the motivation when we face activities. He explained that sometimes we believe that students don't learn because they are not

motivated but the reality is that sometimes students are not motivated because they don't learn.

The use of The Simpsons helps us to maintain the motivation of our students making that children learn enjoying the process. When children are motivated they are not conscious of the effort they are doing in activities. Another advantage of having motivated students in class is that the motivation makes easier the comprehension and avoids the blockage in our students.

But we have to take care of some aspects to achieve motivation in children. The first of these aspects is the meaning of the object to learn. If we not create a positive attitude toward the subjects, students probably don't achieve our objectives. An aspect important is the vision of what they are going to need or to do to learn.

- Meaning. This is a very simple issue. The things that we read or listen in the video are going to be supported by the visual. For this reason it would be easier to learn new words or to improve that words that could be confused for us.

But as I have explained before we have different resources and it is not an obligation to use the video. Before using the video I consider that we have to think and study the following questions. The video offers didactic opportunities? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the video against others resources? And the most important question. What are the reasons that make me choose the video?

Knowing that learning English is becoming increasingly more important and reading the above information we can see how the video is a good tool for the learning of a language. As I have explained to use the video we have to ask ourselves what advantages and disadvantages offer against others resources. Based on my experience and with the knowledge acquired in my university period I have redacted some advantages that we can obtain of the properly uses of the video in English classes are:

- Motivation: As I have explained before motivated students are more efficient and they would learn English enjoying the process.
- Familiarity: Nowadays everybody knows how to use a video. For this reason students have the opportunity of use videos of The Simpsons or another series at home to learning English.

- Possibilities: Videos are flexible in some aspects. They permit to stop, replay or skip depending of what we want of the video.
- Real contexts: The students are going to learn watching The Simpsons and their adventures. This aspect generates motivated students. The Simpsons have similar situations as they have in their real life.
- Attention. It easier to be concentrated in something that generate interest on you that in something boring.

## **6. THE ELECTION OF THE SIMPSONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH.**

As I have explained before, when we have to choose an audiovisual tool in classroom we have to ask ourselves if it is a good option uses it in classroom. Now I am going to do this with The Simpsons.

The Simpsons is one of the most famous shows in the world. We can appreciate this when we know that this sitcom is reproduced around the world. The Simpsons is destined to and adult audience. Despite of this, I consider that it is an incredible resource to learn English if we have some basic ideas about how to use this tool with children.

The first question that we have to make ourselves is if this sitcom offers us didactic opportunities. I propose this tool as a tool for the learning of English and as I have explain before the media is perfect to achieve this objective.

One of the advantages of watching the Simpsons is that we can improve the listening and speaking level of our students. Furthermore if we watch the Simpsons in the original version we have the possibility of use the subtitles. The subtitles permit us to work the reading and to know how some words are pronounced.

We have to understand that The Simpsons are not designed to teaching. But we can consider this as an advantage instead of a disadvantage. As it is an adult show the fluency and the way in which they speak it is real and children could learn how it is really the English. Another advantage that we can extract, it is that with this language children can learn lots of idioms and colloquial expressions. It is necessary to remember that the video is only a tool and it is necessary someone who guides.

One advantage is that students are not get used to work with no educative materials. This could be some different and without any doubt this is funnier. We know it is said that “the forbidden always attracts” and this probably happens with this show. Everybody knows the bad qualification that the Simpsons receive. Children know it and probably they were more motivated for this. Motivated children are too much efficient.

Other benefit of using this material in classroom is the flexibility that it offers to us. It is easy and flexible and for this we have the possibility of stop the video, and repeat fragments to work with it.

And the most important question is: Why I have chosen the Simpson.

I am a fan of The Simpsons since I have memory. Every day at my home at the lunch time The Simpsons were in the TV and now this custom continues. I enjoyed all the chapters and I could remember lots of things that I have watched on it. I remember dialogues, expressions, and situations. Now imagine, if this happened (to me and I supposed that to more people) with a show in your mother tongue, imagine that this sitcom were reproduced in English. We will obtain some benefits.

As a teacher I have been studying the different positive and negative aspects that The Simpsons could have if we use it in a classroom. And I consider that there are more benefits that disadvantages. For this reason I have chosen The Simpsons. Moreover if we focus The Simpsons in an English class context we can consider that the sitcom helps children to improve:

- Listening skills. As it has been explained before the students are going to listen to English in a natural context. It is possible that in some parts the characters speak too much quickly. If this happens and the students have a script, the students will improve their listening fluency. Furthermore students could listen to informal English or slays words that probably don't appear on a dictionary.
- Speaking skills. Listening “natives” speaking English can help the students to acquire some structures that after the video they can use. They could improve too the fluency of their speaking due to an adaptation of their listening capacities. Throw the listening we can improve aspects as the correct accentuation of some words.

- Pronunciation. Watching the Simpsons with subtitles the students will learn how to pronounce some words that they read in the script.
- Vocabulary. With the sitcom the students will learn many new words and phrases, specially idioms and colloquial expressions. As we are going to work with a video we will have the possibility of stopping the show to work with this vocabulary.

As a conclusion of this part. The Simpsons is a family that live “common” days as we live. This means that we can extract vocabulary, expressions... If we watch the daily life of a family we can learn how to talk in our daily life.

## **7. THE VIOLENCE: THE NEED TO KNOW HOW TO ERADICATE**

Violence is one of the aspects that deeply concerns society these days is violence. Violence is in our day to day and we have to live with it. But we know that it is not good and we have to eradicate it. For this reason we have to know what violence is and the origins of it. For this reason I am going to explain a few things about violence.

If you find the definition of violence you can see how there are more than one definition. The first definition that I have chosen is from the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (2014, p.2246): “Violence is an action that leading into a state outside of nature; a rupture of harmony caused by any being.” Another definition that we can extract from the *Diccionario Maria Moliner* (1975, p.1533) is: “the action of the violent”. If we go to the violent definition in the same dictionary we can see “*the actions of people with a disproportionately passionate, impetuous or choleric character that is easily are driven by anger*”. J. Bautista (2012) gives a definition very interesting of another author called Morillas: Violence is a deleterious do. Furthermore J. Bautista (2012) says that UNESCO throw their *Manifiesto De Sevilla* explains that violence is not something innate to people. They explain that violence is learned.

Despite of that definitions there are times in which people believe that aggressiveness is the same that violence. Aggressiveness is natural to all animals, but the violence is generated by the environment in which humans live. Both concepts could be linked by not are the same.

J. Bautista (2009) suggests:

Without any doubt violence is one of the most worrying aspects. But we have to think that if war doesn't exist probably peace wouldn't exist. We could say that violence is a rupture of the established order of the life conditions. It is probably that nowadays violence is something common in our lives, for this reason it is necessary to make an effort to "understand it" in their dimensions to try to eradicate it (p. 15).

In my university period, the subject from *Education for the Peace* has shown how the seeds of violence are sown in the first years of live, and then violence is developed in the childhood and bear fruits in adolescence. Violence is something located in our consciences (It is apprehended and generates symbols) and it is shown throw we think and feel.

But violence is not something simple. Violence is extended because it has a multifaceted character. The violence could be present in institutions, economy, politic, ideologies, and families, as a matter of fact it seems to be part of our cultural manifestations. For example, contrasting articles information of J. Bautista (2012) and Pazos (year not specified) about violence we can learn that Marx said that violence is present in our world and environment because it is necessary. He considered that violence is the engine that permits the changes and chances. J. Bautista (2012). He explained how violence is justified by some movements as:

- The Christianity. This movement talks about the original sin. This sin explains and justifies all kind of violence or negative actions that men make. After violence God pardon all sins.
- Individualism. It defends that everybody thinks and act independently of the rest of people. According to this movement we act without think in general rules and finding our own benefit.
- The Social Darwinism. It believes that there are a natural selection that favours the most ruthless and selfish people.

All these movements are supported by an aggressive impulse. It is a characteristic innate to humans and animals that permits in a first step survival and after a way to improve the conditions of life.

Reading how violence is justified by different movements we can see how violence is a cultural manifestation of the men that it is transmitted from generation to generation.

Reading J. Bautista (2012) we can see how Hobbes has the most complete materialist doctrine of the 19th century. He criticised and has the most radical and deep reflexion about the politic in the occidental world. He believes that violence is everywhere. Moreover he also believes that the natural state of humans is the civil war. But men are afraid of death and prefer to find peace giving the power to the leviathan.

Another important author that talked about the violence is Rousseau. He supposed that men are kind by nature but the society perverts them. He said that violence appears when the conflict is added sectoral distance, difference of perceptions different values, opposing interests ... For this reason he defends that violence is not generated by culture, violence arises from the inability of some cultures to reach agreement and achieve reciprocity. The cultures are not violent, violence is integrated in society to justify its existence.

But we have to understand that violence is the rupture of the order of peace. So one needs each other. Peace is the ordained and violence is the extra-ordinated. A word that describes perfectly this is Dichotomy. When you talk about peace at the same time you are talking about war, violence, racism, ethnics, xenophobia, security, respect...

So we know that violence has a multifaceted character and is reproduced in different environments. For this reason Jimenez-Bautista (2012) analysing Johan Galtung's consideration about violence helps us to understand how we could difference three different kinds of violence.

- Direct violence (verbal, psychological and physical). It is that kind of violence in which the action generates a direct damage in the target individual.
- Structural violence. It defines process of violence in which the action is produced throw institutional or structural mediations. It can be understand as a kind of indirect violence present in the social injustice that causes that people's need are not fulfilled knowing that another system would be fulfilled.
- Cultural violence. It is understood as any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form.

If direct violence is generated from the aggressor and the structural violence is organized from the system, the cultural violence is made from the ideas, rules, tradition, culture, etc.

It is necessary that we as teachers know what is violence and the origins of this. Because knowing this we could know how to eradicate it. But from this idea we have another problem. How can we teach what is violence without hurting the sensibility of the children? As a teacher interested in the eradication of violence I propose to use the visual violence.

What is the visual violence? The visual violence is a term that I have invented and it refers to all kind of violence that is watched through cartoons or animations. This kind of violence permits us to work with the sensibility of children without hurting it. So making an appropriate use of the visual violence we can work the violence's meaning and how eradicate it. For example a sitcom as *The Simpsons* is a good option to work with it.

*The Simpsons* is a sitcom that recreates and parodies the daily life of an American family. For this reason they use aspects as the violence or mistreats as a mockery to our society. This aspect permits that adults enjoy the chapters watching it as a criticism. However the Simpson has a problem when it is used with children. We have to understand that there are some aspects that must be supervised by an adult person because intellectually it could generate problems that children alone don't understand. When I am talking about problems I am referring to intertextualities. If an adult person is with the children to explain these texts, the chapter will increase their sense.

However with the violence it is different. *The Simpson* is a show that has increased their level of violence with the time. But this permits us to work with this violence. The yellow characters live violent situations that with an analysis allow to raise awareness about violence. But not always *The Simpsons* are perfect to work with violence without hurting the children's sensibility.

There is an aspect that is named the threshold of violence. This is the point in which violence hurts the sensibility of our children. This is an important point for the teacher because he has to know where the threshold of their violence is. It is difficult to know all our threshold of our students because it is something different on them and because

is a very personal aspect. So, what have to do the teacher then? The teacher would have to decide the balance between the sensibilities of the children. It has difficult and ethic aspects because doing this the teacher could exceed the threshold of violence or not work enough with others students.

In relation with this threshold in *The Simpsons* I can say that there is one chase in which this violence could exceed the limits. For example, *Itchy and Scratchy* is a show that appears into *The Simpsons*. This show is based on the animal cruelty and I think that there are no possible positive extractions of this. For adults this can be watched as a criticism, but I don't consider this show as appropriate for the children.

## **8. THE READING: THE CONEXION BETWEEN THE SHOW AND THE LITERATURE.**

Everybody knows that reading is something good that offers us some benefits. For this reason we could imagine that this activity is made by all people, but the reality is totally opposite to that idea. The reality shows us how the act of reading is being apart from the daily routines or daily activities. Nowadays children and teenagers prefer playing videogames or being with their mobile phones that being with a book reading.

The act of reading is more selfish that social, but it is necessary. Reading is an act that permits us complete our person. In Yaiza Saiz (2012) article it is explained the opinion of Emily Teixidor who says that people every day go to the gymnasium more, but people do not read more. He thinks that people must dedicate a half hour to the act of reading every day. But there are some people that don't know what the reasons to read are. In my opinion the main reason is that the process of reading is a pleasure process. We read, learn, enjoy and travel at the same time. Reading you can be in two places at the same time.

Yaiza Saiz, (2012) in their article about the benefits of the reading explain:

If we talk about the benefits that offer us the act of reading, we can see how people who read improve their memory, their concentration, the empathy, and work against the generative decline and avoid issues as Alzheimer. All of these are

benefits of the reading, but we have too much more (taken from the internet, page number not specified).

The act of reading is necessary because it permits people generate their capacity of judge and giving opinions. When we are reading something we are making an idea about it, and with this we generate an opinion. For this reason if someone reads, that person are cleaning their mind of topics. Furthermore Yaiza Saiz (2012) explains that studies have shown that people who read have better capacities to speak with people.

Despite of all these benefits there are people that don't read. For this reason we have to try to change this in children. The childhood watching the television is projected in adolescence in front of computers. This person has not lives the process of maturation that the reading permits. To try to avoid this we have to give opportunities of reading to children.

The first point that we have to try that our students (or daughters) learn is one aspect that Bloom (2000) explains in their book *Cómo leer y por qué*. He suggests that reading is one of the biggest pleasures that loneliness offers because is the most healthy aspect in a spiritual way. As I have said before the reading permit us to be in two places at the same time. We can live another life different of our life and we can empathize with this life. Books are worlds of adventures that children create in their way. We have to be clear the idea that the reading is a personal praxis.

But what books are the most appropriates? We as experts have to understand we are going to find the appropriate books to encourage the reading. Yaiza Saiz (2012) reproducing words of Iñaki Gabilondo, says that “a good selection of books is as a good selection of aliments; it nourishes”. In my opinion the best selection of books are the classics that Italo Calvino very well describes in their book *Por Que Leer Los Clasicos*. We have to offer a selection of books to our children or students that create a linkage between the literature and them.

In the childhood it is produced the first contact with the literature and as other experiences it is a particular experience with particular importance. If we achieve the objective of create this linkage between the classics and the child, the child will create a personal relation with the books. And in a future, Calvino (1992) the contact with this book would be different because it would be read with love and the rereading will

permit to recognize new details and meanings that the first time has not been appreciated. As Italo Calvino says “A classic book is a book that never finish to tell everything that has to tell” (1992, p.15)

As a teacher, I would offer books or tales as the wonderful wizard of Oz, The Ugly Duckling, Harry Potter, poetry of Poe, plays as Hamlet... Because we have to offer all kind of literature, not only narrative or tales. For example, in my opinion tales and poems must be used in different contexts. Tales are neither parables nor proverbs. They have to finish, not could have an open ending. The tales must have a satisfying conclusion. On the other hand, poetry is the finding of spiritual creations of the world.

There are adaptations that could be appropriate to read with children. These plays, tales or novels have been writing in a language more adequate for the understanding of the children. But I prefer to read the original version of this book. You can choose parts of books and read with your children.

In conclusion I believe that the teacher must offer opportunities of reading the classics of the literature. They have lots of advantages and they would be useful to create the future personality of our children. Furthermore in a future, these students will have created their own library with their classics.

## **9. THE INTERTEXTUALITY: THE VEHICLE BETWEEN THE SIMPSON AND THE CHILDREN**

E. Veloso (2012) suggests that The Simpson trough the intertextuality have achieved to unite a hypothetic world with a real world.

One of the keys of the Simpson’s success is based on the references that make this sitcom an adult show. Watching the show we can see the amount of intertextual references that appear on the show (winks to films, tale’s adaptations, and apparition of famous pictures...). Everything passes through the yellow filter.

But to clarify better what I am saying it is necessary a definition extracted of E. Veloso (2012). He suggests that intertextuality is an inclusion of a text, or part of text, in another being consciously and with a communicative intention. But the reception it is important too because if not are reception the intertextuality has no meaning. But

reading this we need the definition of text. A text is a set of signs with a communicative intention that has a meaning for the receptor in a determinate context. We will talk about direct intertextuality when a text is used and on the other hand we will talk about indirect intertextuality when it is made a reference in the text. To clarify, an indirect reference happens when is named a character, a song or a film but these do not appear in the Simpson.

But we can different some kinds of intertextuality<sup>1</sup>:

- Defined. When the receptors know that there is an intertextuality.
- Not-defined. When the receptor is not conscious of this reference

But we have more kinds of classification.

- Total. When the intertextuality is formed by a chapter, book a whole film.
- Partial. When the text is a fragment of a film, book, chapter...

Making an analysis of the different season of the sitcom we can see how too much intertextual references appear. These references help to spread culture. This is one of the reasons that explained the variety of people who love this show.

As teacher I consider that the use of these references could be used as middle point between the show and the text. If a poem of Edgar Alan Poe appears in the Simpson we easily be able to work with that poem. The Simpsons help us to create a positive believing about that. This is the first step in the children's culture.

Annalyzing the *Guía Completa de Los Simpson* (2007) I have decided that The raven of E.A.Poe, The Monkey's Pow of W.W. Jacobs, Tom Sawyer of M. Twain, Harry Potter of J.K Rowling, Hamlet of W. Shakespeare, Sherlock Holmes of S.A Conan Doyle and the Bible are some books which appear referenced in The Simpsons. It is possible that the watching of The Simpsons could encourage the students to read that kind of literature.

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<sup>1</sup> The names of these kinds of intertextuality have been translated from the Spanish.

## **10. DIDACTIC PROPOSAL BASED ON THE VIEWING OF THE SIMPSON**

All these proposal activities are designed for a 12 years class. This doesn't mean that these activities only are adequate for this course. A correct adaptation of these activities could make possible their use in other courses.

## **11. NAME OF THE CHAPTER: THE CREPES OF WRATH.**

### **Why I have chosen this chapter?**

This chapter is The Crepes of Wrath. As I have explained in the rest of the work I consider that The Simpson is a show that permits to teach languages at the same time while show culture. I have chosen this chapter because the plot of this is much related with the idea of the language learning. The chapter has an incredible potential to work with it. This chapter has no violence despite I consider that violence in cartoons can help us to understand and then eradicate it.

The headmaster Skinner, who is showing to his mother the school, finds Bart and their friends while they are planning a mischief. When Skinner's mother went to the toilet, Bart light a firecracker and throws it down the toilet. Mrs. Skinner was shot from the toilet due the explosion. The headmaster is angry for the behaviour of Bart and he proposes Bart's parents to include Bart in an exchange program. The boy, who accepts, travels to France where their adoptive parents treat him as a slave. In Springfield, Adil, the adopted child, asks Homer that carried him to the nuclear plant. There, Adil makes photographs of Top Secret material that will send to Albania.

Ugolin and Caesar force Bart to taste the wine they do with antifreeze. When they send Bart to the city to shop more antifreeze, Bart discovers that he has learnt English and asks help from a police. At the same time in Springfield the FBI detect the messages of Ugolin with Top secret information of the Nuclear Central. The police arrest Adil in Springfield and in France Ugolin and Caesar are too arrested. Bart is considered in France as a hero to save the famous French wine.

## ACTIVITY ONE.

### Title: What did the character?

This activity is based on the comprehension. After the first watching of the video the teacher are going to share out different scripts. The script is from the chapter in which we are working. But this chapter have some blanks and children must complete these gaps. These gaps are not only words, these gaps are phrases. For example, in one part of the chapter Lisa appears saying something to his father. In this moment the subtitles disappear and the students in groups have to discuss what it the meaning of the Lisa's phrase. After watching the chapter, the teacher would ask their students about the meaning of the gaps. They could debate and talk about what they think that this gap means. In the correction the teacher could use the video to help students understand some difficult parts.

With this activity we intend to develop the following skills in our students:

- To improve the Grammar comprehension. Our students are going to justify why theirs chooses are appropriate. For this reason they will have to justify the grammatical structure and the meaning of the phrase.
- To improve the speaking abilities. When pupils have to discuss about what is the correct meaning they are speaking. They will have to find the way to express their opinion being grammatically correct. Moreover the teacher will generate determinate situations to see how they act in that moment.
- To improve the listening abilities. Throw the watching of the video the students will improve their listening ability. They will have a need of adaptation to understand the scripts.
- To improve the social abilities. They are going to defend an idea but they have to do it with respect and education.
- To improve the reading skills. They are going to read at the same time that they are watching the show. It permits to know how words have to be written and what are the different structures used in the text.
- To encourage the self-correction between friends. The students have to understand that they can learn from his friends and not only from the teacher.

- To improve the writing skills. When they have to decide what complete the gaps they have to write it.

## ACTIVITY TWO.

### As Monet, Manet or Van Gogh.

This activity is focused on the pictures of the famous Monet, Van Gogh and Manet. In one moment of the chapter, appear three pictures of these authors. The activity consists in watching how the style of these authors are and paint and draw similar pictures. This activity could be divided in two parts. One part is the process of colouring the picture. The other part is the process of drawing through the description given by the teacher. This activity has no correction. It must be used as a vehicle to enlarge the student's culture. When they finished, they will explain their classmates why they have done that things.

With this activity we intend to develop the following skills in our students:

- To enlarge the culture of our students. With this activity they will learn about authors, styles and artistic periods.
- To encourage the creativity of the students. This activity has no limits and the main objective is working with the creativity.
- To improve the speaking abilities. When pupils have finished the pictures they have to explain about their picture's decisions. They will have to find the way to express their opinion being grammatically correct.
- To improve the listening abilities. Through the listening of the explanation the students will improve their listening ability. They will have a need of adaptation to understand the scripts.



### ACTIVITY THREE.

#### Phrasal verbs.

As teacher of English I know how the phrasal verbs are one of the most difficult aspects of the English learning. For this reason and using this resource I try that students learn these phrasal verbs. We have explained before that the chapter will be played with subtitles. It permit that students identify easier these phrasal verbs. This activity consists in the watching of fragments of the video to identify and to explain what the meaning of those words is. In a first moment students will have to write the phrasal verbs that they have located. After that and helped by the teacher they would discussed what would be the real meaning of this words. As teacher I consider that the best way to create a real learning is by the use of a maieutic methodology.

With this activity the intentions are that our students be encourage:

- To improve the social abilities. They are going to defend an idea but they have to do it with respect and education.
- To improve the speaking abilities. When pupils have to discuss about what is the correct meaning they are speaking. They will have to find the way to express their opinion being grammatically correct.
- To improve the listening abilities. Throw the watching of the video the students will improve their listening ability. They will have a need of adaptation to understand the scripts.
- To improve the reading skills. They are going to read at the same time that they are watching the show. It permits to know how words have to be written and what are the different structures used in the text.

- To improve the Grammar comprehension. Our students are going to justify why their choices about the phrasal verbs are appropriate.
- To encourage the self-correction between friends. The students have to understand that they can learn from his friends and not only from the teacher.

#### ACTIVITY FOUR

##### Roundtable of languages

This exercise is based in the debate. We pretend that our students learn why it is necessary to know another language. To do this, the class will be divided in three groups. One group will defend why they believe that it is necessary the language learning. Other group will defend that is not necessary. The third group will act as moderators giving order and coherence. The teacher must participate in this debate to generate adequate questions against the two groups. After the debate, it will be a conclusion that all students have to decide. This activity is focused in the communication and in the understanding of the debate.

- To improve the Grammar comprehension. Our students are going to express their ideas trying to be correct in their use of the language.
- To improve the speaking abilities. When students have to discuss about what is the correct meaning they have to speak. They will have to find the way to express their opinion being grammatically correct. Moreover the teacher will generate determinate situations to see how they act in that moment.
- To improve the listening capacity. With the debate students will improve their listening ability. They have to listen carefully because they have to defend the other's group argument.
- To encourage the self-correction between friends. The students have to understand that they can learn from his friends and not only from the teacher.
- To improve the social abilities. They are going to defend ideas but they have to do it with respect and education.
- To improve the capacity of reasoning in our students.

## ACTIVITY FIVE

### The different explanations

This is one of the basic activities but is one of the most necessities to work with all the class. After watching the video the teacher will hand out different questions about the show. Not all the students will have the same questions but the students have to achieve all the answers. The children will be asked and they will answer. The rest of students will have to listen carefully to complete all the text. It is important that the teacher is conscious of the correct use of grammar and vocabulary when they write and the correct pronunciation when they read. This activity could be the first of all activities. Being the first it could permit that students with English difficulties understand the chapter making easier the rest of exercises. The teacher here has to create doubts in the students to generate in her a way of work.

With this activity we intend to develop the following skills in our students:

- To improve the speaking abilities. When pupils have to discuss about what is the correct meaning they have to speak. They will have to be correct in the pronunciation.
- To improve the listening abilities. Through the listening the chapter, teacher and classmates, the students work out their listening ability.
- To improve the reading skills. They are going to read at the same time that they are watching the show. It permits to know how words have to be written and what are the different structures used in the text.
- To improve the writing skills. They have to answer and write and they must do it correctly.

## ACTIVITY SIX.

### Research project.

In the chapter as has been explained before Bart travel abroad to France. Lisa explains their father basic aspects of the country of Audil. In this activity children have to do in groups a project in which explains the main aspects of a country. These aspects could be as the explanation of the name, the flag, the currency used, the official languages, population, customs, traditional food... It is important that if the class has foreign students the teacher take advantage of that situation. During the process of finding of information the teacher has to recommend resources or generate curiosity to make the students find information. When the children have achieved all the information of the country the teacher propose to do an international day. This day consists in a group of stalls in which children could offer the typical meals, the currency used, the traditional clothes... and always using English. It is important that the teacher participate as other students.

The objectives that intend this activity achieve in the students are:

- To foment the intercultural thought and to broke with some wrong ideas about others cultures. To understand that not only there is a way to do the things.
- To amplify the borders of the students making them conscious of how people live in others places.
- To know about other cultures and aspects that are part of them. To understand children what resources are more appropriate and what are not reliable.
- To manage the technologies as a resource to obtain information and to elaborate works.
- To improve the speaking abilities. Pupils have to explain aspects about another culture. They will have to find the way to express their ideas being grammatically correct and coherent.
- To improve the Grammar comprehension. Our students in the written part and in the stall's day have to be correct in the act of communicate. Improving and working the grammar learn.
- To improve the listening abilities. Through listening the classmates students will work out their listening ability.

- To improve the social abilities. They are going to expose their project and they have to do it in a correct way.
- To encourage the self-correction between friends. The students have to understand that they can learn from his friends and not only from the teacher.
- To improve the reading skills. When they find the information they read working this ability.
- To improve the writing skills. They have to redact the project and doing this they practise the writing.

### ACTIVITY SEVEN.

#### Putting voice to The Simpsons.

This activity consists in put voice to the characters of the show. The chapter will be divided in parts and the different groups made in class will have to imitate the voices. To do this the teacher has to use some kind of software as audacity to record the children voices. Other software necessary would be Adobe Premiere to unit voice and video. In this activity children have to read the scripts and adapt the phrase with the time. This is a good activity to work with the fluency of speaking. When the recordings have finished we can reproduce the show with the children's voices. Very important is the role of the teacher that has to make the children conscious of their mistakes.

- To improve the speaking abilities. Pupils have to reproduce the script of the Simpson. They must try to imitate the tone of the character.
- To improve the Grammar comprehension. Our students read the script and doing it they can observe when some tenses are used or when some expressions are used.
- To improve the listening abilities. Through the first watching the classmates have to be attentive to do the activity. Doing this students will work out their listening ability.
- To encourage the self-correction between friends. The students have to understand that they can learn from his friends and not only from the teacher.
- To improve the reading skills. When they read the script they work this ability.

- To know that technologies are a resource to obtain information and to elaborate works.

## 12. NAME OF THE CHAPTER: The tree house of horror: The Raven

### Why I have chosen this chapter?

As I have explain before the Simpson are an incredible educative tool despite of the opinions of people. The Simpson is a perfect vehicle to transmit the culture literature. That is thanks to the intertextuality. There are lots of chapters in which we can see literary texts. As educators I believe that we have to benefit of this. There are chapters in which the whole chapter is a parody of a novel, tale or legend. There are too, chapters in which are references to this books, novels or legends without it appears complete. This is the moment to use this chapter in English classes. It is a way to combine three aspects as English, entertainment and literature.

The following exercise is a simple example about how to use a chapter, or part of this, to work with this in class. The proposal activity is focus on a part of the tree house of terror of the second season. In one of the parts there is an incredible representation of The Raven of Edgar Allan Poe.

I have chosen this chapter and concretely this part because the parody of this poem it incredibly good. Furthermore I consider that this author must be known by all students because is an approach to the poetry and it has too much benefits as the explained in this work. To work literature, English and culture at the same time which students are entertained is possible thanks to chapters like this.

This part of the chapter is a literary reading of the poem of Edgar Allan Poe. It has some parts edited but do not change the plot of the poem. The characters of this novel are interpreted by the family. Bart is the raven, homer the main character, Lisa and Maggie are angels and marge is the Homer ´s lover, Leonore. The narrator is the famous James Earl Jones, the voice of Darth Vader in Star Wars. One curious aspect of this segment is that appears a bust of Edgar Allan Poe.

## ACTIVITY.

As the yellow characters.

The following activity is based in the dramatic interpretation of the Poe's poem. It an activity that requires time but it has benefits to our students. The teacher proposes the play in class and makes groups. All the students have to watch the poem's fragment. Then the students have to read the script to see how they act. After a "casting" the teacher choses the appropriate students to play the different characters. The children have to prepare all the materials for the play and to rehearse the play. When the play will have finished we have to say that this poem that they have play is from Poe and it was written in the age 1845.

- To improve their manual and creative ability throwing the elaboration of the materials for the play.
- To know different authors and what kind of works they elaborate.
- To encourage the self-correction between the classmates understanding that this is a way of learning.
- To improve the Grammar comprehension. Our students read the script and doing it they can observe when some tenses are used or when some expressions are used.
- To improve the speaking abilities. Pupils have to reproduce the script of the Simpson. They must try to imitate the tone of the character.
- To improve the listening abilities through the watching and the listening of their classmates. Doing this students will work out their listening.
- To improve the reading skills. When they read the script they work this ability.
- To know that technologies are a resource to obtain information and to elaborate works.

### 13. CONCLUSION

It would be a mistake to focus only in The Simpson in this conclusion because as I have explained before in this work there are too many aspects to be treated.

I believe that teachers must have an own conscience and enough capacity to criticise and evaluate what is good or bad in the classroom. For this reason the teachers have to put into practice this idea and check if it is effective or not. Teachers should not be influenced by educative dogmas. We have to make that our experience will be the aspect that evaluates this practices or ideas. This is one of the problems that The Simpsons suffers and for example I have decided to check what positive aspects this show may portray.

As far as violence is concerned, I believe that my opinion has been clear in this work. It is impossible to end up with something without knowing what it is. Moreover I think that the negatives opinions that have suffered this sitcom are made without the necessary knowledge about this show and the contents that this show has.

One of the aspects worries me the most is the reading. I believe that books are losing the value that they have years ago. Nowadays it is not common to see children with illusion for reading a book or with illusion of buying a book. Now children prefer to play with their mobiles, tablet or videogames. I am sure that these instruments have good aspects and good benefits. However I know that the benefits of the reading in the childhood are necessary and we have to work to revive this activity. For these reasons we have to foment this activity, making that children love reading as others we have love.

I would like to finish this conclusion mentioning all these teachers that do not love the reading and therefore do not preach this activity. The teacher is an example for the children and probably children reproduce their behaviour. I believe that in their capacities to work they would be incomplete. They could be good teachers and they could have good aptitudes, but in my opinion they would need the reading to be better teachers. In my experience my best teachers have been that teachers that love reading and transmit this love that nowadays I have.

For this reason, I have to say thanks to all the teachers who have helped me to be who I am and to be the teacher I hope to be tomorrow. Thanks.

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