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TRABAJO FIN DE MÁSTER:

PROMOTING READING AND WRITING AMONG ESL/EFL STUDENTS: A PROPOSAL WITH CHOOSE-YOUR-OWN-ADVENTURE STORIES

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Abstract

Gamebooks date back from the 1940s when the South American writer J. L. Borges published a short story, which was divided into three parts and had nine endings. However, it was R. A. Montgomery who turned this kind of stories popular under the brand Choose Your Own Adventure. These books, narrated in the second person, involve the reader in the development of the story by letting him or her decide among a set of options what to do next at the end of some chapters. This proposal examines the use of CYOA stories as a tool to both engage the ESL/EFL students in the reading habit and to promote their creativity and writing skills. This project is meant to avoid the use of an exam as a means to assess reading. Instead, the text is properly exploited in order to make the most of the reading experience. In the case of written expression, this proposal fosters the students' creativity through the production of a collaborative CYOA story in the ESL/EFL classroom. In addition, this paper defends the use of authentic materials in the L2 classroom in order to provide a more realistic approach to language learning.

Key words

Authentic materials

Choose Your Own Adventure stories

Gamebooks

Literature

Reading

Reading and writing habit

Writing

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Resumen

Los *librojuegos* datan de los años 40, cuando el escritor argentino J.L. Borges publicó una historia corta dividida en tres partes que tenía nueve finales. Sin embargo, fue R.A. Montgomery quien las hizo famosas con la marca Escoge tu propia aventura. Estos libros, narrados en segunda persona, involucran al lector en el desarrollo de la historia permitiéndole decidir sobre su continuación entre una serie de opciones que aparecen al final de algunos capítulos. Esta propuesta examina el uso de las historias de ETPA como una herramienta tanto para el desarrollo del hábito de lectura entre los estudiantes de inglés L2, como para promover su creatividad y sus habilidades de expresión escrita. Este proyecto tiene como objetivo evitar el uso de los exámenes como método de evaluación de la lectura. En su lugar, se propone la apropiada explotación del texto para sacar el mayor provecho de la experiencia lectora. En el caso de la expresión escrita, esta propuesta fomenta la creatividad de los alumnos a través de la producción de una historia ETPA de manera colaborativa en el aula. Además, este documento defiende el uso de los materiales auténticos en la enseñanza de la segunda lengua para obtener un enfoque realista en el aprendizaje de la lengua.

Palabras clave

Escritura

Hábito de lectura y escritura

Historias de Elige tu propia aventura

Lectura

Librojuegos

Literatura

Materiales auténticos

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"*Reading is like breathing in,*

writing is like breathing out"

Palm Allyn

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To my parents and my sister, I could not have dreamt this big without them.

To all the teachers who have inspired all my way to this last moment where I am about to become an educator.

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To the one who supports this Choose Your Own Adventure story that is life.

To all the books that have contributed to my love for reading and writing.

To every and each of the people who have come across my way and shared their knowledge with me. I am wearing it all.

To the firm believe that another education is possible.

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Introduction

This master's degree dissertation focuses on both reading and writing skills essential in the development of L2 students' communicative competence. As both written comprehension and expression seem to be the least appreciated among learners due to the challenge they represent, their apparent lack of relation to the communicative competence, and the way they are approached in the L2 classroom; this paper proposes a project to introduce Choose Your Own Adventure stories to foster the learners' motivation towards the written competences.

More often than not, the reading activity is not taken fully into consideration in the English classroom. Students are forced to read a book they have not chosen, most of the times a version or an adaptation of a classic story, in order to sit an exam. However, when working with literature in class, the reading lesson will take time, which is often seen as time-consuming, because students need to read the selected text and do some activities in order to prove both that the students have read and understood the text and that they have done so with a purpose. The way reading exams are usually approached in nowadays Spanish high schools tends to pass superficially through the reading experience, rather than fully exploiting the reading materials. Thus, this leads to a widespread feeling of rejection towards reading.

Something similar happens with writing. Although students are told to write several pieces of work throughout the school year, these writings tend to have a fixed structure the students need to follow. Therefore, learners do not need to think much about what they are writing, they just need to pay attention to the grammar aspects required by each type of writing and all other writing conventions linked to it. This approach to writing heads to the same feeling of rejection towards writing as the one explained above towards reading.

In order to change the approach to the written comprehension and expression in the ESL/EFL classroom, this paper proposes a project to tackle students' demotivation towards written texts by introducing Choose Your Own Adventure stories. For the readers of these kind of books, the experience is unique due to two main facts. The first of these is that they become a character of the book and they are empowered to decide what they want the character to do next at the end of every chapter. The second fact is that every time they read the book, they may find a different ending. Depending on their decisions, the story can vary considerably, so they live the adventure facing the consequences of their choices as if they were one of the characters, rather than just the readers.

When it comes to writing, the creation of a book of these characteristics allows the students to explore all the options they can think about for a plot and this helps them find different solutions to the same situation. It will undoubtedly lead to the development of their critical thinking, which is one of the cross-curricular elements most acclaimed in the modern world. By introducing creative writing in the L2 classroom, students see their motivation fostered because they find an input to create something different where they do not need to pay attention to specific conventions and where they are free to invent a story. Learners will most likely express their own opinions and explore all the different options this kind of writing provides them with.

This paper is divided into two main sections: the theoretical framework and the didactic proposal. The former section is subdivided into three main chapters. First, there is a review of the reasons that have led to the rejection of the use of literature in the ESL classroom. This will be followed by the benefits of using it in the context of the L2 classroom. After setting the basis to support the use of literature in L2 with these two first points, the two following subsections argue the main aspects to take into account when selecting the appropriate texts, and explain what authentic materials are and why it is of utmost importance to use them as the main resource in the L2 classroom. The end of this chapter focuses on how to asses literature in the ESL classroom.

The second chapter of the theoretical framework examines the importance of teaching writing to ESL students, analyses what the writing process and the writing habit are, and reviews a couple of writing suggestions. These three first points are based on Harmer (2007, 2001). There is a specific point devoted to creative writing, the advantages of its practice and some threshold concepts related to it. Following the same structure as for literature, the closing chapter is dedicated to assessment. It explores different types of assessment and suggests how to give feedback to students on their written work.

Gamebooks are presented in the third and final chapter. This specific type of literature is the basis for the whole proposal, so it can be highlighted as the most relevant part of the whole theoretical framework. Its main purpose is to create a context by understanding the roots of this kind of books. There is a particular point referring to Choose Your Own Adventure stories, which are the ones selected for the proposal's development.

The didactic proposal is introduced by a context where the reader will be able to create an image of the kind of students this proposal is aimed at. The lesson plan is divided into two parts.

The first of these is related to the cultivation of the reading habit among the students, addressing the reading process as a game where they can make decisions as if they were a character of the story. The second is devoted to developing the students' writing creativity through the use of a book as an input text for the creation of a collaborative CYOA story. There is an essential part which covers the assessment of the students' work throughout the lesson plan. The two last points cover the key competences appearing in the Spanish curriculum covered in this project, and the teacher's role for the proper development of this proposal.

Justification

As a child, I loved reading and I spent as much time as I could discovering new places, meeting new friends –who sometimes had impossible shapes– and living fantastic adventures. One day my father came home with a book that promised to be a new reading experience. What was my surprise when I discovered, quite deceived, that the storyline was different from the ones I knew. The writer had not given a plot like the ones I was used to, it was up to me to decide what to do next; I had to decide the fate of the character.

After the first impression, I decided to give the story a chance and I started to read. I was soon amazed by the opportunity the book gave me to find a different approach to reading where I was half reader, half writer. I discovered that I loved creating stories as much as I enjoyed reading them. However, that was the first and the last Choose Your Own Adventure book I read.

It was not until I had to write this dissertation that I thought of these books again. During the master's degree Practicum, I was able to see how hard teachers try to introduce new approaches to the tasks involving written texts due to the fact that the exam students need to sit in order to access university focuses on reading and writing. However, the way reading was approached is the widespread one used in different ESL/EFL teaching across the world: the students are told to read a graded reader they have not chosen at home in order to sit an exam that, more often than not, does not really prove they have read it nor understood it. Based on the idea that another way to approaching reading and writing was possible, I rescued the book my father had given me so many years ago that had inspired me to start writing my own stories, and I started working on this dissertation.

> Montgomery said in an interview in 2013: "This wasn't traditional literature. The *New York Times* children's book reviewer called *Choose Your Own Adventure* a literary movement. Indeed it was. The most important thing for me has always been to get kids reading. It's not the format, it's not even the writing. The reading happened because kids were in the driver's seat. They were the mountain climber, they were the doctor, they were the deep-sea explorer. The made choices, and so they read." (Chooseco LLC, 2006, p. 135)

This approach is an attempt to change the focus from the teacher to the student, as from the writer to the reader. The protagonist in the learning process should never be the teacher, although it is the case most of the times. However, letting the student be in the centre of their own learning process implies a greater work for the teacher. The teacher is a guide in the process

and his or her duty is to monitor the students' learning process, making sure they cover all the learning outcomes required at their age and level.

Teaching differently is of utmost importance in an era when it is essential to develop the so-called cross-curricular elements. Learners are expected to internalise all the language and cultural contents at the same time they develop their creativity, their critical thinking or their respect and tolerance, among other values. Traditional methods fail to fulfil all these in the modern world invaded of new technologies. Teaching students to focus their attention on just one task is hard within generations used to multitasking, though it is fundamental in order for them to understand the importance of paying attention to the details so that they can have a complete background of information over which they will build their critical thinking.

This is a very difficult task, especially in a context where teachers have lost the respect they once owned and their work is constantly called in question. Teachers need to justify everything, from the way they address the contents, to the grades they give each of the students. However, the project in this paper aims to be a proposal at the service of all those committed teachers who love their profession and work hard for the education they believe in.

Theoretical framework

This section is aimed to provide the reader with an overall view of the most important aspects taken into account for the design of the lesson plan. Thus, there is a review of the use of literature and creative writing in the L2 classroom, as well as an introduction to the concept of gamebooks.

1. Literature in the ESL/EFL classroom

In 2018, Conecta Research & Consulting, a company specialised in research services, carried out a survey on reading and book buying habits in Spain for the Federación de Gremios de Editores de España. In the final paper, some impacting conclusions were drawn. According to this piece of work, although 61.8% of the population read in their free time and reading is a widespread habit among children, this practice seems to be reduced when they become adolescents. From 15 years old, the library becomes a place to study rather than the place to read or to obtain books. It is also at this time when books stop being among the most offered presents, as well as there is a decrease in the participation of activities related to reading in schools. Almost all adolescents from 15 to 18 years old read some kind of content in digital formats. Only 20.7% of them use technology to read books.

49.3% of all the interviewed are frequent readers, 12.5% are occasional readers and 38.2% hardly ever read. Regarding the reasons for not reading, 49.3% of the people attribute it to the lack of time, while 32.2% admits they do not like or are not interested in reading. Bearing in mind that our ability to communicate and our language systems are what differentiates us from other species, and reading is basic for humans to develop those language skills, these data are worrying.

1.1. Reasons for the withdrawal of literature

The question, at this point, seems obvious. What happens to children when they grow up so that they stop wanting to read for fun, in their free time. "Today with the current focus in ESL on meeting the particular academic and occupational needs of the students, it is easy to view any attention to literature as unnecessary" (McKay, 1982, p.529), and I would convey it is still a current statement. Among all the arguments she addressed in her paper, this one is the most relevant for this dissertation so we will focus on it.

"The English teaching activity in public schools of non-English speaking countries mainly focuses on teaching grammar" (Alemi, 2011, p. 177). In her paper, she explained the problem

with literature in the ESL/EFL classroom was the way teachers approached it or did not approach it at all. There are no special hours devoted to reading in order to enhance the students' skills. Instead, the vocabulary is listed and memorised, the teacher asks a few questions about the reading, which do not prove that the students have read the text because the answers can be found just by scanning the text, there is no attempt to connect the reading to the students' writing and speaking skills. Thus, the protagonist in the class is the teacher and the students are passive members of the learning community.

Along with this idea, and maybe because of the curriculum constraints, another scholar agrees that "literature is too often viewed by the second language educator as a source of activities, as 'material', with too little concern for the wider curricular issues which can help us understand what is going on when a student reads (or fails to read) literature." (Hall, 2015, p.47) It is undeniable that whenever teachers have the freedom to choose and organise the topics they will cover and the materials they will implement to do so, their connection with the class is better and they are able to make the most of the classes. Hence, when they feel the pressure of covering a certain amount of a subject in a restricted period of time, some important issues are laid aside.

Literature is, without a doubt, at the basis of our understanding of any written texts, as reading comprehension is essential in any professional and personal area. All language skills are linked to literature and it can be used both to learn about the linguistic aspects of a language and as a means of communication, as the container of the topic we want to work about. "Certainly, in so far as literature can foster an overall increase in reading proficiency, it will contribute to these (academic and occupational) goals. An evaluation of reading proficiency rests on an understanding of what is involved in the reading process." (McKay, 1982, p.530)

> Second language reading can be modelled in much the same way as first language reading. It generally improves with practice, and writers on the subject note the growing importance of reading fluency in an additional language (often English) for professionals and students globally. (Hall, 2015, p.111)

Moreover, this still spread teacher-centred system is coexisting more and more with the so-called communicative approach where students are encouraged to use the language as a tool to express themselves and get in touch with others. This is mainly due to the globalisation our societies are increasingly experiencing. Despite the crowded classes, it would be, without doubt, the most suitable moment to include literature as a way to develop the students' reading comprehension over the approaches more focused in the language form. Some may argue that

literature is not a useful aspect of language since it is not a communicative tool itself. Reading for pleasure is not likely to be the basis of human interaction, but it can be used as the input for such communication.

1.2. Advantages of the use of literature in the L2 classroom

When it comes to the benefits literature may have for L2 students, most authors agree on the following points.

Motivation was addressed both by McKay (1982) and, later on, by Khatih, Rezaei & Derakhshan (2011). The former author made a point explaining that as far as reading is an interaction, because the reader is assumed to be willing to work with the text, motivation is a key point in reading. If the reader is forced to interact, the result of the process is likely not to be the desired one. In the later publication, motivation is presented as essential for readers to feel encouraged to continue reading. This is something that may be intrinsic in some texts, but how attractive a text depends on the reader more than on the text itself. "Literary texts are very motivating due to its authenticity and the meaningful context it provides" (Khatih et al., 2011).

Related to the former aspect, Alemi (2011) presented personal involvement as an asset to literature usage in the classroom. When working with a text, students give their own interpretation to the reading and link it to their lives. "The most important justification is that literature can educate the whole person (Lazar, 1993, p.19)" (Alemi, 2011). This vision implies that literature is a comprehensive resource to work with students in the L2 classroom. Also known as EQ, emotional intelligence seems to be fostered by reading literature, too. EQ is important because, as believed by its pioneer Daniel Goleman, it is "related to human ability to control and manage their emotions and feelings in difficult situations" (Khatih et al., 2011).

"Literature can open horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore" (Ghosn, 2002, p. 607, as cited in Khatih et al., 2011, p.203). Fyre (as cited in McKay, 1982) claims that the use of literature in the classroom had a different goal than just praising it; its reading should inspire students to express their own opinions and ideas. As a result, they would also develop a critical opinion towards the topics discussed in the texts and learn to argument their beliefs in a solid way. The development of critical thinking is a current issue nowadays, in a world where any kind of information can be quickly and easily accessed, teachers focus on showing their students how to decide what information is accurate.

Alemi (2011) points to <u>language enrichment</u>, which is also studied by Khatih et al. (2011) in a more detailed way by separating grammar and vocabulary knowledge from language skills, as a way to encourage students "to familiarize themselves with different language uses, forms, or conventions" (Alemi, 2011, p. 178). Language in literature is richer and more varied than the kind of language students find in textbooks. Once students are exposed to such variety of both grammar structures and vocabulary, they will be able to acquire them as they will see them in context and it will give them the language in use, rather than isolated.

Khatih et al. (2011) also address <u>cultural enrichment</u> (Alemi, 2011). Literature is seen as "a doorway into another culture" (Alemi, 2011, p.178). Language cannot be fully understood if culture is not taken into consideration, especially in the era of globalisation. However, it is sometimes difficult to approach culture properly, and literature can be a great way to learn about it within a context.

<u>Authenticity</u> (Khatih et al., 2011), found also as authentic material (Alemi, 2011), refers to the valuable aspect of literary texts that shows real language use, rather than adapted terms and structures. "Literature includes all possible varieties of subject matter and language that might be intrinsically interesting" (Alemi, 2011, p.178). This point will be fully explored later in this dissertation.

1.3. Selecting the appropriate texts

According to Alemi (2011) the criterion to choose the most suitable texts are the following:

<u>Language proficiency</u>. Teachers need to bear in mind the level of their students because were the students to deal with a text they do not feel comfortable with, they would feel disappointed and frustrated. The language of the text needs to be attainable for the students in order for them to be motivated with the reading. This does not mean that there will not be some challenging forms and terms, because the challenge is essential for the learning process. It is widely believed that certain types of texts, such as poetry, are more difficult than others, but it depends entirely on the way they are written and if the message is clear or hidden. Language proficiency criteria do not neglect poetry itself. However "the abstract language of poetry and the length of novels may create problems in overcrowded classes" (Alemi, 2011, p. 178), which implies that the role of the teacher as a guide during the process is indispensable.

<u>Time availability</u>. One important aspect to be considered is whether the text will be read in class or at home. Sometimes, the overcrowded classes impede the development of certain

activities because it would take much more time than what teachers really have available. Thus, it might be considered to start the reading process in class and then continue it at home, or simply the length of the text might need to be especially short in order to work with it fully in class. Timing is usually a teachers' *nightmare*, as it is sometimes unpredictable whether an activity will actually take the time that was set for it.

Cultural competence. Just as with language proficiency, if the text entails loads of effort to be understood due to the cultural relations, the attention span might be distorted easily and students are likely to abandon the reading. However, this does not imply that there can not be selected texts in order to work specifically the student's cultural competence towards a different society. In this case, the teacher must make sure to cover properly the topic so that it can be well worked with the group of students in class. In addition, this should be done in order to promote tolerance and intercultural understanding, so teachers need to be aware of the possible misunderstandings that might appear towards an unknown culture, and they should have a plan to address these in case they arose.

Short story. The length of the text is something to be taken into account, particularly since it is possible that many students are not used to reading and a long text might provoke a feeling of discomfort to it. Moreover, when a text is short, it can be fully covered and exploited, which "will give the students a feeling of achievement and self-confidence" (Alemi 2011, p. 178). Longer texts can be used as far as teachers make it clear that what matters most to them is that students are able to get the overall idea and that they develop their reading comprehension and other related skills, as for extensive reading. Along with this idea, whenever students have to face a long text, it can be very useful to divide it and show it as if it was just several small texts instead of a big one. The feeling of achievement when they realise they have read a full book in English may encourage them to go on reading authentic materials and will show them they are able to cope with texts that may seem challenging at first.

Personal involvement. When the readers' opinions are taken into account for the selection of the texts, they feel stimulated by the personal involvement achieved from the beginning. Letting the students choose what they want to read is not always possible, neither advisable, as most of the times teachers seek for a text that can be exploited the way they need in order to cover a specific aspect or topic. However, linking the reading to personal experiences, ideas and opinions is something that tends to foster their involvement in the activity and can be easily done. Regarding this point, it is of utmost importance to remember that, when picking a text,

the criteria cannot be fixed in the proficiency level of the language, as the age of the students will surely make a difference and should be taken into account when choosing a text. Most of the times, teachers tend to choose texts they like or they feel that might be interesting and then the text is rejected by the students. It is not only possible but advisable, to ask them about their interests and link the compulsory reading tasks to those, as far as possible.

1.4. Authentic materials

> For much of the English course reading material must inevitably be simplified –that is to say, it must be within the linguistic range of pupils at different levels of the language. It must either be specially written within a precise range, or texts in "full" –that is, unlimited– English must be re-written in simplified versions. (It is not enough to write in a simplified vocabulary; there must also be limitation of structure.) But the time will come when at least some pupils, those who reach the top of the secondary school, for example, should be moving from simplified to "full" English reading. By this time, they should have achieved a command of the essential structural items of the language, and have acquired a useful, though not a large, vocabulary. (Elliot, 1965, p.287)

Expecting the students to reach a certain level of proficiency in English in order to use authentic materials in the classroom might be a point to be discussed. Although this excerpt was written in the 1960s, it could be thought that it is a current text as most high schools in Spain still work with adapted texts in the class. More often than not, they are versions of classics. Those adaptations are characterised by having simplified grammar structures, a glossary with the most challenging terms –sometimes with the translation aside; in the best case scenario, instead of the translation they have the definition–, a handful of questions and activities related to the story, and the storyline abridged. They are commonly known as graded readers.

Much as society and education may have changed since the publication of Elliot's piece of work, L2 teaching seems to remain the same regarding the use of literature in the classroom. I would certainly disagree with some of the ideas exposed. In the first place, there is still a common belief that it is necessary to adapt the texts so that they cover the students' needs. However, nowadays there is a wide variety of materials in order for teachers to select appropriate authentic literature for different levels. Also, instead of avoiding difficult structures and challenging vocabulary, teachers should work on those pieces of new knowledge as part of the reading lesson so that the students acquire them properly. Rather than make them learn those lists of language forms by heart, it would certainly be more advisable to explain them in advance and show their use in context. Moreover, the universal topics that teachers may want to address

in class with a particular classic text are addressed in current literature as well, and students might empathise more with those new texts more than they do to the classics. To sum up, the point is that if teachers have decided that the original text is not appropriate for their students, the solution is not an adaptation of such text, but an appropriate one.

Arguably, assuming that only students in the last stages of secondary education will be able to read authentic texts is not applicable to nowadays' bilingual schools. Even for those schools which are not bilingual, most students have the opportunity to travel and do some exchanges both with the schools or with their families. Also, learning languages, especially English, has become a fundamental part of children's education and it is becoming a widespread language in today's society, so, while the excerpt might still relate to other less spread languages, it is not current for English.

The use of authentic materials could never be recommended in the approach where grammar and vocabulary are of utmost importance, as it may imply a huge challenge for students. However, if teachers are looking to motivate students and encourage them to acquire reading habit, it is highly advisable approaching extensive reading where authentic materials are undoubtedly suitable. While practicing this kind of reading, students focus on the overall meaning of the text, instead of on the form and the linguistic aspects. (Day & Bamford, 1998, as cited in Alemi, 2011). It can be divided into two categories: efferent or aesthetic. (Rosenblatt, 1978, as cited in Alemi, 2011). Through efferent reading, students gather information from a text in order to complete a specific task. On the other hand, aesthetic reading's main objective is to enjoy the reading experience. (Alemi, 2011). This is why extensive reading is also known as reading with intrinsic motivation.

Extensive reading is needed, especially when taking into consideration that "L2 readers often have better memory for surface than first language readers because of their relative lack of automaticity in procession the language of the text" (Hall, 2015, p. 112). Thus, it is recommendable to encourage students to read in order to understand the overall meaning and enjoy the stories, rather than to push them through a tough analysis that is likely to impede their healthy interaction with the text. "Second language reading is typically more effortful, even for relatively advanced readers" (Hall, 2015, p. 112), so there is no need to make it more difficult.

1.5. Assessment

When it comes to assessment in literature teaching, it seems to be a "thin and surprisingly under-researched field, given the centrality of testing and evaluation too much literature teaching activity" (Hall, 2015, p.162).

However, it remains clear that "securing an interest in, and encouraging voluntary reading of, literature are important aspects of education where English is a second language" (Pattison, 1965, p. 290). According to Pattison (1965), the aim of the discussion of the reading materials is to ensure that the students understand the details in their context and relate them to the overall reading. The teacher is meant to be a guide for the students to read and focus the attention in the most relevant parts of the text, depending on what the teacher plans to work. "The literature lesson should never degenerate into a language lesson: always the question is how each detail fits in which other detail to minister to the general effect". (Pattison, 1965, p. 291)

The current method to prove that students have read the text proposed and that they have internalised the grammatical structures, as well as the long lists of vocabulary, is testing them through an exam. According to Carter and Long, 1990 (as cited in Hall, 2015), the questions of those exams do not prove what is intended, as they can be answered without reading the texts (by reading simplified versions, translations or, as added by Hall (2015), internet cribs). Not only does this kind of assessment prove to be invalid as such, but it also impedes the full exploitation of the text to the detriment of the students' learning.

Any kind of assessment and evaluation is based on the syllabus statements and the criterion exposed in the teaching curriculum of every country. However, the way those criteria are addressed varies depending from teacher to teacher, from one institution to another. It is essential to fix sensible and realisable aims, and plan the means accordingly, instead of just focusing on the mark. Also, if students feel that the means are not meaningful for them, they are less likely to make an effort, whereas they are prone to work hard when they value the project in which they are involved, which is directly linked to motivation theories.

"Questions, for Nuttall, should not be teacher attempts to expose ignorance, so much as 'aids to the successful exploration of the text' (p. 126), opening up rather than closing down discussion." (Hall, 2015, p. 162) Arguably, texts should be thought of as a resource to introduce any kind of topics, to teach cross-curricular values, to cover any aspect that might seem difficult to present in class, etc. A text is never just a bunch of words well, or not so well, scattered through a paper, but the way those words can be interpreted and what they evoke and inspire to

the readers. All in all, "the aim of literature questions is, as 'washback' to promote student 'extensive reading', assumed to promote, in turn, second language acquisition, but also as a prompt for the oral testing and/or writing components." (Hall, 2015, p.149)

Along with that idea and in order to try to answer to the challenging issue that is literature assessment, University of Cambridge has approached the assessment of literature differently in their exams. Instead of texting the students on the linguistic aspects of the texts, they use them as an input for writing and speaking interaction (Hall, 2015).

According to several reviews, the most desirable, and also pretty difficult, approach is to assess relative literary competence, which McRae (1992, p.37, as cited in Hall, 2015, p. 149) explains as "the ability to make connections and cross-references, to quote and summarise constructively, to balance arguments and reach conclusions, to take subjective standpoints and relate them to objective criteria, and to contextualise". None of those abilities seem to be addressed through the current standardised assessment.

Taking this literary competence, Hall (2015) proposes several examples of more progressive ways to assess literature. Among those proposals, there are two that are particularly interesting for this dissertation, as those two ideas are the ones that will be used to assess the reading and writing project suggested in this paper. The first of these is the implementation of "group projects to promote interaction with other readers, as well as with texts" and the second one is the use of "creative writing as a response" (Hall, 2015, p. 150)

> These more progressive forms of assessment represent attempts to accommodate newer understandings of the personal as well as social and interactive nature of reading, perhaps especially literary reading. There is also a recognition that such assignments can act as preparation for the more polished traditional products which most find difficult to produce more spontaneously. (Hall, 2015, p.150)

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2. Writing in the ESL/EFL classroom

2.1. The importance of teaching writing

Writing is one of the four skills traditionally worked in language teaching and it is approached in different ways depending on what aspects are expected to be developed. There are varied reasons for teaching writing and creating a writing habit among students and this section's aim is to explain them.

As suggested by Harmer (2007), written production gives the students time to think and plan what they want to express. Contrary to what happens in oral expression, they may avoid many mistakes and have the opportunity to search for the most appropriate terms and structures to produce a clear and coherent text. "This allows them more opportunity for language processing" (Harmer, 2007, p. 112), meaning they are more aware of the use of the language and may be able to internalise the use of it better.

Harmer (2007) also proposes the dichotomy between writing-for-learning and writing-for-writing. While the main goal of the former is to "help students practise and work with language they have been studying", (Harmer, 2007, p. 112) the latter is aimed at "developing the students' skills as writers. In other words, the main purpose for activities of this type is that students should become better at writing, whatever kind of writing that might be" (Harmer, 2007, p. 112).

2.2. The writing process and the writing habit

Harmer (2007) explains that the writing process involves four differentiated steps being planning, drafting, reviewing and editing. Although the whole process might be time-consuming it is important to encourage students to complete it in order to achieve a better result.

Planning is essential, especially in the lower levels, in order to make sure that the idea or ideas the student wants to express are clear and properly laid out. Although it is many times rejected by learners as it is a pre-task that may feel tedious and laborious, it is a necessary step to produce a good draft.

Drafting is the longer part of the work, as it allows the learners to develop their ideas, search for the most suitable words and the best structures in order to make a coherent and free-flowing text.

It is important not to mix reviewing and editing up, as they are two different concepts. The former makes reference to reading the draft carefully looking for specific things such as great range of vocabulary, good use of connectors of sequence so that the text is fluidly written and read, and minor errors in spelling. The latter implies the rewriting of the draft taking into account the revision in order to achieve a final version of the text.

Hammer (2007) suggests that the students' refusal to write is a consequence of a lack of self-confidence, a feeling of boringness or a belief that they have 'nothing to say'. This is why it is so important to engage them with playful writing activities, easy to achieve and making sure they do not worry about having their final mark lowered due to the possible mistakes made in the written production. The author claims it is essential that "writing activities not only become a normal part of classroom life but also present opportunities for students to achieve almost instant success" (Harmer, 2007, p. 113). This is how the writing habit is set.

2.3. Harmer (2007) writing suggestions

Harmer (2007) proposes a handful of writing approaches to develop the students' writing skills in the L2 classroom. This section explores two of them, selected according to the purpose of this dissertation.

Collaborative writing. "Students gain a lot from constructing texts together" (Harmer, 2007, p. 119) because they may contribute to their classmates' ideas reformulation, giving their point of view and expressing the same concepts in varied ways. Much as the writing activity has always been seen as a lonely one, collaborative writing gives the learners the possibility to build together a kaleidoscopic text with more complex ideas.

> Cooperative writing works well with both process and genre based approaches. In the first case, reviewing and evaluating are greatly enhanced by having more than one person working on it, and the generation of ideas is frequently more lively with two or more people involved that it is when writers work on their own. (Harmer, 2001, p. 260)

This kind of writing deals with group work, which is a trendy concept essential to prepare students to work as part of a community and stop seeing competitors among their classmates. Regarding this, it is claimed that "small groups of around five students provoke greater involvement and participation than larger groups" (Harmer, 2001, p. 117).

Harmer (2001) explains that there are several advantages such as the use of the language as a communicative tool, the great involvement of varied opinions and contributions, the

development of cooperation and negotiation skills, the promotion of the students' autonomy, and the possibility for the students to choose the level of their implication in the piece of work.

Among the drawbacks, the author highlights that in a crowded class this kind of activities may be noisy and some students might not enjoy it because they find it easier to work on their own. Roles might be designated and some learners will be more passive and others will dominate. Moreover, it can be time-consuming to organise the groups.

Writing in other genres. There is a wide variety of genres to be explored in the ESL classroom apart from the ones covered in the curriculum. Teaching them to produce different texts will widen their idea of what writing means. Moreover, it will provide them with the necessary tools to find their own voice and it will also encourage them to be original in their productions, something that will be priceless in their further studies. Along with this proposal, Harmer (2001) introduces the concept of creative writing that will be developed below.

2.4. Creative writing in the L2 classroom

"Like speech, like the world's languages, all writing is creative. Sometimes it is imaginative and sometimes it is expository or critical writing, but usually there is overlap between them." (Morley, 2007, p. 41)

The ESL/EFL classroom is the best place to foster students' openness and creativity. Through written expression, they do not feel so exposed as by oral speech, they are given time to reflect and they can rewrite as many times as they need in order to produce a coherent text where they may likely reflect their opinions and beliefs.

"A critical creative writing pedagogy values flexibility, collaboration, and student agency. The goal is to enliven students' interest in writing in its range of forms and genres, to help them gain a fuller sense of how language works upon us and how we can act through it." (Adsit, 2017, p. 117)

2.4.1. Benefits of creative writing

Think of an empty page as an open space. […] Writers are born and made. […] By choosing to act, by writing on that page, we are creating another version of time; we are playing out a new version of existence, of life even. We are creating an entirely fresh piece of space-time, and another version of your *self*. (Morley, 2007, p. 1)

Morley (2007) claims that writing has the power to transform people while they create new worlds and fills them with infinite possible options. Writing is engaging and captivating and

some, teachers even, argue it can be therapeutic while contributing to self-development and self-awareness.

Creative writing can be beneficial for anyone regardless of their discipline, as writing helps develop both critical thinking and creativity, and those abilities are not restricted to any specific field. Used to *right or wrong* questions as they are, students need to find a way to develop new ideas and innovative solutions for common problems. It is essential for them to learn to think *outside the box*.

Moreover, there seems to be an urge for new generations to improve their communicative skills. In this era where new technologies' use is so widespread and where news is spread at a high speed, students are used to reading fast over them and to skimming the texts in order to extract the information they need. This way, they may get an overall view of it, but they will not obtain detailed facts. Thus, there is a need for students to reflect at a slower speed and be able to find the time to put their ideas in order and search for the most appropriate way to express them.

> Writing is an extreme act of attention and memory; it pleads with your brain cells to make new connections. As neuroscientists put it, neurons that fire together wire together, and inspiration could be more natural to and more nurtured in a writer because they simply read the world (and the world of literature) a little closer when they were children. (Morley, 2007, p. 8)

This implies that creative writing may be used as the means to recover the infinite possibilities humans see in everything when they are children because nothing seems impossible to them, which is what adults need in order to open to new methods to approach daily issues. As utopic as it might have been thought to be at the time, if there had been nobody to put a piece of metal shaped like a bird to fly, today's world would not benefit from planes.

"Alongside many other neuroscientists, Mark Turner contends, 'Story is a basic principle of mind', and 'the parable is the root of the human mind – of thinking, knowing, acting, creating, and plausibly of speaking' (1996:1)." (Morley, 2007, p. 8).

Much as writing might be used to achieve different goals, when it comes to motivation creative writing seems to foster it as it is presented as a challenge for students and they try to work harder than in any other case-scenario. "When teachers set up imaginative writing tasks so that their students are thoroughly engaged, those students frequently strive harder than usual to produce a greater variety of correct and appropriate language than they might for more

routine assignments" (Harmer, 2001, p. 259). Creative tasks booster what Harmer (2001) calls the students' 'product pride' and when the text is finished they feel the urge to share it with others.

Life choices are not a standardised test where there is one only possible answer. Real problems need critical thinking and creative minds to be solved. And thinking *out of the box* is something that can be learned.

2.4.2. Threshold concepts

In her book *Toward an inclusive creative writing: Threshold concepts to guide the literary writing curriculum*, Adsit (2017) explains 12 "Threshold Concepts in Creative Writing" among which there is a selection of five regarding this papers' field of interest.

The first of these concepts is *attention*. "Creative writing involves specific modes of attention as writers learn to be close and critical observers of the world. Writers learn to account for the ethical considerations involved in perceiving and reinventing the world through their research and observation" (Adsit, 2017, pp.83-84). This concept sets the focus on research, known as invention, as a way to generate new texts. The writer examines critically the existing knowledge in contrast with his or her own experiences.

"This is what it means to teach attention in creative writing. It means seeing past the frame, seeing beyond the lens that is offered by dominant narratives, finding the counter-narrative, and critically evaluating a text's potential effects in the world."(Adsit, 2017, p.84) With creative writing, students have the chance to write past the established conceptions of the things. No matter what topic they write about, they can do it in a controversial way. In creative writing there is no such dichotomy between what is right and what is wrong, anything can be expressed and students may see this as an open approach to compulsory writing in a second language.

Not only will they be able to express their opinions freely, but they will also learn to pay close attention to what is being said and how it is being expressed, and analyse the effect the text might have in the potential readers. Students will have to discover the subtle language that covers a sharp opinion about different topics and how that use of the language may affect the reading.

Creativity is the second concept and it happens to be a trendy one nowadays. In an educational environment where almost everything is tested with impersonal and aseptic exams where there is only one right answer and any attempt to explain the topic with one's own words

is prised with a failing grade, creativity tend to disappear. Contradictorily, it is one of the best-valued aspects of applicants for enterprises, as those who have an open mind can solve everyday problems in many different ways and that is likely to lead to innovative approaches. Fostering students' creativity can have varied consequences such as more tolerant individuals, more inclusive people and it may develop the students' self-awareness. It is essential for teachers to bear in mind that while all tasks need to be done for a purpose, some of those tasks may not be intended to cover a specific part of the curriculum but to develop cross-curricular aspects.

Adsit (2017) makes it clear that every student has a different input for their creative thinking and invites her students to experiment with a variety of exercises in order to see what works for each of them.

> We hone the "mental muscle" that is creativity. I encourage students to seek out challenging tasks, to take on projects that do not necessarily have a solution for the sake of working the imagination. We talk about why the imagination is a valued form of intelligence, about what creativity in writing has to offer readers, about how to evaluate creative thinking. (Adsit, 2017, p. 91)

When it comes to *language*, creative writing is a great tool to broaden students' vocabulary and it can be seen as an alternative to avoid memorising never-ending lists of terms. "Creative writing is a site where we can think about the words we use to talk about language-use." (Adsit, 2017, p. 94). When students are asked to write for a creative task they are pushed to select the words that better describe the setting of their stories, they are driven to analyse the connotations and, therefore, they end up using more colourful vocabulary when searching for the exact words they need to express what they imagine.

Community is a concept that might not seem to match with the writing task at first. Although it is widely claimed that the writer's role is a lonely one, the author claims that they are "formed by the communities they engage" (Adsit, 2017, p. 98). What the writer imagines might end up being a different thing than what the reader understands. Some concepts might be wrongly expressed, yet misunderstood, and the sense of the whole text may vary. "The creative writing curriculum demands a thorough consideration of audience." (Adsit, 2017, p.99)

> This threshold concept teaches students that the literary text is 'a social relation between the writer and the readers', Terry Eagleton (1996, p.206), and it emphasises the co-constructed nature of texts, which are developed from a network of relations and intertextualities. Writers compose from what they have read and from what they understand of other writers and readers. (Adsit, 2017, p.101)

Thus, the communities above mentioned are both the future readers and the previous authors of the books that nurtured the writer's composition.

Anytime teaching is the central topic, there is always a place for the *evaluation*. It is important to remember that "students in a critical creative writing classroom do not enact a universal standard of art, since any universal is but a privileging of one perspective" (Adsit, 2017, p. 102). Therefore, they need to be assessed within a special rubric that covers originality, creativity, attractiveness, a great variety of terms and structures or whether everything is well expressed, rather than just grading the text from 1 (being the lowest mark) to 10 (being the highest mark). Teachers should not focus on the number of grammar mistakes the students have made, but on their capacity to transmit their ideas properly and on the value of the text as a communicative and even teaching tool because "a critical creative writing pedagogy values flexibility, collaboration, and student agency. The goal is to enliven students' interest in writing in its range of forms and genres, to help them gain a fuller sense of how language works upon us and how we can act through it." (Adsit, 2017, p. 117)

Students need to be aware of the power of language and the mighty tool words can be. By writing students develop their own thoughts because they are given the time to reflect on a topic and they are given a space to order their ideas and think thoroughly about other's opinions.

2.5. Assessment

2.5.1. Types of assessment

Assessment is an essential part of the learning process. However, the way it is usually done does not help teachers achieve their main purpose –that students learn from their mistakes. This happens because "when students are graded on their work they are always keen to know what grades they have achieved" (Harmer, 2001, p. 101). Thus, the focused is misplaced in a number, instead of in the learning outcomes. Rather than just using a red pen to cross all the 'wrong' attempts, Harmer (2001) suggest the use of comments in order to let them know that their work has been carefully read and considered. Along with this idea, the author proposes the use of reports where, at the end of a term, teachers can sum up the students' performance. Reports will show the level of language proficiency acquired by the students and they will be able to see their evolution.

2.5.2. Feedback for written work

"One way of considering feedback is to think of it as 'responding' to students' work rather than assessing or evaluating what they have done" (Harmer, 2001, p. 110). By using this kind of feedback, we focus on reinforcing the achieved knowledge of the students and giving them the tools to learn from their failed attempts. It is seen as an opportunity to learn, rather than as a 'punishment' for the subject they did not acquire properly. The teacher is supposed to write down several comments offering alternatives to solve the mistaken sentences in order to help the students achieve their learning goals.

Harmer (2001) also presents 'coding', which is another way of giving the students feedback on their activities. In this case, instead of writing comments, the teachers provide the students with a table where there are several symbols related to different types of mistakes. When assessing the students' activities, teachers write down the symbols where something needs to be corrected. Although this second option may be a great way to give feedback because students are forced to go back to their mistakes and correct them, it seems less personal while less time-consuming.

3. Gamebooks

3.1. The roots

Interactive books are also known as "gamebooks". The term "gamebooks" refer to all those stories that are written in a second-person approach, that have multiple choices to be made by the reader and where every reader will find a different ending depending on their decisions.

Nowadays, "interactive" is a trendy word that seems to inevitably link to screens and the Internet, but interactive stories have a long history, as explained in Chooseco (2006). Indeed, they started with South American authors. In 1941 Jorge Luis Borges wrote *Examen de la obra de Herbert,* a short story divided into three parts and for which there were nine possible endings. He repeated the process with *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, a multiple-storyline, and multiple-ending novel. Julio Cortazar published, in 1964, his famous novel *Rayuela*, where readers were encouraged to take decisions that would lead to different endings.

Thus, before 1967, when R. A. Montgomery would start writing and publishing young adult novels with this interactive approach, several authors had already tried it to engage the readers in a more active reading role. He even expressed this idea himself in an interview in 2013 "There were people who expressed the feeling that nonlinear literature wasn't 'normal'. But interactive books have a long history, going back 70 years." (Chooseco, 2006, p.135)

3.2. Choose Your Own Adventure books

Choose Your Own Adventures, aka CYOA, is a series of interactive books addressed to young readers. These books were first published in 1979 by Bantam Books and became very popular within the two first years. What was original about these publications was that the reader could play a more active role during the reading process. Every few pages, readers encountered a proposal to decide what they wanted the characters to do. The experience lets the readers go back and start the book again several times as the ending would be different depending on the choices they made.

It is also known as *interactive fiction* which, as explained by Jones (2016) "reads like a story but plays like a game, with branching narratives that lead the reader to experience different story outcomes and experiences depending on the choices they make."

In its creator's words, "CYOA is a series of interactive books where the reader is the hero of the story making choices leading to a variety of different endings" (SevenDaysPromo, 2013).

For Shannon Gilligan, co-founder of Chooseco, "that something else that CYOA lets the kid do is get out of their comfort zone, get out of what they know and really play that role of being in a danger spot, being in a foreign culture and I actually think it encourages them a little bit maybe to go after that when they grow up." (SevenDaysPromo, 2013)

Montgomery explained that they wanted children to "experience in their lives that ability to make choices" (SevenDaysPromo, 2013).

3.2.1. History and creator

CYOA's roots can be found in game theory and role-playing simulations. In 1976, Ed Packard approached R. A. Montgomery, who was running a small publisher with an innovative look to children's literature and showed him a manuscript entitled *Sugarcane Island*. Montgomery had been involved in the design of interactive role-playing games a few years before and, when he read Packard's manuscript saw a role-playing game in the form of a book. The first books were published as part of a series known as "The Adventures of You", and Montgomery himself wrote some of them under a pen name.

It was not until 1978 when Montgomery signed a contract with Bantam Books in order to continue with the collection. From 1999 to 2004, Montgomery formed Chooseco and several of the authors contributed to his work to restore the series.

The original "classic" series included 184 different titles, but Bantam published nearly 100 additional books in several spin-off series, and they have been translated to 40 languages. The last title in the original series was released in 1998. However, the series is currently published through an independent publishing company, Chooseco LLC, set up by the founder of the series, R. A. Montgomery.

As expressed in Chooseco's webpage, "in addition to its mainstream popularity, CYOA has been cited by numerous educators as a uniquely effective method for helping students learn to read. The series has documented popular appeal for the reluctant reader due to its interactivity. CYOA has also been used specifically in technology lesson plans in elementary, high school and college curricula, as well as in professional development tools.

3.2.2. CYOA nowadays

The impact of the series of books has been notable as it showed a different way of narrating. Some proposals in video format, which combine storytelling with gameplay, are explained below.

In 2013, Ray Montgomery and Shannon Gilligan launched an App named Choose Toons. This project followed the second-person adventure where the reader needs to make the decisions and where the story can evolve differently so that every reader would reach a different ending. They brought the written stories to the next level and connected them with technology.

Gilligan defined it as "interactive cartoons based on the younger CYOA" and explained that there were "multiple choice, multiple endings available for a tablet" (SevenDayrPromo, 2013).

This was a big step for Montgomery, who added: "my dream is that these Choose Toons will reach kids all over the world and help them make choices, help them explore and discuss decisions that they have made in this animated cartoon series" (SevenDaysPromo, 2013).

In 2017, RTVE started broadcasting *Si fueras tú*, a series created by the audience. It was the first interactive series in Spain and every Friday a new episode was broadcasted. At the end of the episodes, a question was asked in order to decide the continuation of the story. The spectators could vote one of the options through a mobile phone app, and the most voted one was chosen to continue the plot.

In 2018, the streaming service Netflix announced that they would upload interactive content to their platform. The audience can decide the development of the plot while they watch an episode of *Black Mirror*, *Minecraft* or *You vs. Wild*, among other series. At a certain point of the plot, the audience can make a choice among different options and several endings are available depending on people's decisions. The result has been so good that the service is uploading new materials in this format.

Also in 2018, the Spanish YouTube channel *TikTak Draw* started an interactive story. Every Friday they uploaded a new chapter of the story and gave to possible options at the end of it so that their followers could write a comment to choose what would happen next. By the end of the fourth chapter, they leave a question instead of two options, asking the audience to write an ending for the story. The most voted comment was chosen to be represented in the fifth and final chapter.

3.2.3. Structure of the books

When studying the structure of CYOA books, Swinehart's work is the best way to understand the complex scheme that lays under this kind of stories. He explains thoroughly the structural framework of CYOA on his website, and even Chooseco has acknowledged his great work. The aim of this section is to provide an overall view of how these stories are built.

The choices

Looking closely to CYOA books, they are a collection of numbered pages, but not as any other kind of books because the pages here are of different types. Most pages contain part of the story and they finish by telling you to jump to a specific page. A smaller number of pages represent an endpoint and lead to no more jumps. The former ones are called 'narrative' whilst the others are the 'endings'. At the same time, the 'endings' can be subdivided among the following categories: great (blue), favourable (yellow), mediocre (orange), disappointing (brown) or catastrophic (red). This colour code is used by Swinehart to explain visually the structure of CYOA books.
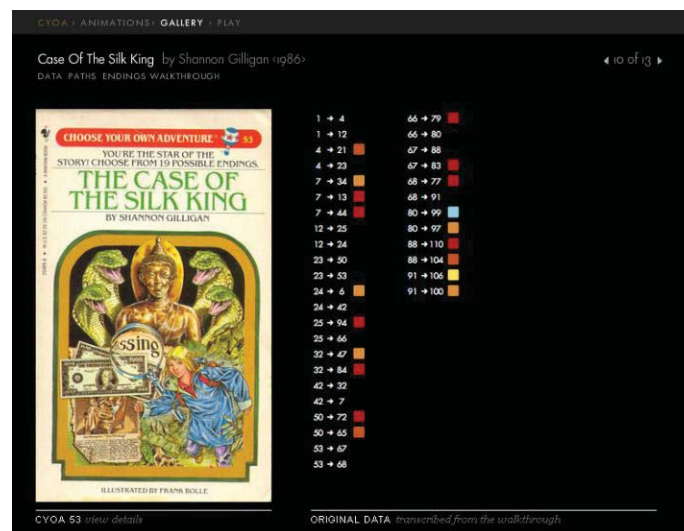
Picture 1. *The Case of the Silk King*'s colour-coded ending pages. (Swinehart, 2009)

The early CYOA books were not prone to giving a single ending unequivocally better than the rest and attempts to find those better endings were proof of readers expecting the book to be as any other type of book, instead of a reading adventure set as a game in the form of a book. However, some CYOA stories showed to have a progression toward a winning ending. This implies that, depending on the choices the reader made, the story would lead them to a better or a worse ending. Nevertheless, "the set of best endings was distributed fairly evenly throughout the branches of the decision tree, so early choices don't necessarily take you out of the running for a good ending" (Swinehart, 2009).

The paths

However, what makes these books unique is not only that they have narrative, ending and decision pages, but the way they are all connected. The first few pages were narrative in order to set the story's introduction and context. Once this was achieved, the reader was given two options and the story jumped to two destination pages that were subsequently divided again.

The story would evolve so that some of those subdivisions would lead to an ending while others would continue to subdivide and present new choices to the reader.

"Part of the fun in playing through these books (or part of the obsession) was trying to find every ending and every path" (Swinehart, 2009). The images below are CYOA *The Case of the Silk King* maps as studied by Swinehart.
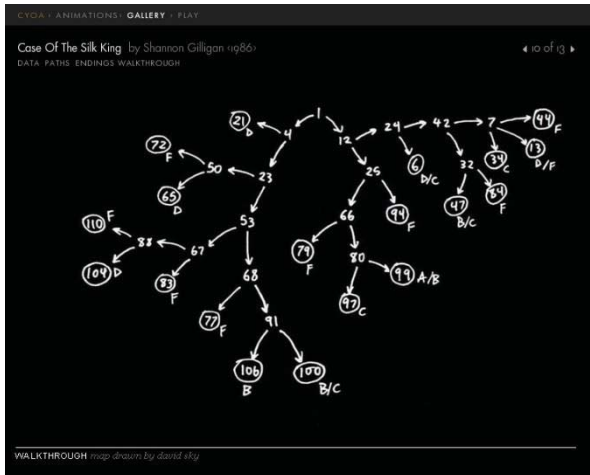
Picture 2. Walkthrough (Swinehart, 2009)
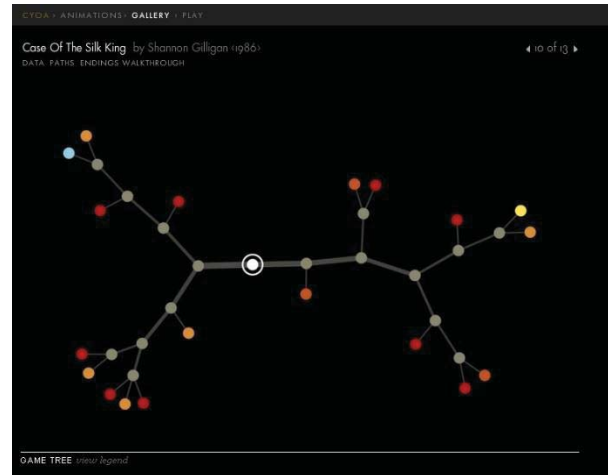
Picture 3. Game tree (Swinehart, 2009)

The walkthrough image represents the branching decisions and the different kind of endings those decisions lead to, whilst the game tree image shows the decision frequency. All readers had to go from the first page to the one where the first decision appeared, but not all would go from the first decision A to the best ending because some would choose other paths throughout the reading.
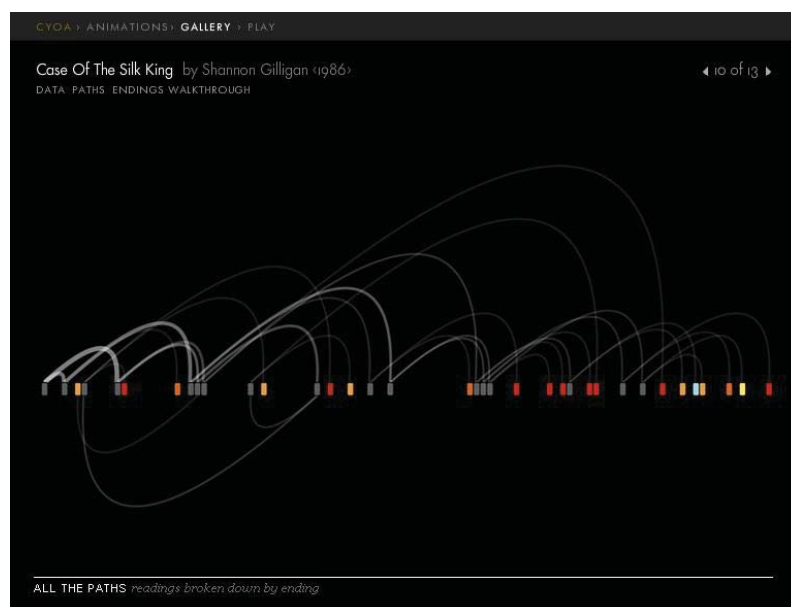
Picture 4. *The Case of the Silk King.* All the paths. (Swinehart, 2009)

In 'all the paths' image the evolution of the storyline is presented with arcs. On the one hand, the arcs on top of the colours representing the pages show the decisions that take the readers onwards in the book. On the other hand, the few arcs below the pages picture the choices that make the readers move backward in the book. This exemplifies the fact that this kind of books do not follow the usual storytelling procedure. However, not all the books of this collection show this storyline, as some of them follow a linear structure.

The storylines

Switehart (2009) explains that it is difficult to know how the writers decided the ordering of pages, but he claims that there can be seen a handful of recurrent strategies. Along with his investigation, Switehart (2009) learned that, although there seems to be a pattern in the openings of most of the books, there are always some jumps that cannot be explained as part of the pattern, for example, most books condense the activity on the early pages. This means that, even though there might be an overall criterion, the ordering is quite arbitrary. Nevertheless, these patterns seem to be useful to classify the books regarding the year when they were written.

Proposal

1. Context

This section deals with the context in which the proposal has been framed. This proposal is aimed at students in the 1st year of Bachillerato in a bilingual high school in Spain. Although it has not been put into practice and it is just a project, I have taken into account my experience in the Master's internship with students of a bilingual high school in Valladolid. The activities here explained follow the guidelines of both the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the *Boletín Oficial de Castilla y León* (BOCyL).

The CEFR is the basis for any language syllabus across Europe. Therefore, BOCyL is the Spanish curriculum for Castilla y León and takes into account the guidelines provided in CEFR. The main objective of the CEFR is to "overcome the barriers to communication among professionals working in the field of modern languages arising from the different educational systems in Europe". In such a globalised era, it is essential for the different countries to find a way to unify the system for language teaching so that exchanges are easier and language proficiency is similar all around Europe. The CEFR proposes the guidelines on how to approach errors and mistakes that argues that those are signs of several things and not always they are the consequence of a lack of willingness to learn, most times they should be seen as an attempt to communicate in spite of the risks and they are essential in the learning process. The Companion Volume is the most recent document due to this matter and it should be taken into account when assessing all language skills, too.

BOCyL provides a detailed curriculum where the four skills[1] –oral and written comprehension and expression– are covered. For this proposal the focus is on blocks 3 and 4, related to written texts comprehension and production. When it comes to reading, the learning outcomes draw the attention to being able to understand the most relevant information in any kind of format and related to situations of daily life. It is therefore fundamental for students to be used to working with written materials in authentic form, in other words, they need to build a reading habit. In the block related to writing, it is stated that students must be able to produce clear and coherent texts of a wide variety of topics. Those texts are a communication tool and so they need to be written in a planned and thoroughly thought way.

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[1] New names for these four skills are *reception*, *production*, *interaction* and *mediation*, according to the Council of Europe's *Companion Volume* (2018).

In this paper the use of the literary texts selected is planned to boost the students creativity, to motivate them and encourage the implementation of reading habits. At the same time, it will develop the written language skills.

The selected texts are authentic materials because "when introducing the contents, the use of authentic documents –from which the syntactic-discursive contents will be deduced because they do not exist out of the discourse– will prevail" (BOCyl, 8 de mayo de 2015)[2].

Mystery of the Maya is a book aimed at children from 8 to 12 years old, so the linguistic aspects of the text are not much challenging and will not make the reading experience difficult for 1st year of Bachillerato students. As it is an adventure story it will not be perceived by the students as a childish topic. The length is appropriate because although the story is 131 pages long, every possible storyline is shorter and it is sprinkled with illustrations that help with the understanding of the scenes. However, by the time students finish it, they will be filled by a feeling of satisfaction knowing they are capable of reading an authentic book.

For the second reading, the chosen text is *The perks of being a wallflower*. It is divided in four parts and, instead of chapters, it is written as a collection of letters which makes the reading easier and free-flowing. The main purpose of using this text is that it addresses several hot topics that are appropriate for this level and may well lead to a great variety of written possibilities for the intended task. The text is comfortable to read because the narrator is a teenager and the vocabulary used is easily relatable to the students. As it is a proper book, it is longer than the previous one, having 231 pages. However, the reading would be done partially in class and it is intended to be approached letter by letter, not as a whole text.

This proposal is conceived to be a project developed throughout the academic year because its main objective is to introduce reading and writing as a natural habit in the students' lives. Therefore, the assessment is carried out along with the project and evaluates the process as well as the result. In order to accomplish this, the students will not be marked on a test to prove they have read the texts, but they will implement the acquired knowledge with their creativity to produce a proper piece of work. This project also includes teamwork and a little bit of ICT, and students will also be marked on the skills related to those aspects. Nevertheless, the most important point is the feedback given to the students because it will allow them to learn from

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[2] Own ex profeso translation from "Para la introducción de contenidos se hará un uso preferente de documentos auténticos, de los cuales se deducirán los contenidos sintáctico-discursivos, que no existen fuera del discurso" (BOCyL, 18 de mayo de 2015, p. 32785).

their mistakes and introduce the corrections for further tasks. That is why marks will only be shown at the end of the whole project.

2. Lesson plan

This proposal includes a lesson plan to be carried out within the whole school year. It does not have a limited timing as it may vary depending on the school year and the class we are working with. The lesson plan is divided into two different parts. The first of these is focused in engaging the students in the extensive reading of the chosen book in order to develop the students' motivation towards the reading practice. The second part's target is to nurture the students' creativity through a writing project on which they will work in groups.

2.1. Part 1. Engaging in the reading

As part of the English curriculum, students have to read between two and three books during the school year. Those compulsory readings are usually graded readers[3], but in this case, the chosen text is an authentic material, so it is not adapted to the level, although it has been selected coherently with the age at which this reading is aimed.

Mystery of the Maya is a CYOA book chosen for this dissertation for its structure and because the topic is thought to be appealing as the story is set in both the 1980s Mexico and the ancient one, home of the mysterious Mayan civilisation. Nevertheless, there are lots of different titles among which any teacher could choose.

<u>Pre-reading activities</u>

The first step towards any reading should always scanning the class in order to know how much the students know about the topic, whether they have read similar things previously and if they are interested in that kind of stories. All this information gathered by the teacher is very useful in order to know how to approach the text.

In this case, the teacher will show some pictures of Maya temples and constructions and will ask the students several questions in order to brainstorm the context of the story they are going to read. They will have to guess where Mayas were from and they will be asked how much they know about this civilisation. After that, the teacher will give some time to research about the permanence of their traditions in the current Mexican way of living. This will set the framework for what will come next.

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[3] Graded readers, aka readers, are adapted versions of existing books or books written for English language learners. The language is simplified in both the vocabulary and the grammatical structures. They are called "graded" because they are adapted according to de level to which they are aimed.

As this project deals with a book different to what studentes are used to, before starting to read the book, the teacher will present it as a CYOA story. This introduction is necessary so that they understand what they will be reading and it is essential that the teacher presents it as an enthusiastic experience. One way to achieve this is by explaining clearly that reading this kind of books is just like playing a videogame where you can choose where you want to go next. The teacher will have to make it clear that there are a lot of endings and that there is no way to cheat.

The teacher will read aloud the first page of the book, which is the same for every CYOA story, entitled "beware and warning!", where the author claims:

> This books is different from other books. You and YOU ALONE are in charge of what happens in this story. There are dangers, choices, adventures, and consequences. YOU must use all of your numerous talents and much of your enormous intelligence. The wrong decision could end in disaster –even death. But don't despair. At any time, YOU can go back and make another choice, alter the path of your story, and change its result. (Chooseco, 2006).

This introduction will catch the students' attention and will serve to engage them in this reading project. The teacher will then continue reading the synopsis in order to let his or her audience plunge into the story:

> Your best friend Tom goes missing on assignment in Mexico. You have to help find him. Will it require you to take a potion that sends you back in time to the world of the mysterious Mayan Civilization? Or is Tom still her in the present day? Can you trust Manuel? Depending on your choices, YOU may become a great Mayan ruler or a double agent fighting a modern revolution. The wrong choice could turn you into a human sacrifice on a bloody altar. (Chooseco, 2006)

It is important to prevent the students from looking every single word of vocabulary in the dictionary. As it is an authentic text, the structures can be quite challenging at times and the new words may overwhelm them at first. The teacher will be responsible of making it clear that they will not be tested on the vocabulary, but on the overall comprehension. As soon as they start to get used to the reading, they will be able to guess most of the meanings by the context. However, it might be advisable to remind the students to look up the meaning of the words that appear consistently and may affect reading comprehension.

<u>While-reading activities</u>

The book will be started in class until the group gets to the first decision. This is done both to leave them wanting for more so that they are engaged to the reading by the end of the session –as sometimes the most difficult step for those who are not used to reading is getting started– and to make sure that everybody is able to follow the reading without problems.

From the first decision onwards, the book will be read at home but, instead of leaving the students with the whole text ahead, they will be expected to reach to another decision within a week. While reading, they need to take notes in a reading diary where they will track how the story is evolving according to their own choices. It is important that they note down which options they choose and where they lead them because the diary will be collected by the teacher as part of their assessment in order to make sure they really read the story.

Every fifteen days or so, depending on the pace of the school year, the teacher will spend around 20 minutes to talk about the reading. The students will gather in groups depending on the choices they have made so that they can discuss the evolution of the story and ask any questions they may need to get answered in order to understand the text. The main aim of this activity is to make sure that all the students progress in the reading and that nobody is left behind due to linguistic or comprehension problems. While sharing their views on the fragments of the story read up to that moment, they will reflect on how to take their further decisions and this will help them develop their critical thinking.

<u>Post-reading activities</u>

Right after finishing the book, the teacher will bring to the class two types of review, one recorded as a YouTube video, and the other one written to be posted on a blog or to be published in a literary magazine. After the visualisation of both the students will be divided in groups of five in order to analyse the benefits and the drawbacks of each of them, as well as outlining the structure of a review. Their ideas will be put in common in a short brainstorming debate. The purpose of this activity is to get to a unified structure and gather the tools the students need in order to produce their own review.

In a second step, the students will have to decide whether they prefer to record a video pretending they are *booktubers*[4], or to write a review for a literary blog. As this part of the

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[4] Booktubers are people who own a YouTube channel in which they upload videos related to books they have read or they want to read. It is a different way to do reviews of books.

project is centred in the development of the students' reading habit, it does not matter whether they choose an oral or a written review. However, depending on their choices the teacher will use a different rubric to asses their work.

With the aid of the notes they have been taking while reading and discussing the book, the students will have to explain the plot and spoil their story ending, as they will vary from student to student but some of them may have finished the same way. They will be encouraged to express their opinions about this kind of books, the story itself and whether they would like to read more afterwards. All reviews will be post in the school blog so that everybody can share them with their friends and family and watch or read them at home to see how much the story may vary depending on the decisions made.

As a way to link this reading experience with the consecutive writing project, the teacher will ask the students about the structure of the CYOA story they have read. They will need to brainstorm and the teacher will guide the discussion so that they understand the way those stories are written. This will help them have a clear view of how to tell stories differently and will hopefully open their mind to different ways of storytelling through gamebooks.

2.2. Part 2. Developing writing creativity

For the second compulsory reading the proposal is to avoid, once again, the graded readers in favour of authentic materials. *The perks of being a wallflower* was written in 1999, but the topics covered remain current. As a matter of fact, in 2012 its author directed its film adaptation with a cast including Logan Lerman, Emma Watson and Ezra Miller, among others. Students will be able to identify themselves with many of the experiences and feelings portrayed in the book and it will engage them. Indeed, while the previous book was targeted at children, this one is aimed to a teenage audience. Moreover, although it may feel overwhelming as it is a proper book, the way it is divided will make it lighter than students may think at first.

The perks of being a wallflower is divided in four parts plus a last letter labelled as the epilogue. All those parts are formed by a set of letters written by Charlie, the adolescent protagonist, to an unknown recipient always called "dear friend" and through which the reader gets to know his life. Among the themes included there are drugs, friendship, body image, first love, suicide, eating disorders, sexuality and toxic relationships.

Although this text has been picked for the reasons above explained, just as stated in the first part of the project, the choice of the book is entirely up to the teacher as there are lots of different titles among which to choose.

Pre-writing activity

Once the students have a clear vision about CYOA stories' lay out, they will be divided into groups of four or five members each. While setting the groups up it is fundamental to make sure that they are balanced so that strong students can help those learners with some difficulties in English. This part of the project has got the main purpose of producing a written story collaboratively and the teacher will have an essential role monitoring and guiding the group.

While-writing activity

Given that the reading is a proper book, it will be started to read in class, in order for the students to get use to the way it is written and to get them engaged in the reading. It is divided in four parts, plus an epilogue, formed by a collection of letters, so the story is easy to follow.

The teacher will ask the students to read the first letter aloud in turns and will ask for any problems to understand the story. In order to make sure that everybody has been able to get the overall idea of it, he or she will ask some students to make an oral summary.

Then, the students will be told to continue reading on their own for the next 15 minutes. After that, they will discuss in the groups what they have understood up to the point where they have been able to read. They will be encouraged to take notes about the story line and stick post-its in the pages bearing some interesting and valuable information or hot topics while they read. This is meant to help them access the information easily in the next steps of the project.

After this, the process will be repeated: students will read on their own at their own pace and every 20 minutes they will be asked to stop in order to comment on the book with their group. Although this may take several sessions, it is important to make sure all the students are able to follow the story-line and that non of them is left behind.

The last letter of the first part, which happens to be the longest one, will be read aloud in turns in class, just as the first one. By the time the reading is finished, students will be asked about their first impressions of the book, whether they find it difficult to follow the story, and if they feel they are more able to read without needing to know every single word of the text.

In groups, they will be given a list of the topics covered in this part: Charlie's friend and aunt deaths, Charlie's sister relationship with his boyfriend, Patrick and Sam's relationship between them and with Charlie, and Charlie's first and second parties. They will be also told to keep their favourite sentences from this part, if they have any, such as "we accept the love we think we deserve" (Chbosky, 1999, p. 27) or "and in that moment, I swear we were infinite" (Chbosky, 1999, p.42). Students will have to reflect on this first part and write down, in groups, a chapter of 300 to 500 words that sums up everything that happened in this part. It needs to be told in the second-person, just as in CYOA books, as this will be the first chapter of their own cooperative CYOA book. They will be asked to add their favourite sentences in their written productions. The teacher will collect all the drafts and will post them in the online platform so that all the students of the class can read all the drafts at home.

In the following session, the students will vote the chapter they like best and it will be set as the starting chapter of the collaborative CYOA book. The teacher will make the corresponding corrections so that it is a proper text. There will be a little brainstorming time where the class will share their ideas about what may happen next in the book. Then, the groups will be asked to write a second possible chapter for the book. This time, the text will be from 200 to 400 words. Among all the second chapters, two will be selected, using the same system as for the previous one. Those two texts will be the two possible options the reader will have when arriving at the first decision.

Once the first part has been read, the students are already absorbed in the story and it will not be necessary to spend more time in class reading the story, as this can be a really time-consuming activity. By the time the second chapters are written, the students will be encouraged to continue reading the second part of the book at home. Both the first and the last letter will be read aloud in class, as done with the first part. Two weeks later, the second part will be commented in class following the same structure of the work plan used for the first chapter. Students will analyse the differences between what they wrote and what actually happened in the second part of the story and would be encouraged to take those new ideas into account in order to write their third chapter of the story.

The third chapters will be written before the students read the third part of the book. The groups will be given one of the two second chapters and they will have to continue the story from then onwards, and they will also have to invent a final chapter for the other option. They should make use of the new information they have from the authentic book as a source of

inspiration. Among all the third chapters, there will be two selected for each second chapter. Two of them will be ending chapters.

This process will be repeated until both the reading and the writing are completed, in other words, until the book is finished. For the creation of the fourth chapter, the groups will be given the two third chapters that were left opened to be continued. The groups will have to write an ending for one of them and an ending that suits both third chapters. When selecting the fourth chapters, there will be one specific ending-chapter for each third chapter and one more common for the two third chapters.

Before reading the epilogue, all groups will be asked to write an epilogue from 100 to 150 words for the stories. They can write three different epilogues, two between which one will suit two fourth chapters, or just one epilogue suitable for the three ending-chapters. The students will decide which epilogue or epilogues are better for their story.

The letter of the epilogue will be read in class and it will be followed by a little bit of debate. The teacher will leave an open space for the students to talk freely about the reading. In order to organise this, the teacher will leave some time for the students to write down a few ideas in groups and then the different groups will expose their opinions.
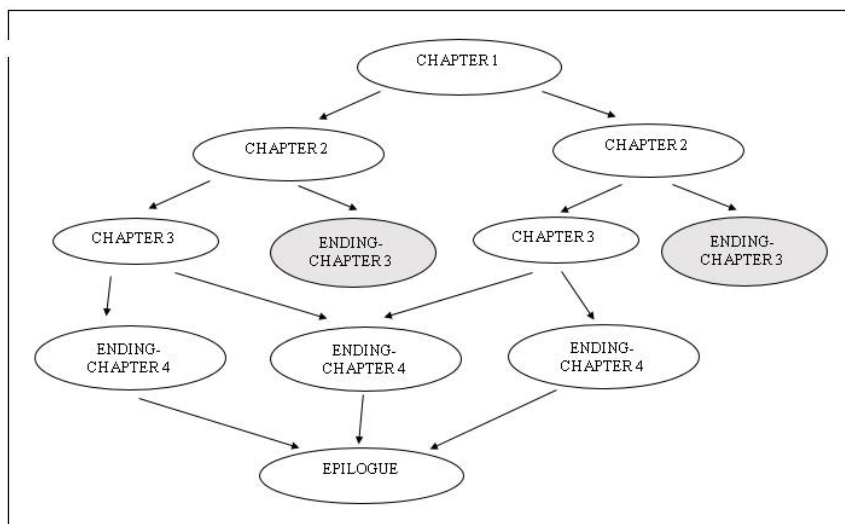
Picture 5. Diagram on the structure of the collaborative CYOA story.

With this method, by the time they finish their own version of the story, they will have also finished reading the compulsory text for school. Some may argue that this is a time-consuming way of approaching a compulsory reading, but it seems evident that this way the book is fully exploited an d the subject is widely covered. With this activity, the students will practice both

their reading and writing skills, while enhancing their linguistic knowledge, and their communicative sills as well while dealing with group work.

It can be argued that this is not the original structure followed in CYOA books, but it is important to bear in mind that this is a project thought for students, thus, the process needs to be adapted and simplified.

<u>Post- writing activity</u>

After writing there is always a need to edit the draft. During the writing process, the teacher will have collected the drafts to highlight things that need to be improved and to mark them as part of the assessment of this project, but it will be the students who will correct the mistakes of the drafts. It might be advisable to do peer editing, as it is sometimes difficult to rewrite correctly one's own ideas. Therefore, the students will be given the fragments back and each group will correct the drafts taking into account the teacher's suggestions.

Only once the editing is done, the class will digitalise the story with the aid of the teacher. There are many apps available to create digital and interactive CYOA stories. However, some are not free and some are quite hard to work with. It is important to bear in mind that this project is intended for a whole classroom and it needs to be done as quickly as possible. That is why the chosen digital tool to transform the paper-written story to a digital one is the PowerPoint presentation. Although it will always be guided and supervised by the teacher, it is essential to involve the students in this step too. In order to organise this last step that may be the most tedious for most of the students as they will participate one by one, the teacher can ask one student at a time to edit the interactive presentation while the rest of the class is focused on a different task, not necessarily related to the project.

The students will be encouraged to bring their own drawings or pictures in order to add some colour to the presentation and make it more visually powerful. All of them will be included and, once the interactive story is finished both digitally and paperback, the teacher will upload the final result to the previously mentioned blog, in order to share it and show it to the families too. It would be advisable to share it with the different classes of the same level and exchange the stories written if the rest of the classes have worked on this project too.

Regarding the reading objectives, the teacher will not need to make a test in order to prove the students have read and understand the text, as well as acquired the linguistic aspects involved, as the collaborative book will be enough to assess it.

3. Assessment

Failure, mostly seen as a bad trait, is an essential aspect of the learning process. When students make mistakes those are the signs of their attempts to produce something new for them, and it should never be punished.

This project is an attempt to avoid standardised tests where there is just one correct answer and where creativity and self-development are restricted. Therefore, the assessment will be carried out through several rubrics according to the goals that need to be achieved by the students. These rubrics will assess teamwork and individual work, as well as the writing and the oral aspects.

The major premise is to reward the students' attempts, even if they fail, to develop their language skills, and, at the same time, only lowering their marks when they make mistakes in already explained aspects or when there is a lack of interest in the activities proposed.

Assessment has lost its main function in detriment to the final grades. When learners receive a correction of an exercise they are only interested in the mark they have obtained, rather than looking thoroughly through the task to learn from their mistakes. This way, learning is at the expense of a number that, more often than not, does not accurately express the degree of knowledge acquisition. In an attempt to avoid this, this project's assessment will focus on giving feedback to the students so that they can develop their task the best way possible.

The rubrics proposed for the different parts of this project have been thoroughly planned regarding group work, individual work while working in a team, written comprehension and expression, and oral expression. They have been designed in order to help the teacher be more accurate while marking the students as in this project there is not a final exam. All these rubrics can be checked in and are part of Appendix 2.

4. Key competences worked with this project

According to *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (BOE), there are seven key competences in the Spanish curriculum. They are expected to be linked to the learning outcomes defined for Primary and Secondary Education, as well as for Bachillerato. The key competences [5]are:

a) **Linguistic communication**. Understood as "the result of the communicative action within given social practices in which the individual acts with other interlocutors through multiple types and formats of texts." (*Orden ECD/65/2015*)

b) Mathematic competence and basic competences in science and technology. "The mathematic competence implies the ability to apply mathematical reasoning and its tools to describe, interpret and predict different phenomena in their context." (*Orden ECD/65/2015*)

c) **Digital competence.** "This competence is the one that implies the creative, critical and sage use of information and communication technologies to achieve the objectives related to work, employability, learning, use of free time, inclusion and participation in society." (*Orden ECD/65/2015*)

d) **Learn to learn**.

> This competence is characterised by the ability to initiate, organise and persist in learning. This requires, in the first place, the ability to motivate oneselg to learn. This motivation depends on the generation of curiosity and the need to learn, of the student being the protagonist of the process and the result of their learning and, eventually, that they reach the learning goals proposed so that there is a perception of self-efficiency. All of the above mentioned contributes to motivate the learner to tackle future learning tasks. (*Orden ECD/65/2015*)

e) **Social and civic competences.**

> These competences imply the ability to use knowledge and attitudes about society, understood from different perspectives, in their dynamic, changing and complex conception, to interpret social phenomena and problems in increasingly diversified contexts; in order to elaborate answers, make decisions and solve conflicts, as well as to interact with other people and groups according to rules based on mutual respect and democratic convictions. (Orden ECD/65/2015)

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[5] Own ex profeso translation from (BOE, 20 de enrero de 2015, pp. 6991-7002).

f) Initiative and entrepreneurship.

This competence implies the ability to transform ideas into actions. This means acquiring awareness of the situation in order to be able to intervene, and know how to choose, plan and manage knowledge, skills or abilities and attitudes needed with their own criteria, in order to achieve the intended objective. (*Orden ECD/65/2015*)

g) Cultural sense and expressions.

This competence involves knowing, understanding, appreciating and critically evaluating, with an open and respectful attitude, the different cultural and artistic manifestations, using them as a source of enrichment and personal enjoyment and considering them as part of the wealth and heritage of the peoples. (Orden ECD/65/2015)

With this proposal, the students work on most of them. The linguistic communication is covered all along the project because the students are encouraged to use the language in a real context, fuelled with authentic materials. The digital competence is approached while searching for information but, more specifically, when transforming the handwritten story to a digital interactive one. By letting the students explore the possibilities of their own learning process, they are awakening their curiosity to invest more time learning on their own, going back to the materials used in class, creating a learning habit. They will, thus, learn to learn. Groupwork fosters the student's social and civic competences. At a low level, when changing to a student-centred learning approach, the teacher is promoting initiative and entrepreneurship among students. Was literature to be understood as part of the cultural expression of a society, students would also be developing the cultural sense and expressions with this project.

5. Teacher's role

Much as teachers try, classrooms continue to be mainly teacher-centred. However, with this project the purpose is to change the focus to the students in order to turn the roles inside out to empower the learners by being in charge of their own learning process.

In this project, the role of the teacher is to explain the activity, guide the students and monitor the development of the activities. The activities are planned so that the students can carry them out on their own and working cooperatively with their classmates. When a question arises, the solution can be found both in the students and in the teacher. This way, the students feel not only part, but above all the managers of their knowledge acquisition.

When the classroom happen to be student-centre, learning flows. In spite of what it may seem, the teacher's role is even more important because he or she needs to know how to change the approach to the task when the students do not feel motivated by it and nothing can be left to improvisation. While a graded reader with its consequent test might be easy to work with, a project like this one involves hours of dedication, more freedom for the students and a many different right answers, what implies a bigger amount of work for the teacher.

However, the benefits are large as students will acquire what has been taught because they will have done the work for themselves. The project provides a real context for the language learning and that is what makes the acquisition of the language possible.

In addition, teachers need to be aware of the group needs, that will differ from class to class, in order to adapt the activities or change the approaches to them. All the written and oral production is done by the students, but the teacher needs to monitor it and supervise the final result as well as assess each student individually.

In short, the success or failure of this project depends mainly on the teacher's abilities to coordinate well the group and make the most of each student and of the class as a whole. The procedures and methods may vary, but the teacher is a key part of the adequate development and smooth conduct of this proposal.

Conclusions

McKay (1982) explained, almost 40 years ago, that literature was easily seen as unnecessary in a time where the focus in ESL was to meet the students' academic and occupational needs. This statement remains current almost four decades after. Literature continues to be seen as an input source to review vocabulary and grammar, rather than as a reading material with which learners can enhance their comprehension skills. Thus, teachers fail to properly cover the reading process and, consequently, students fail to develop the reading habit.

The main problem encountered, then, is the way reading is addressed in ESL, as the students are told to read at home a compulsory book, mostly a graded reader, in order to sit an exam, which can be passed even without reading the text. This piece of work provides with an alternative way of approaching the reading task. On the first place, the use of authentic materials, rather than the so much widespread graded readers, especially at the level at which this proposal is aimed, proves to be a more realistic approach to language learning. In addition, the topics of the chosen texts for this proposal are appropriate for the age of the students. The compulsory reading has great exploitability, but it needs to be carefully prepared in order to make the most of the reading experience.

There are many ways to exploit a text, apart from the one thoroughly explained in this dissertation. The teacher can choose to bring about a debate about one of the topics discussed in the book, carry out a role-play or even make a small piece of improvised theatre giving each group the possibility to represent one scene of the story, to cite some ideas. The most important point that needs to be made in relation to the exploitability of the texts is that students feel demotivated towards reading because they do not see the utility of reading to sit an exam. Were them encouraged to properly work with the text in many different ways that ensure their understanding and that contribute to their personal development, they would approach this task differently and with a more positive attitude.

In respect of writing, proper development of this skill may lead to better use of the language. Whenever students have to hand a written task, they usually perform better than when they are told to answer orally. This happens due to the fact that they have more time to reflect and revise the written document, while they need to be more spontaneous in oral communication. Therefore, teachers need to make good use of these moments of reflection in order for their students to learn. This is what Harmer (2007) calls "language processing".

Within this proposal, students are meant to write a collaborative and creative piece of work taking a compulsory reading as the input text. This is both a way to involve them in the reading habit and a way to let them express creatively through writing. Students can gain a lot from working together in the same text, as they will listen to their classmates' ideas and they will contribute to a common text they will all be part of. Dealing with group work can be pretty challenging, but it is very enriching for students and essential for their future development as they are part of a society, and they need to learn to live in the community.

The groups in this proposal are small so that all students get involved in the work and all learners will be assessed both as part of their group and as individuals. This is essential as it is usual in group work to see some members avoiding to participate and then receiving the same good grades for their final work as their peers, who did really work hard.

Arguably, creative writing is a good way to avoiding the *right* and *wrong* answers the students are so used to. Creativity is a key point in order to provide innovative solutions for common issues and it is also a very well considered skill in the professional world, but it is less and less encouraged as students pass through the educational system. "Children are very curious and they think expansively, but over the time we begin to think reductively because education teaches us to look for one right answer and corporations for our fear of failure" (Wardle, 2018). This proposal stands for the use of this type of writing in order to promote the creative ability that seems to be prone to diminish through the passing of time.

It should be noted that this piece of work is only a proposal, as it has not been implemented in any real classroom. However, the materials selected and the lesson plan have been prepared bearing in mind the level and age at which they are aimed, following the recommendations of several authors, cited in this dissertation, as well as taking into account the author's own experience both in English academies and in a high school in Valladolid during her Practicum.

To sum up, the main conclusions of this piece of work are the following:

- as time-consuming as it may seem, changing the way reading is addressed in high schools is not only possible but also necessary in order to engage students in the reading habit;
- authentic materials provide a more realistic approach to language learning, and their use is possible if teachers take the time that is needed to make the most of them;

- Choose Your Own Adventure stories give the students the possibility to make their own decisions along the development of the plot, which is especially important when they do not choose the book they have to read;

- creative writing allows students to develop their critical thinking and creativity in a constraint educational system where only one option is accepted as correct;

- group work is an essential way to instil tolerance to the students and a great opportunity for them to learn to negotiate while using the language in a real context.

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Appendices

1. The two **books** used for the proposal will be provided to the master's degree dissertation's defence as no reproductions can be made according to their copyright.

2. **Rubric** for the assessment of the different parts of the lesson plan.

GROUP WORK (collaborative writing)	Percentage of the overall mark	Student's mark
The overall communication throughout the development of the project is in English.	15 %	
All the students' ideas are considered.	15 %	
The group is well organised and balanced so that all the students have a specific responsibility.	20 %	
The ambience is cooperative rather than competitive.	30 %	
The group makes good use of the time given for each task.	20 %	

INDIVIDUAL WORK in the team work	Percentage of the overall mark	Student's mark
The student is able to listen to his/her classmates' ideas.	20 %	
The student is respectful with his/her classmates.	30 %	
The student is able to express clearly his/her point of view without imposing it.	15 %	
The student fulfils the task he/she is in charge of.	25 %	
The student helps his/her classmates when they are not able to reach their own objectives.	10 %	

WRITTEN EXPRESSION (written review & collaborative story)	Percentage of the overall mark	Student's mark
The content is covered. The task is completed.	25 %	

There is a good use of grammar, according to the level of the student. Minor errors do not impede communication.	17 %	
There is a great variety of vocabulary related to the topic and the student includes some new words learned from the input text.	18 %	
The text is clearly organised with different paragraphs and several connectors that make it fluent and easy to follow.	25 %	
The approach is original and creative.	15 %	

WRITTEN COMPREHENSION (the two books' reading)	Percentage of the overall mark	Student's mark
The student has understood the overall idea covered in the written text.	35 %	
The student is able to use the text as an input to express his/her own opinions and ideas.	20 %	
The student is able to read the text without needing to understand every single word and is able to work the meaning of the unknown terms by the context.	15 %	
The student proves to have read the text they were told to read.	10 %	
The student is able to differentiate among the different characters and has an overall view of their personality.	20 %	

ORAL EXPRESSION (video review)	Percentage of the overall mark	Student's mark
The content is covered. The task is completed.	25 %	
Pronunciation and intonation are good in order to make the content understandable.	15 %	
There is a good use of the language (vocabulary and grammar) according to the level of the student.	20 %	

The text is clearly organised in order to make it fluent and easy to follow.	25 %	
The approach is original and creative.	15 %	