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***Nimona: Using a Graphic Novel in the EFL Classroom
to Give Visibility to the LGBTQ+ Community and
Break Gender Stereotypes***

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ABSTRACT

The use of literary texts in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is exceptionally beneficial for students because it enhances their proficiency in the foreign language. However, that is not the only advantage that literature brings to pupils, as it also motivates them, increases their interest in the foreign language and gives them the opportunity to grow at a personal level. This Master's dissertation presents a didactic proposal for the fourth year of *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* based on ND Stevenson's graphic novel *Nimona*. The proposal aims at improving the students' mastery of the English language, as well as at giving visibility to the LGBTQ+ community and defying gender stereotypes.

Key words: EFL classroom, literature, graphic novel, *Nimona*, LGBTQ+ community, gender stereotypes.

RESUMEN

El uso de textos literarios en el aula de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE) es excepcionalmente beneficioso para los estudiantes porque mejora su competencia en la lengua inglesa. Sin embargo, esta no es la única ventaja que la literatura ofrece a los alumnos, ya que también los motiva, aumenta su interés por la lengua extranjera y les proporciona la oportunidad de crecer a nivel personal. Este Trabajo de Fin de Máster presenta una propuesta didáctica para 4º de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria basada en la novela gráfica *Nimona* de ND Stevenson. La propuesta tiene como objetivo mejorar el dominio de la lengua inglesa de los estudiantes, así como dar visibilidad al colectivo LGBTQ+ y desafiar estereotipos de género.

Palabras clave: Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE), literatura, novela gráfica, *Nimona*, colectivo LGBTQ+, estereotipos de género.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a resource that offers a great deal of possibilities for EFL teachers who want to explore new ways of teaching English. Firstly, teachers might consider using authentic literary texts as real sources of input for students to acquire the foreign language in a natural way. Thus, the use of literature in the classroom contributes to enhancing the students' proficiency in the foreign language. Secondly, teachers can use literature as a tool for increasing the pupils' interest in the foreign language and for promoting active learning and participation. If teachers take into consideration their pupils' interests and tastes when selecting the literary texts they want to use in their lessons, students will feel highly motivated and engaged while reading the texts and completing the activities. Thirdly, bringing literature into the EFL classroom provides teachers with the opportunity of implementing innovative methodologies and designing dynamic activities that develop the students' creative and imaginative abilities. For these reasons and many others, an increasing number of EFL teachers are deciding to make use of literary texts in their lessons.

Furthermore, the use of graphic novels in the classroom is on the rise nowadays. Numerous EFL teachers select graphic novels for their lessons because teenage students normally find them enjoyable and interesting. The fact that graphic novels are composed of a combination of text and images makes them less challenging to read than other types of literary texts. Moreover, pupils tend to feel attracted by the visual components of graphic novels, which makes them more engaged in reading them. Additionally, graphic novels can belong to any genre, so teachers are easily able to adapt to their students' interests. Taking into account the large number of benefits that literature and, in particular, graphic novels, have for students, this dissertation aims at planning a didactic proposal for the fourth year of *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* based on ND Stevenson's graphic novel *Nimona*.

Moreover, a text like *Nimona* allows teachers to approach cross-cutting themes. If teachers select literary texts that represent LGBTQ+ characters, students will be provided with an expanded vision of the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities and they will normalize people who are not heterosexual or cisgender. In addition, if the literary text that students are reading portrays characters who express their gender in non-normative ways, they will understand that the social conventions regarding gender should not determine their personality traits. Considering that ND Stevenson's *Nimona* presents several non-normative

characters, the didactic proposal that has been designed for this dissertation focuses on the cross-cutting themes of sexual orientation and gender identity and it encourages values of respect and tolerance towards diversity.

The main reason why this dissertation is based on the use of literature in the EFL classroom is that it is essential to promote the habit of reading among students. If pupils are given the opportunity to discover books that are close to their interests, they might find reading enjoyable and they might start reading in their free time. That is also the reason why ND Stevenson's *Nimona* has been selected for the didactic proposal that will be presented further on in this dissertation. *Nimona* is a fantasy and science fiction graphic novel aimed at adolescents aged between 13 and 17 and the main character is a teenager herself, so it is believed that it will draw the attention of Secondary Education students. Furthermore, *Nimona* has been chosen for this didactic proposal because of the fact that it represents LGBTQ+ characters and the protagonist expresses herself in non-normative ways that defy gender stereotypes. This didactic proposal aims at emphasizing the tremendous importance that fostering values of tolerance towards diversity among students has. It is fundamental to make students understand that the spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities is very wide and diverse. By doing so, heteronormativity can be challenged, gender stereotypes can be deconstructed, and a better society can be built.

Taking all these aspects into account, this dissertation has the following general and specific objectives:

General objective:

- a) To design a didactic proposal for the EFL classroom based on the graphic novel *Nimona* by ND Stevenson to develop the students' proficiency in the foreign language and promote visibility for the LGBTQ+ community and freedom of expression regardless of gender.

Specific objectives:

- a) To explore the benefits that literature can bring to students and the best approaches that can be followed to implement it in the EFL classroom.
- b) To analyze the reasons why graphic novels are legitimate literary works that can be used as effective teaching materials.
- c) To examine how literature can be used as a tool for introducing cross-cutting themes into the EFL classroom.
- d) To determine the importance of fostering values of respect and tolerance towards diversity among teenage students.

This dissertation will be divided into three different sections. The first one is the theoretical framework that underpins the proposal, in which the following aspects will be analyzed: the advantages of using literature and graphic novels in the EFL classroom, the ways in which cross-cutting themes can be introduced into the EFL classroom through literature, and the importance of using literary texts that portray LGBTQ+ and non-normative characters. In the second section, the didactic proposal will be presented, providing an examination of the methodologies and curricular elements on which the proposal is based and a detailed description of the sessions and the activities. Finally, the third section will provide the conclusions of the dissertation, focusing on the achievement of the stated objectives.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Literature in the EFL Classroom

In the last two decades, an interest in using literature in the EFL classroom has resurged, “stressing not only the benefits of literary resources for language improvement, but also the personal involvement and the cultural enrichment that its use entails” (Pellicer & Romo, 2020, p. 9). Therefore, literature is considered a valuable and practical tool that should be applied in EFL teaching because of the large number of benefits it brings to students. To begin with, if reading materials are selected carefully, using literature in the classroom can be highly motivating for learners of English (Lazar, 1993). Students will be more engaged in reading authentic literary texts rather than adapted or constructed ones because authentic texts “are proof that the language is used for real-life purposes by real people” (Nuttall, 1996, p. 172). Therefore, if pupils are given authentic literary texts, they will associate reading with real life and thus they will be more attracted to it. As a result, “students will feel that what they do in the classroom is relevant and meaningful to their own lives” (Lazar, 1993, p. 15). It is essential that pupils see what they do at school as useful and significant in order for them to be motivated and engaged in the learning process. Moreover, “a good novel or short story may be particularly gripping in that it involves students in the suspense of unravelling the plot. This involvement may be more absorbing for students than the pseudo-narratives frequently found in course books” (Lazar, 1993, p. 15). Thus, authentic literary texts are more motivating because of the complexity and depth of their plots, characters and themes, which are usually simpler in constructed texts.

Nevertheless, a common argument against the use of authentic literary texts in the classroom is that, “since one of our main goals as ESL teachers is to teach the grammar of the language, literature, due to its structural complexity and its unique use of language, does little to contribute to this goal” (McKay, 1982, p. 529). Therefore, authors like Edmondson (1997) support the idea that EFL teachers should only focus on language and that, as a result, there is no necessity to use literature in the EFL classroom because grammar can be learnt from any other type of text. However, this argument is debatable because, although grammar still plays an essential role in EFL teaching nowadays, there is a greater emphasis on the development of the four linguistic skills and the communicative competence of students. Moreover, Paran (2008) argues that “this type of argumentation seems to be taking the learner as a person out of the equation: the focus is on the text, and on the learner as a language learning machine” (p.

14). Nonetheless, what McKay (1982) defends is not completely unreasonable, and it needs to be taken into consideration when referring to students from lower levels. Pupils whose level of English is not especially high will probably have difficulties when working with authentic literary texts due to the complexity of the language used in them. Furthermore, Lazar (1993) argues that adapted texts are usually more appropriate for students who have not reached a high level of English proficiency yet. Of course, every context is different, and that is why one of the roles of EFL teachers who want to use literature in the classroom is to determine whether an authentic literary text is suitable for their students. In order to do so, teachers need to meticulously examine the literary text they would like to be read at school and judge if the totality of their pupils would be able to cope with it.

However, students with a higher level of English can read authentic literary texts, and, by doing so, they will acquire the foreign language in a natural way. According to Lazar (1993), “literature may provide a particularly appropriate way of stimulating [language] acquisition, as it provides meaningful and memorable contexts for processing and interpreting new language” (p. 17). Lazar (1993) also mentions that, in some countries, the access to spoken input in English is limited so the acquisition of the language depends on the written input that people can receive from literary texts. Nonetheless, that statement was made in 1993 and, nowadays, people have a much greater possibility of obtaining spoken input in any language via the Internet. Still, in Spain, every audiovisual work in English is dubbed into Spanish. This has negative effects on learners of English, since they become accustomed to watching everything in Spanish and the input they get in English is minimal and essentially limited to the EFL classroom. Thus, “the reading of literature then becomes an important way of supplementing the inevitably restricted input of the classroom” (Lazar, 1993, p. 17). Furthermore, reading authentic literary texts allows students to learn a great amount of new vocabulary and expressions that are not normally taught at school. Pupils also have the opportunity of appreciating and analyzing the way in which the foreign language is used by native speakers. According to Povey (1967), “literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax” (p. 41). Therefore, it is clear that reading authentic literary texts facilitates the acquisition of English and also the learning of new lexicon and grammatical aspects.

In addition, another advantage of using literature in the EFL classroom is that it contributes to developing the students’ capability of inferring meaning and making interpretations (Lazar, 1993). According to Widdowson (1979), reading is not “a reaction to a text,” but an “interaction between writer and reader mediated through the text” (p. 74). Thus,

reading a literary text is an active process in which the reader is constantly making assumptions about what the writer wanted to express when writing the text. In order to do so, the reader needs to analyze the way in which the writer uses language and also to understand that “literary texts are often rich in multiple levels of meaning”, so a word or a sentence from a text might have a hidden significance that needs to be deduced (Lazar, 1993, p. 19). Therefore, “while reading literature could be perceived as a passive activity, the experience of reading activates students’ minds” (Greene, 2019, p. 99). Moreover, Lazar (1993) also explains how inferring meaning from a literary text provides students with a set of abilities that are applicable to other situations:

By encouraging our students to grapple with the multiple ambiguities of the literary text, we are helping to develop their overall capacity to infer meaning. This very useful skill can then be transferred to other situations where students need to make an interpretation based on implicit or unstated evidence (p. 19).

Hence, the use of literature in the EFL classroom allows students to become able to interpret different levels of meaning, a faculty that is essential for a language learner, since it is necessary in a large number of real-life communicative scenarios, such as having a conversation with another person.

Furthermore, another benefit of using literature at school is that, by exploring new realities depicted in literary texts, pupils’ creativity and imagination will be significantly enhanced. Moreover, literature can help develop students’ critical thinking, and it also educates pupils in values (Lazar, 1993). According to Greene (2019), promoting reading in the classroom can contribute to positive social change because it enhances the pupils’ ability to think in a critical way and, “by imagining what is possible and having the skills to communicate those ideas, language learners will be able to contribute to the improvement of our society” (p. 108). When analyzing literary texts in order to determine if they are suitable for use in the classroom, “it is important to select themes with which the students can identify” (McKay, 1982, p. 532). If pupils relate to the characters from a story or to the themes that are addressed in it, they will not only become more motivated to read, but they will also see reading as a way of understanding their own feelings and emotions. As a result, “if we ask students to respond personally to the texts we give them, they will become increasingly confident about expressing their own ideas and emotions in English” (Lazar, 1993, p. 19). Therefore, literature can be used as an instrument for opening discussions and for providing the opportunity for pupils to communicate their feelings, which is normally challenging for them.

Moreover, according to Lazar (1993), there are three different approaches to using literature in the classroom that can be followed by EFL teachers. The first one is the language-

based approach, which consists in making students analyze the language of a literary text in order to improve their proficiency in English. The main advantage of this approach is that pupils “are encouraged to draw on their knowledge of English, so [it] may provide useful exposure to, or revision of, grammar and vocabulary in interesting new contexts” (Lazar, 1993, p. 25). Nevertheless, this should not be the only approach followed by an EFL teacher when using literature in the classroom, because if the “analysis of the text is undertaken in purely linguistic terms with little chance for personal interpretation, this approach could become very mechanical and demotivating” (Lazar, 1993, p. 25). The second approach focuses on the use of literature as content, and “it concentrates on areas such as the history and characteristics of literary movements; the social, political and historical background to a text; literary genres and rhetorical devices” (Lazar, 1993, p. 24). This approach, however, is not particularly suitable for the EFL classroom, since it does not pursue its main objective, which is to ensure that students become proficient in English. The last approach is based on the use of literature for personal enrichment and it encourages students to reflect on their own opinions and emotions. The main benefit of this approach is that “it helps students to become more actively involved both intellectually and emotionally in learning English, and hence aids acquisition” (Lazar, 1993, p. 24). Nevertheless, the literature for personal enrichment approach also presents some handicaps, since some students might not be able to relate to the story or to the characters depicted in a literary text, and some others might not feel comfortable sharing their feelings with other people (Lazar, 1993). Therefore, the advantages and disadvantages of the three approaches have to be taken into consideration by EFL teachers in order to design a variety of activities for the classroom.

2.2. Graphic Novels as Legitimate Literary Works and Educational Materials

When deciding which authentic literary texts are most appropriate for students, EFL teachers may consider the possibility of selecting graphic novels. For decades, graphic novels have been intensely criticized due to the fact that they are usually not considered legitimate literary works. To begin with, graphic novels have received criticism because of its newness, since “anything new often faces resistance, especially if it is part of popular culture” (Schwarz, 2006, p. 63). Furthermore, people tend to generalize their vision of graphic novels as adventure or superhero stories that deal with trivial themes (Bucher & Manning, 2004) and are usually extremely violent (Strong, 2012). In addition, graphic novels are often rejected because they are mainly composed of images and other visual elements (Strong, 2012), which are considered inherent

features of children's books (Downey, 2009). Some people also believe that "pictures detract from what the authors could have expressed in words alone" (Downey, 2009, p. 181). Moreover, graphic novels are frequently perceived by teachers and pupils as uncomplicated texts that are meant for students with low academic performance (Strong, 2012). According to Connors (2010),

Arguments that foreground graphic novels as tools with which to support struggling readers ... motivate reluctant readers, or lead students to transact with more traditional forms of literature have the unintended effect of relegating them to a secondary role in the classroom (p. 67).

Nevertheless, in spite of all the critiques that graphic novels have received over the years, they are legitimate literary works and they should be brought into EFL classrooms because of a large number of reasons.

One of the main reasons why graphic novels are an astounding teaching resource is the fact that students generally find this type of literature highly attractive and stimulating because of its combination of text and images. According to Bucher and Manning (2004), "growing up with television and video games, contemporary young adults look for print media that contain the same visual impact and pared-down writing style and contribute to their enthusiasm for visual rather than written literacy" (p. 68). Due to today's multimodal society, most contemporary students are visual learners whose motivation depends principally on imaginal elements. Taking this into account, it is essential to consider the perspective of pupils when planning lessons in order to adapt them to their interests. Therefore, graphic novels are legitimate educational materials that can contribute to enhance the motivation of students and also their appreciation for the foreign language (Moeller, 2016). Furthermore, although graphic novels are normally considered children's books because of their use of illustrations, reading them can strengthen the students' intellectual capacity considerably. According to Lavin (1998), "the perception of sequential art requires more complex cognitive skills than the reading of text alone" (p. 32). The reason for this argument is that, when reading a graphic novel, the reader does not only need to decode the meaning of the text, but also to interpret what is being expressed through the images. Therefore, the interpretation of images requires students to make use of an additional series of critical thinking and evaluation abilities that they would not need if they were reading a text without visual elements (Strong, 2012). Thus, graphic novels are enormously criticized because they rely on illustrations, but they are in fact elements that motivate students and also provide them with a large amount of analytical skills.

Furthermore, graphic novels are an extremely effective instrument for expanding the pupils' knowledge of the English language. In particular, graphic novels "can illustrate

sequencing, placement, and timing of dialogue” (Downey, 2009, p. 183). Nearly all of the text from graphic novels appears in the form of dialogue, and it is usually presented in a natural way, as if it were a real-life conversation between two or more people. Therefore, by reading graphic novels, students acquire the foreign language naturally as they assimilate aspects related to interaction and discourse. In addition, graphic novels can be used “to highlight textual features such as sentence structure, context and graphics” (Strong, 2012, p. 60). Thus, as with any other type of literary text, the way in which language is used in a graphic novel can serve to teach students about linguistic features. However, graphic novels have the peculiarity that their illustrations can also be used to develop the communicative abilities of students. According to Strong (2012), “artists can communicate through their visual representations of information, allowing the graphic novel to be an excellent vehicle to teach the concepts of symbolism, foreshadowing, metaphor, and many other literary devices” (p. 62). Therefore, graphic novels can help students understand that, as previously mentioned, “literary texts are often rich in multiple levels of meaning” that need to be interpreted, and that the same occurs with language use in real-life communicative scenarios (Lazar, 1993, p. 19).

Additionally, although a large number of people believe that graphic novels are shallow superhero comics, this type of literary text is extraordinarily varied in genres, themes and characters. According to Strong (2012),

Numerous graphic novels are fictional narratives of many kinds. The wide range of stories told, themes advanced, and information presented provides opportunities for the genre to develop in any number of ways. This means that the graphic novel has the potential to appeal to almost any reader (pp. 57-58).

Therefore, within the graphic novel format, there is a great diversity of genres to suit all tastes, which makes it easier for EFL teachers to find a book that would be enjoyed by all their students, or at least by the majority of them. Moreover, the heterogeneity of themes that are portrayed in graphic novels provides EFL teachers with the possibility of using them to open debates so that their students can make use of the English language to reflect on and discuss substantive issues. According to Bucher and Manning (2004),

Graphic novels can contribute to interdisciplinary thematic units or can serve as an introduction to a specific content area. For example, in the social studies, they can help students develop an understanding of history and/or an appreciation of different cultures ... In addition, graphic novels offer subject matter and viewpoints that students might not otherwise consider (p. 71).

Hence, it can be appreciated that graphic novels allow EFL teachers to establish cross-curricular connections by addressing different subjects in the classroom. Schwarz (2006) claims that a great amount of “graphic novels offer more diverse voices than traditional textbooks,” which “offers teachers the opportunity to implement critical media literacy in the classroom—literacy

that affirms diversity, gives voice to all, and help students examine ideas and practices that promulgate inequity” (p. 62). Thus, graphic novels can also be used in the classroom in order to give visibility to minorities and the social issues they face so that students become more open-minded.

2.3. Literature and Cross-Cutting Themes in the Curriculum

As explained above, the use of graphic novels and other authentic literary texts in the EFL classroom is highly advantageous for learners. As a result, literature plays a relevant role in Castilla y León’s curricula of *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* (ESO) and *Bachillerato* for the subject “Primera Lengua Extranjera: Inglés.” The first mention of literature that can be found in the curriculum of ESO is the one that follows: “Las comprensiones orales y escritas han de ser documentos reales o adaptaciones de estos, que permitan al alumnado la adquisición de los contenidos socioculturales y transversales previstos en el currículo” (BOCYL, 2015, p. 32233). Therefore, it can be appreciated that particular emphasis is put on the fact that authentic or adapted texts are preferred over constructed ones. Moreover, it is also stated in the curriculum that literature can be used for teaching students cross-cutting themes, an aspect that will be analyzed later in this section. Furthermore, there is another mention of literature that is repeated in the learning standards of the curricula of the first three years of ESO: “Comprende lo esencial (p. e. en lecturas para jóvenes) de historias de ficción breves y bien estructuradas y se hace una idea del carácter de los distintos personajes, sus relaciones y del argumento” (BOCYL, 2015, pp. 32237, 32243, 32250). Thus, students are meant to be able to read a fiction text in English and comprehend the storyline and the differences between characters. In addition, a learning standard similar to the previous one but explained in more detail can be found in the curriculum of the fourth year of ESO:

Comprende los aspectos generales y los detalles más relevantes de textos de ficción y textos literarios contemporáneos breves, bien estructurados y en una variante estándar de la lengua, en los que el argumento es lineal y puede seguirse sin dificultad, y los personajes y sus relaciones se describen de manera clara y sencilla (BOCYL, 2015, p. 32257).

Hence, it can be appreciated that a first direct mention of literature is made in the curriculum of the fourth year of ESO, as pupils are supposed to be able to read contemporary literary texts in English.

Furthermore, the relevance of using authentic texts in the EFL classroom is also stressed in the curriculum of *Bachillerato*, and in this case they are also preferred over adapted texts (BOCYL, 2015). Furthermore, students of the first year of *Bachillerato* are meant to be able to

give oral presentations about literary works and also to comment about the plot of a book and their opinions about it (BOCYL, 2015). Moreover, there is another mention of literature in the curriculum of the first year of *Bachillerato*:

Sigue sin dificultad la línea argumental de historias de ficción y de novelas cortas claramente estructuradas, de lenguaje sencillo y directo, en una variedad estándar de la lengua, y comprende el carácter de los distintos personajes y sus relaciones, cuando unos y otras están descritos claramente y con el suficiente detalle (BOCYL, 2015, pp. 32790-32791).

Therefore, this learning standard is similar to the one in the curricula of the first three years of ESO, but it can be seen that a first mention of novels is made. Additionally, the learning standard related to literature that appears in the curriculum of the second year of *Bachillerato* is much more specific:

Comprende los aspectos principales, detalles relevantes, algunas ideas implícitas y el uso poético de la lengua en textos literarios que presenten una estructura accesible y un lenguaje no muy idiomático, y en los que el desarrollo del tema o de la historia, los personajes centrales y sus relaciones, o el motivo poético, estén claramente señalizados con marcadores lingüísticos fácilmente reconocibles (BOCYL, 2015, p. 32801).

Hence, students of the second year of *Bachillerato* are supposed to be able to read literary texts in English in a more detailed way in order to interpret implicit meanings and the poetic use of language.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, Castilla y León's curriculum of ESO states that literature can be used in the EFL classroom for allowing students to acquire the cross-cutting elements that have been marked by the national curriculum. The national curriculum's cross-cutting themes that are most relevant for this dissertation are reading comprehension, equality between men and women, non-discrimination on the basis of social or personal circumstances, and rejection of sexist behaviors and gender stereotypes (BOE, 2015). Cross-cutting elements are "critical to building a society which treats others with understanding and empathy, whatever their ethnicity, social economic background, disability, or sex, gender or sexuality" (Welsh Government, 2022). Therefore, EFL teachers can make use of literary texts that portray a broad diversity of characters and deal with social issues such as gender-based discrimination or racism in order to bring cross-cutting themes into the EFL classroom. Furthermore, cross-cutting themes related to sexuality and gender are essential because they "help promote equality and equity of sex, gender and sexuality" and they also "help reduce all bullying, including homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and increase safety and well-being for all learners" (Welsh Government, 2022). Hence, the inclusion of literature in the curriculum is

essential not only for the development of students' proficiency in English, but also for approaching themes that are crucial for the personal growth and enrichment of pupils.

2.4. Benefits of Using LGBT-Themed Literature in the Curriculum

As stated previously, one of the cross-cutting themes that teachers can explore in the EFL classroom is the diversity of sexual orientations. The notion of heteronormativity is still predominant in today's society, which makes it difficult or even impossible for people from the LGBTQ+ community to be accepted or respected. Heteronormativity can be defined as the set of views and beliefs "that legitimize and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and 'natural' within society" (Cohen, 2005, p. 24). The fact that heterosexuality is viewed as what is normal and correct results in the perception of other sexualities as anomalous and incorrect (Blackburn & Smith, 2010). Nowadays, people who are not heterosexual are still considered abnormal by a large number of people, and the devastating social consequences that this conception causes directly affect the LGBTQ+ community. The principal aftereffect of heteronormativity is that it "promotes gross civil rights abuses against LGBT individuals" (Blackburn & Smith, 2010, p. 627). One of the reasons why the present society is heteronormative is because there is an absence of representation of people from the LGBTQ+ community in books, movies, etc. This also applies to school curricula and, in particular, to the books that are read in the classroom, since teachers normally tend to prefer classic and canonical works that "are typically written from a white, cisgender male, heterosexual perspective and more often exclude the identities and experiences of many diverse students" (Schuler, 2021, p. 15). Blackburn and Smith (2010) explain how students who only read literary texts that portray heterosexual people are inevitably forced to adopt a heteronormative ideology:

Requiring adolescents to read a text focusing on a heterosexual couple and to identify with those characters as heterosexuals presents only one option, that of an unchangeable binary: You are either Romeo or Juliet, a boy attracted to a girl or a girl attracted to a boy (p. 627).

Therefore, literary texts that illustrate LGBTQ+ themes and characters must be used in the classroom in order to combat heteronormativity.

Nevertheless, a large number of teachers do not feel comfortable bringing queer literature into the classroom because of several reasons. The main fear that teachers have is that they will be criticized by their superiors or by parents who are not supportive of the LGBTQ+ community, which could lead them to lose their jobs (Woods & Harbeck, 1992). In addition,

some teachers consider that “it would not be fair to discuss LGBTQ+ issues or read these texts as it shows support for LGBTQ+ people, which might go against various religious beliefs” (Schuler, 2021, p. 30). Moreover, some pupils, independently of their sexuality, might also reject the use of queer literature in the classroom. Firstly, LGBTQ+ students might believe that, if they publicly show support for queer people, they will be outed as their classmates will presume that they are part of the LGBTQ+ community. Secondly, heterosexual pupils might fear that they will be socially excluded by the group as a consequence of advocating for LGBTQ+ people (Gilligan, 2015). Therefore, scarcely any teachers use queer literary texts at school out of fear.

However, although some teachers refuse to select LGBTQ+ literary texts, literature can be used as a tool for giving visibility to LGBTQ+ individuals and for defying heteronormativity and homophobia. According to Bishop (1990), books can widen the readers’ minds by giving them the opportunity to explore different perceptions, experiences and identities through the text in three different ways. Firstly, “books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange” (Bishop, 1990, p. 9). Thus, heterosexual students who read LGBTQ+ literature are given the possibility to appreciate and comprehend that there are different sexualities and that the notion of what is natural or unnatural is just a social construct. Secondly, books can also be “sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created and recreated by the author” (Bishop, 1990, p. 9). Hence, LGBTQ+ literature offers heterosexual pupils the opportunity of metaphorically experiencing the struggles that people who are not heterosexual face every day. Thirdly, a book can be “a mirror [that] transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience” (Bishop, 1990, p. 9). Therefore, students who are part of the LGBTQ+ community can benefit from reading queer literary texts in the sense that they are able to feel identified with the characters and to relate to the situations they experience. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ literature can help queer pupils understand that there are more people like them and that they are not alone. Schuler (2021) clearly explains the advantages of using queer literary texts in the classroom:

When LGBTQ+ texts are included in a school’s curriculum, acceptance of LGBTQ+ experiences is promoted and the identity of LGBTQ+ people is validated ... In utilizing these texts, LGBTQ+ youths will see themselves reflected in the curriculum and cisgender heterosexual youth will have access to texts that help them develop a more complex understanding of the experiences of others and bridge gaps in their knowledge and/or empathy (pp. 13-14).

It is then clear that inclusive literary texts that represent queer themes or characters must be used at school in order to give visibility to the LGBTQ+ community.

2.5. Breaking Down Gender Stereotypes Through Literature

Another cross-cutting theme that EFL teachers can bring into the classroom through the use of literature is the diversity of gender identities. Gender stereotypes can be understood as the characteristics, attributes and patterns of behavior that are socially assigned to people in terms of their gender (Amurrio et al., 2009). Gender stereotypes are a social construct and they are based on the image of women and men that has been traditionally passed on from generation to generation (Amurrio et al., 2009). Nevertheless, stereotypes become naturalized over time, which means that people forget that they are social constructs and they accept them as absolute truths that establish how men and women are supposed to be (Amurrio et al., 2009). Therefore, gender stereotypes are deeply rooted in society and, as a result, they are also deeply rooted in the minds of people, who unconsciously normalize them (Amurrio et al., 2009). Thus, features such as being sensitive, caring, sweet and weak are socially attributed to women, while men are considered to be affectless, cold-blooded and strong (Amurrio et al., 2009). Moreover, gender stereotypes are dangerous because they lead to discrimination of people who are out of the norm and also to inequalities between men and women (Amurrio et al., 2009). Furthermore, gender stereotypes are normally reproduced by the media, which makes it even more challenging to deconstruct them. Therefore, people need to reconsider what kind of masculine and feminine models society places as models for adolescents in film, television, literature, sports, videogames, fashion, etcetera (Amurrio et al., 2009). Hence, if teachers select books that portray characters that do not measure up to gender stereotypes, literature can be used in the classroom as an instrument to break gender stereotypes down.

Literature is a perfect instrument for shaping teenagers' identity, as it offers them the opportunity of escaping the real world and developing an intimate space where they can explore their inner selves:

No lo olvidemos, el lector no consume pasivamente un texto; se lo apropia, lo interpreta, modifica su sentido, desliza su fantasía, su deseo y sus angustias entre las líneas y los entremezcla con los del autor.

Y es allí, ... en ese trabajo psíquico, donde el lector se construye (Petit, 2001, p. 28).

Thus, literature and other art forms can be highly influential for teenagers as they are in the process of constructing their identity and they can provide them with a better understanding of

themselves (Aparicio, 2016). As a consequence, if teenagers read books or watch movies that reproduce gender stereotypes, the formation of their gender identity might be altered:

La presencia de estereotipos de género en la rutina diaria de chicos y chicas (en revistas, programas de televisión, publicidad, películas, obras literarias, etc.) condiciona la construcción de su identidad de género y puede potenciar la manifestación de creencias y actitudes sexistas (Aparicio, 2016, p. 37).

Hence, it is essential that teachers select literary texts carefully before bringing them into the classroom to ensure that they do not perpetuate gender stereotypes. Young adult literature is key to make gender stereotypes disappear, as this type of literature is one of the first cultural products that children and teenagers consume (Caamaño, 2007). Nonetheless, a large number of editorials still foster gender stereotypes out of fear of experiencing social repercussions (Luengo, 2013). However, teachers can find numerous literary texts that represent characters that are out of the norm, which can help students understand that gender stereotypes are a social construct:

Es fundamental que los chicos y chicas sean conscientes de que [los estereotipos de género] muestran una visión sesgada y limitada de la realidad, ... y que su perpetuación impide la construcción de un mundo más libre y justo. A través de la presencia de nuevas obras literarias en las aulas, ... sería posible plantear una educación a base de modelos más igualitarios que ayuden a los adolescentes a desarrollar su espíritu crítico (Aparicio, 2016, p. 51).

Therefore, using literary texts that defy gender stereotypes in the classroom can be an efficient way of deconstructing students' preconceived ideas of how men and women are supposed to be. This is illustrated by the didactic proposal described in the third section.

3. DIDACTIC PROPOSAL

3.1. Introduction to the Didactic Proposal

This didactic proposal is based on the implementation of *Nimona*, a graphic novel by American author ND Stevenson, in the EFL classroom. The proposal aims at exploiting the potential of literature as a fruitful resource for improving the students' communicative competence and proficiency in the foreign language and for developing cross-cutting themes.

Nimona was published in 2015 and it is a fantasy and science-fiction story that narrates the adventures of two alleged villains, Nimona and Lord Ballister Blackheart, in their fight against the Institution, the corrupt government of the fictitious world where the story takes place. The target audience of the novel corresponds to the age group of 13 to 17, so it is a perfect literary work to be used in Secondary Education. Moreover, the story combines magic, action and humor, so it is motivating and compelling for students at that age. Regarding the use of language, the entirety of the graphic novel is written in dialogue format, which makes its reading simpler for pupils. Furthermore, the images of the comic strips provide a visual context for the dialogue that facilitates the comprehension of what is being read. Additionally, the lexicon and grammar that are used in the novel are, in general, uncomplicated, so these aspects should not pose a problem to students. In any case, if pupils had difficulties in understanding a piece of dialogue, the teacher would always help them in the classroom. In terms of length, the graphic novel is relatively long, since it has more than two hundred pages. Nevertheless, there is not a large number of comic strips per page and the dialogues tend to be short, so its reading does not demand a huge amount of time. Therefore, dividing the reading of the novel into approximately two chapters per week makes it manageable for students in terms of time. Lastly, *Nimona* is an excellent book to be used at school because of its diverse content and characters, which make it highly exploitable when it comes to developing cross-cutting themes.

The main reason why *Nimona* has been selected for this didactic proposal is that it is a graphic novel that includes a large number of inclusive characters. To begin with, the importance of giving visibility to discriminated collectives is one of the cross-cutting themes that will be examined deeply in one of the sessions. Two of the main characters, Ballister and Ambrosius, are homosexual, and their love story is developed throughout the novel. Furthermore, Ballister has a missing arm and that does not stop him from being an outstanding warrior. Additionally, another cross-cutting theme that will be discussed in this didactic proposal is the presence of gender stereotypes in today's society and the ways in which they

can be deconstructed. Nimona, the protagonist of the graphic novel, defies the majority of the gender stereotypes that have been traditionally attributed to women. She is brave and strong and she expresses her identity freely in ways that are socially considered representative of the male gender. Thus, *Nimona* is an excellent literary work for developing cross-cutting themes in the EFL classroom. The graphic novel can be used for giving visibility to the LGBTQ+ community and for promoting values of tolerance and respect for diversity. Moreover, the protagonist of the story can serve as a model for students to understand that gender conventions are a social construct and that they can express their gender identity in the ways they want.

3.2. Context and Temporalization

The target group for which this didactic proposal has been designed is the fourth year of *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* (4º ESO). This didactic proposal can be implemented in any public school in Castilla y León. Nevertheless, the socio-economic status of the students must be taken into consideration before applying this proposal to a particular school because the purchasing of the graphic novels could pose a problem to them. Additionally, a large number of activities require pupils to have mobile phones. Moreover, the resources that the school has is another relevant aspect to be considered before the implementation of this didactic proposal, since the teacher will need a computer, a projector, a screen and Internet connection for all of the sessions.

In terms of temporalization, the entirety of this didactic proposal will take place during the same semester. The proposal is divided into seven sessions and there will be one session per week, so the total duration of the proposal will be of seven weeks. The reason why there will be one session per week is that students will need time between sessions in order to read the following chapters of the graphic novel. According to *Anexo II: Organización de materias y distribución del horario semanal* established in *ORDEN EDU/362/2015*, students in 4º ESO have three teaching hours per week for the subject *Primera lengua extranjera*. Taking this into account, one of the three weekly teaching hours will be dedicated to work on the graphic novel. In addition, each session will last 50 minutes, which is the average lesson duration in public schools in Castilla y León. Lastly, this didactic proposal can be implemented in any semester, although its relatively long duration must be taken into consideration so that it does not interfere with the exams.

3.3. Objectives of the Proposal

This didactic proposal aims at several objectives that are related to the improvement of the students' proficiency in the foreign language, the promotion of reading and the education in values such as equality, tolerance and respect for diversity. The principal objectives of this didactic proposal are the following:

- a) To enhance the students' proficiency in the foreign language through the completion of tasks that develop the four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
- b) To develop the pupils' communicative competence through activities that engage students in peer interaction and authentic communication.
- c) To engage students in the reading of an authentic literary text (i.e. *Nimona*) in the second language.
- d) To foster reading for pleasure and the habit of reading among pupils.
- e) To promote tolerance towards diversity and to emphasize the importance of giving visibility to discriminated collectives as a means of normalization.
- f) To deconstruct gender stereotypes and to advocate freedom to express gender in non-normative ways.
- g) To cultivate the students' creativity through tasks that encourage imaginative and inventive abilities.

Furthermore, the planning of this didactic proposal has been carried out taking into consideration the objectives of *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* established in the *Artículo 11* of the *Real Decreto 1105/2014, de 26 de diciembre, por el que se establece el currículo básico de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y del Bachillerato*. The objectives that apply to this proposal are the following¹:

- a) To assume their duties in a responsible way, to know and exercise their rights in terms of respect for others, to practice tolerance, cooperation and solidarity between people and groups, to train themselves to use dialogue, strengthening human rights and equality of treatment and opportunity between men and women as common values of a plural society, and to prepare for the exercise of democratic citizenship.
- b) To develop and consolidate habits of discipline, study and individual and group work as a necessary condition for the efficient completion of learning tasks and as a means of personal growth.

¹ The following objectives are formulated in Spanish in the *Real Decreto 1105/2014*, but they have been translated into English as a matter of consistency with the rest of the proposal.

- c) To reject discrimination of people on the basis of sex or any other personal or social condition or circumstance. To reject stereotypes that entail discrimination between men and women.
- d) To strengthen their affective capacities in all areas of personality and their relationships with others, as well as to reject violence, prejudices of any kind, sexist behaviors, and to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way.
- g) To develop participation, critical thinking, personal initiative and the ability of learning to learn, planning, making decisions and assuming responsibilities.
- i) To comprehend and express themselves appropriately in one or more foreign languages.
- k) To know and value the human dimension of sexuality in all its diversity.
- l) To appreciate artistic creation and to comprehend the language of the different artistic manifestations, making use of diverse means of expression and representation.

3.4. Legal Framework and Curricular Elements

This didactic proposal has been designed following the curriculum for the fourth year of *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* established in *ORDEN EDU/362/2015, de 4 de mayo, por la que se establece el currículo y se regula la implantación, evaluación y desarrollo de la educación secundaria obligatoria en la Comunidad de Castilla y León*. Therefore, this didactic proposal is based on the curricular elements determined by LOMCE: contents, evaluation criteria and learning standards. The following table represents the specific curricular elements on the basis of which the planification of this didactic proposal has been conducted²:

Contents	Evaluation criteria	Learning standards
Block 1. Comprehension of oral texts		
1. Comprehension strategies: 1.3. Distinction of types of comprehension (general meaning, essential information, main points, relevant details).	1. Identify the general meaning, the essential information, the main points and the most relevant details of oral texts of short or medium length, in a formal, informal or neutral register, that	1. Understands the main points and relevant details of messages that contain instructions, indications or other type of information.

² The following curricular elements are presented in Spanish in *ORDEN EDU/362/2015*, but they have been translated into English as a matter of consistency with the rest of the proposal.

<p>1.4. Formulation of hypotheses about content and context.</p> <p>1.6. Reformulation of hypotheses through the comprehension of new elements.</p> <p>2. Sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects: social conventions, standards of courtesy and registers; customs, values, beliefs and attitudes; non-verbal language.</p> <p>3. Communicative functions:</p> <p>3.2. Description of physical and abstract qualities of people.</p> <p>3.3. Narration of past events, present situations and expression of future events.</p> <p>3.4. Petition and offering of information, opinions and points of view.</p> <p>3.8. Formulation of suggestions, desires, conditions and hypotheses.</p> <p>3.9. Make predictions and express intentions. Express certainty and probability.</p>	<p>deal with concrete or abstract aspects of general themes.</p> <p>2. Know and apply adequate strategies for the comprehension of the general meaning, the essential information, the main points and ideas or the relevant details of the text.</p> <p>3. Know and use for the comprehension of the text sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects related to interpersonal relationships and social conventions.</p>	<p>4. Comprehends, in an informal conversation in which the student participates, explanations or justifications of points of view and opinions about diverse topics, as well as the formulation of hypotheses, the expression of feelings and the description of abstract themes.</p> <p>6. Distinguishes, with visual support, the main ideas and relevant information given in oral presentations.</p>
<p>Block 2. Production of oral texts: Expression and interaction</p>		
<p>1. Production strategies:</p> <p>1.1. Planification:</p> <p>1.1.1. Conceive the message with clarity, distinguishing the main ideas and the basic structure.</p> <p>1.1.2. Adequate the text to the recipient, context and canal, applying the appropriate register and discourse structure for each case.</p> <p>1.2. Execution:</p>	<p>1. Produce written texts of short or medium length, in a formal, informal or neutral register, in which information, ideas and opinions are exchanged, actions and plans are justified and hypotheses are formulated.</p> <p>3. Incorporate to the production of the oral text the acquired sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge related to interpersonal relationships and social</p>	<p>1. Makes short presentations, well-structured, about concrete aspects of academic topics, organizing the basic information in a coherent way and explaining the main ideas briefly and with clarity.</p> <p>3. Participates adequately in face to face informal conversations about daily or less common themes, in which information is exchanged and opinions and</p>

<p>1.2.1. Express the message with clarity, coherence and an adequate structure, and adjusting it to the models and formulae of the type of text.</p> <p>2. Sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects: social conventions, standards of courtesy and registers; customs, values, beliefs and attitudes; non-verbal language.</p> <p>3. Communicative functions:</p> <p>3.2. Description of physical and abstract qualities of people.</p> <p>3.3. Narration of past events, present situations and expression of future events.</p> <p>3.4. Petition and offering of information, opinions and points of view.</p> <p>3.8. Formulation of suggestions, desires, conditions and hypotheses.</p> <p>3.9. Make predictions and express intentions. Express certainty and probability.</p>	<p>conventions, selecting and delivering the pertinent information, adjusting the expression to the recipient, the communicative purpose and the topic, and expressing opinions and points of view with the necessary courtesy.</p> <p>4. Conduct the functions required by the communicative purpose, making use of common discursive patterns to initiate and conclude the text appropriately, organize the information in a clear way, expand it with examples or summarize it.</p> <p>9. Interact in a simple but effective way in exchanges, making use of common formulae or indications to take or give the floor.</p>	<p>points of view are expressed and justified briefly; narrates and describes in a coherent way events that happened in the past and real or invented future plans; formulates hypotheses; makes suggestions; expresses and justifies feelings, and describes concrete and abstract aspects of topics such as music, film, literature or topical subjects.</p>
<p>Block 3. Comprehension of written texts</p>		
<p>1. Comprehension strategies:</p> <p>1.3. Distinction of types of comprehension (general meaning, essential information, main points, relevant details).</p> <p>1.4. Formulation of hypotheses about content and context.</p> <p>1.6. Reformulation of hypotheses through the comprehension of new elements.</p> <p>2. Sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects: social</p>	<p>1. Identify the essential information, the most relevant points and the important details in texts, in printed format, well-structured, written in a formal, informal or neutral register, that deal with daily or less common topics, and that contain structures and lexicon of common use.</p> <p>2. Know and apply adequate strategies for the comprehension of the general meaning, the</p>	<p>5. Locates easily specific information of a precise nature in journalistic texts, well-structured and of a medium length.</p> <p>7. Comprehends the general aspects and the most relevant details of fiction texts and contemporary literary texts, well-structured and in a standardized variant of the language, in which the argument is lineal and can be followed without difficulties, and</p>

<p>conventions, standards of courtesy and registers; customs, values, beliefs and attitudes; non-verbal language.</p> <p>3. Communicative functions:</p> <p>3.2. Description of physical and abstract qualities of people.</p> <p>3.3. Narration of past events, present situations and expression of future events.</p>	<p>essential information, the main points and ideas or the relevant details of the text.</p> <p>3. Know and use for the comprehension of the text sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects related to interpersonal relationships and social conventions, as well as the general cultural aspects that allow for the comprehension of information and ideas that are present in the text.</p> <p>7. Recognize the main conventions of format and its associated meanings.</p>	<p>the characters and their relationships are described in a clear and simple way.</p>
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Block 4. Production of written texts: Expression and interaction

<p>1. Production strategies:</p> <p>1.1. Planification:</p> <p>1.1.1. Mobilize and coordinate the general communicative competences in order to conduct the task efficiently.</p> <p>1.2. Execution:</p> <p>1.2.1. Express the message with clarity, adjusting it to the models and formulae of the type of text.</p> <p>2. Sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects: social conventions, standards of courtesy and registers; customs, values, beliefs and attitudes; non-verbal language.</p> <p>3. Communicative functions:</p> <p>3.2. Description of physical and abstract qualities of people.</p> <p>3.3. Narration of past events, present situations and expression of future events.</p>	<p>1. Write, in paper, texts of short or medium length, coherent and with a clear structure, about issues of personal interest, or daily or less common topics, in a formal, informal or neutral register, making an adequate use of cohesion resources, orthographic conventions and common punctuation marks, and showing a reasonable control of expressions, structures and lexicon of common use.</p> <p>3. Incorporate to the production of the oral text the acquired sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge related to interpersonal relationships and social conventions, selecting and delivering the pertinent information, adjusting the expression to the recipient, the communicative purpose and the</p>	<p>5. Writes, in a conventional format, simple and brief reports describing situations, people, objects and places; narrating events in a clear and lineal sequence, and explaining simply the reasons for certain actions.</p>
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<p>3.8. Formulation of suggestions, desires, conditions and hypotheses.</p> <p>3.9. Make predictions and express intentions. Express certainty and probability.</p> <p>5. Written lexicon of common use (production), related to personal identification; home and environment; and family and friends.</p>	<p>topic, and expressing opinions and points of view with the necessary courtesy.</p> <p>7. Make use of the most frequent conventions of orthography, punctuation and format with reasonable correctness so that the message is comprehensible.</p>	
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3.5. Key Competences

This didactic proposal gives students the opportunity to develop the majority of the key competences established in the *Artículo 2.2.* of the *Real Decreto 1105/2014, de 26 de diciembre, por el que se establece el currículo básico de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y del Bachillerato*. Regarding the literacy and multilingual competences, the main objective of this didactic proposal is to develop the communicative competence of the students in the foreign language. Students will receive input in the second language at all times and they will need to make a practical use of the foreign language for the completion of all the activities. Moreover, the four linguistic skills play a major role in the development of the sessions, so pupils will be able to master their listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities in the L2.

In relation to the digital competence, students will need to make use of ICTs for a large number of tasks. Firstly, pupils will play two digital games: Kahoot and Jeopardy. Secondly, students will conduct two activities that require the use of online brainstorming tools: padlet.com and mentimeter.com. Finally, pupils will make use of authentic online resources in the foreign language. Therefore, students will be shown that ICTs can be a useful instrument for learning. Furthermore, pupils will develop the personal, social and learning to learn competence, since they will be working in pairs and groups for the majority of the tasks. Thus, they will be able to learn how to work in a collaborative way. In addition, this didactic proposal requires students to become active learners, since the role of the teacher will be that of a facilitator and a guide and students will be the ones who conduct the tasks by themselves. Thus, students will also learn how to be autonomous and independent.

Additionally, the citizenship competence will also be developed during this didactic proposal. Since *Nimona* portrays a large number of inclusive characters, pupils will conduct numerous activities that deal with inclusiveness and gender representation. Therefore, students will be given the chance to learn values that promote human rights, equality and the fight against any kind of discrimination. Lastly, this didactic proposal allows students to develop the cultural awareness and expression competence. Pupils will read an authentic literary work in the foreign language, which will hopefully provide them with a deeper appreciation for literature. Moreover, this didactic proposal will show students that, despite the prejudice that exists towards graphic novels, they are legitimate literary works.

3.6. Methodology

This didactic proposal has been designed following two different methodological approaches: the Communicative Approach and the Task-Based Approach. The Communicative Approach is characterized by a “functional view of language” and its main goal “is to improve students’ communicative competence” (Demirezen, 2011, pp. 57, 62). Correspondingly, all the activities of this didactic proposal have been created with the purpose of providing pupils with the opportunity of making a practical use of the foreign language by engaging in authentic communication. Thus, the principal aim of this didactic proposal is to develop the students’ communicative competence. Furthermore, the proposal is consistent with the fundamental principles of the Communicative Approach, as stated by Demirezen (2011). Firstly, students will experience a full linguistic immersion because they are meant to use the second language for the completion of all of the tasks. Secondly, speaking plays an essential role throughout the whole didactic proposal, since numerous activities consist of group discussions. In addition, the majority of the tasks are meant to be conducted in pairs or small groups, which require students to communicate efficiently in order to complete the activities in a collaborative way. Finally, the graphic novel and all the materials and resources that will be used during the sessions are authentic and provide students with samples of real-life language.

Regarding the Task-Based Approach, it is a “teaching approach employing tasks as its main pedagogical tools to structure language teaching” (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011, p. 49). In respect of tasks, they can be defined as activities that have a specific objective and require the use of communicative language in order to be completed (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). This didactic proposal is composed of a sequence of tasks that are interconnected and enabling, since they allow students to acquire the indispensable insight and

competence that are required for conducting a final task. Moreover, Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011) define the Task-Based Approach as student-centered. In this didactic proposal, pupils play a central role in the learning process, as their endeavor is to participate and to accomplish the tasks. On the other hand, the teacher is a facilitator and a mediator who guides students during the realization of the activities. The principal function of the teacher is to provide students with the necessary input and to help them to complete the tasks only if they request it.

Additionally, the decision to group students in pairs and small groups for the completion of the majority of the tasks has been taken based on Lev Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) theory. When applied in an L2 learning context, ZPD consists of "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production, and the level of potential development as determined through language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer" (Fani & Ghaemi, 2011, p. 1551). Therefore, Vygotsky's theory states that the level of competence that pupils can acquire is exceedingly higher if they interact with their classmates and work collaboratively with them during the activities. Moreover, this didactic proposal has been planned taking into consideration two of the five hypotheses from Stephen Krashen's Natural Approach. The first one is the "Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis," which claims that language acquisition is "the 'natural' way to develop linguistic ability, and is a subconscious process," while language learning is "'knowing about' language, or 'formal knowledge' of a language" (Krashen & Terrell, 1998, p. 26). As stated previously, the focus of this didactic proposal is on making use of the foreign language for real communication rather than on learning formal aspects of the foreign language. Thus, it is expected that students will unconsciously acquire the second language by receiving constant input in the L2 and by having to make a practical use of the L2. The second hypothesis is the "Affective Filter Hypothesis," which affirms that "performers with optimal attitudes have a lower affective filter" and a lower affective filter encourages pupils "to try to get more input, to interact with speakers of the target language with confidence, and also to be more receptive to the input they get" (Krashen & Terrell, 1998, p. 38). With respect to this didactic proposal, the students' affective filter will be lowered in several ways. Firstly, when students are asked to conduct tasks in pairs or small groups, they will have the freedom to choose the classmates they want to work with. Therefore, if pupils group with their friends, they will feel more comfortable when they have to communicate in the foreign language. Secondly, all the materials that will be used during the sessions are authentic, which enhances students' motivation and makes them more willing to receive input in the second language.

3.7. Sessions and Activities

As stated previously, this didactic proposal is divided into seven sessions. The first three sessions focus on the content of the book and the formal aspects of the graphic novel format. Sessions 4 and 5 deal with the analysis of the main characters, with an emphasis on inclusiveness and gender representation. Finally, sessions 6 and 7 allow students to conduct a final task, which will be completed in pairs: the creation and consequent oral presentation of a comic strip in which they will represent an alternative ending for the graphic novel including a new inclusive character invented by them. The sessions and activities will be described in detail below, but, before that, a table that represents the proposal as a whole is provided:

SESSION 1	
Activity 1	Presentation of the novel and explanation of the final task.
Activity 2	What is the graphic novel about?
Activity 3	Time capsule.
Activity 4	Reading begins.
Activity 5	Commentary on chapters 1 to 3.
SESSION 2	
Activity 1	Debate on chapters 4 and 5.
Activity 2	Nimona's backstory jigsaw.
Activity 3	Create your own dialogue for a comic strip.
Activity 4	Reading of chapter 6 begins.
SESSION 3	
Activity 1	Debate on chapters 6 and 7.
Activity 2	Kahoot!
Activity 3	Role playing.
Activity 4	Reading of chapter 8 begins.
SESSION 4	
Activity 1	Debate on chapters 8 and 9.
Activity 2	What are gender stereotypes?
Activity 3	Word cloud (female and male gender stereotypes).
Activity 4	Gender representation in <i>Nimona</i> .
Activity 5	Reading of chapter 10 begins.
SESSION 5	
Activity 1	Debate on chapter 10.
Activity 2	Describing the characters (Padlet brainstorming).
Activity 3	Debate on inclusive characters in film, television and literature.

Activity 4	Designing an inclusive character for the novel.
Activity 5	Reading of chapter 11 begins.
SESSION 6	
Activity 1	Jeopardy.
Activity 2	Creation of the comic strips.
SESSION 7	
Activity 1	Opening of the time capsules.
Activity 2	Presentation of the comic strips.
Activity 3	Final voting.

SESSION 1 (50 minutes)

In this session, students will conduct several pre-reading activities in which they will make predictions about the graphic novel. Moreover, students will have some time to start reading *Nimona* in class. Therefore, the purpose of this session is for students to formulate and reformulate hypotheses on the graphic novel.

Activity 1 (10 minutes): Presentation of the novel and explanation of the final task

Aim: To become familiar with the graphic novel and understand the objective of the final task and its specific requirements.

Classroom management: Whole class.

Type: Introductory activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona*, a blackboard and chalk will be needed.

Description: Students will be asked to take out their hard copies of *Nimona* and they will be told that they will be reading it at home and that they will be working with it in the classroom over the next few weeks. Afterwards, the teacher will tell pupils that they will have to conduct a final task related to the graphic novel. They will be explained that, in pairs, they will have to create an alternative ending for the novel and that, to do so, they will have to design the comic strips in which their ending is represented, including drawings and dialogue. Moreover, the teacher will tell students that they will have to invent a new character for the novel that they will have to include in their alternative ending. Pupils will also be told that they will have time to start creating their comic strips in the classroom. Finally, students will be given some minutes so that they can form the pairs for the final task.

*Linguistic input*³: Hello guys! How are you feeling today? Did you remember to bring your copies of *Nimona*, the book that you were told to buy? Awesome! Over the next few weeks, you will be reading the novel at home and, every Wednesday, we will devote the English class to do activities related to the book. Furthermore, for the last session, which will take place in six weeks, you will be asked to complete a final task. By then, you will have already finished reading the novel, so you will be asked to create an alternative ending for the story. You will work in pairs and you will have to create the comic strips for the ending that you invent. Do you know what comic strips are? Comic strips are *viñetas*. So, yeah, you will have to design the drawings that represent your ending and also the dialogue for the characters. Moreover, you will have to include a new character that you will invent, but you will do that at school in a few weeks so do not worry about that for now. Additionally, for the last session, you will orally present your comic strips in front of the class. Okay, are there any doubts? Have you understood what you have to do? Great. Now, I am going to write on the blackboard the date on which you will have to hand your comic strips and the date on which you will present them in front of the class. Do not forget to write the dates down on your datebooks. Great, so now I will give you two minutes to form the pairs for the final task. When you finish, write your names on this sheet so that I have the final list of pairs. Let's go!

Activity 2 (5 minutes): What is the graphic novel about?

Aim: To make assumptions about the topic and genre of the graphic novel by analyzing its cover.

Classroom management: Whole class.

Type: Warm-up activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen, hard copies of *Nimona*, a blackboard and chalk will be needed.

Description: The teacher will ask students to look at the cover of the graphic novel and to try to guess what the novel is about. The teacher will show the cover on the screen so that students can see it better. Pupils will be asked to share their assumptions and the teacher will write them on the blackboard to create a cloud of ideas. Finally, the teacher will tell students the suppositions that are correct and the ones that are not.

³ Samples of linguistic input are provided in Activities 1 and 2 of Session 1, but it will not be included in the description of the rest of the activities.

Linguistic input: Okay, let's move on! For this activity, I want you to look at the cover of the novel and I want you to analyze it. I will give you one minute to reflect on the cover and to try to guess what the novel is about considering what you see. Okay, time is up! What do you think the novel is about? I am going to write your ideas on the blackboard. Well done, guys! This is indeed a fantasy novel. Moreover, as you said, it seems to be set in the Middle Ages because you can see two medieval warriors, right? And, also, the girl on the cover has dragon wings and a tail so, you are right, magic plays an important role in the story. Very good! Are you excited to start reading the book?

Activity 3 (15 minutes): Time capsule

Aim: To make predictions about events that might have happened earlier and events that might happen later in the story.

Classroom management: Students will work in pairs, following the pairs formed for the final task.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* and a box will be needed.

Description: A student will be asked to choose a random number from 40 to 60. The number that the pupil selects will be the number of a page from the graphic novel that students will have to read. They will be asked to read it and, when they finish, they will be asked to get together in pairs and write down in a piece of paper two events that might have happened in the story before that page and two events that might eventually happen after that page. When they finish, the teacher will collect the pieces of paper in a box and students will be told that it is a time capsule that will be opened in the last session to see if some of their predictions actually happened.

Activity 4 (15 minutes): Reading begins

Aim: To commence reading the graphic novel and comprehend general and specific aspects related to the characters and the plot.

Classroom management: Students will work individually.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Description: Students will be asked to read chapters 1 to 3 of the graphic novel individually and in silence. The teacher will be moving around the classroom in order to solve doubts that students might have, especially in relation to the meaning of some words.

Activity 5 (5 minutes): Commentary on chapters 1 to 3

Aim: To assimilate what they have read and give their own personal interpretation of it.

Classroom management: Whole class.

Type: Closure activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Description: Students will be asked to orally describe the main characters and the location where the plot takes place and also to provide a brief explanation of the main events that happen in chapters 1 to 3 of the graphic novel.

SESSION 2 (50 minutes)

For this session, pupils must have read chapters 4 and 5 of the graphic novel and they will conduct a series of while-reading activities. The purpose of this session is for students to become familiar with the formal aspects of the graphic novel format, with an emphasis on dialogue, expression through visual elements and the way in which comic strips are sequenced.

Activity 1 (5 minutes): Debate on chapters 4 and 5

Aim: To assimilate what they have read and give their own personal interpretation of it.

Classroom management: Students will work in small groups of four.

Type: Warm-up / routine activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen and hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Discussion questions:

- Do you think Nimona was right when she told Ballister that the people who died in the explosion deserved it because they worked for the Institution?
- Do you believe Nimona's backstory about how she got her shapeshifting abilities? Can you find any flaws in the story?
- Would you like to have Nimona's shapeshifting magical powers? Why?

- What do you think the Institution is planning on doing with the jaderoot?

Description: Students will be shown some questions about chapters 4 and 5 of the graphic novel on the screen and they will be asked to get together in groups of four so that they can ask the questions to each other and discuss what they have read. Afterwards, the teacher will ask each group to share their opinions and thoughts with the rest of the class.

Activity 2 (20 minutes): Nimona's backstory jigsaw

Aim: To comprehend the meaning of some decontextualized comic strips that represent Nimona's backstory in order to collaboratively put them in the right order following a logical structure.

Classroom management: Students will work in groups of eight.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: Printed sets of comic strips that represent Nimona's backstory will be needed (see Appendix 1).

Description: Students will be asked to get together in groups of eight. Each group member will be given a set of decontextualized comic strips that represent different parts of Nimona's backstory. They will be asked to individually read them and understand what is represented in them. Afterwards, the teacher will tell pupils to put the comic strips down because they are not allowed to look at them anymore. Students will then be asked to tell the other members of their groups what was depicted in their comic strips. When they finish, the teacher will ask pupils to put the comic strips in the right order following a logical structure.

Activity 3 (20 minutes): Create your own dialogue for a comic strip

Aim: To generate a dialogue for a comic strip by making an interpretation of the images.

Classroom management: Students will work in pairs, following the pairs formed for the final task.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: Printed comic strips taken from chapter 7 in which the original dialogue has been erased will be needed (see Appendix 2).

Description: Students will be asked to get together in pairs. Each pair will be given a printed copy of a comic strip taken from chapter 7 of the graphic novel, which students will not have read yet, in which the original dialogue has been erased. They will be asked to complete the

speech bubbles by producing their own dialogue based on the interpretation they make of the images. Afterwards, the teacher will ask some pairs to orally reproduce the dialogue that they have created.

Activity 4 (5 minutes): Reading of chapter 6 begins

Aim: To commence reading chapter 6 of the graphic novel and comprehend general and specific aspects related to the characters and the plot.

Classroom management: Students will work individually.

Type: Closure / routine activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Description: Students will be given the last five minutes of the session to start reading chapter 6 of the graphic novel so that they have to read less at home.

SESSION 3 (50 minutes)

For this session, students must have read chapters 6 and 7 of the graphic novel and they will complete several while-reading tasks. Pupils will play a Kahoot quiz in order to ascertain whether they have understood everything they have read so far. In addition, pupils will do a role play in which they will perform a scene from the graphic novel. Therefore, the objective of this session is for students to consolidate the seven chapters of the graphic novel that they have already read.

Activity 1 (5 minutes): Debate on chapters 6 and 7

Aim: To assimilate what they have read and give their own personal interpretation of it.

Classroom management: Students will work in small groups of four.

Type: Warm-up / routine activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen and hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Discussion questions:

- Do you think Ballister's plan to poison apples was a good strategy? Would you have acted differently?
- Do you think Ambrosius is an actual villain? Why?
- What do you think about the relationship between Ballister and Ambrosius?

- Why do you think Ambrosius decided to tell Ballister about the Institution's plan to kill Nimona?

Description: Students will be shown some questions about chapters 6 and 7 of the graphic novel on the screen and they will be asked to get together in groups of four so that they can ask the questions to each other and discuss what they have read. Afterwards, the teacher will ask each group to share their opinions and thoughts with the rest of the class.

Activity 2 (10 minutes): Kahoot!

Aim: To consolidate what they have read so far and recall specific details of the story.

Classroom management: Students will work individually.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen and Internet access will be needed. Moreover, students will need to use their mobile phones.

Kahoot game: <https://create.kahoot.it/share/nimona-chapters-1-7/e5ab57e1-6fe8-41f3-8c6b-7b26457793e5>

Description: Students will be asked to take out their mobile phones and go to kahoot.it. They will play a quiz in which they will answer questions about chapters 1 to 7 of the graphic novel.

Activity 3 (30 minutes): Role playing

Aim: To orally produce an improvised dialogue that represents a scene from the graphic novel.

Classroom management: Students will work in small groups of four.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Description: Students will be asked to get together in groups of four. They will be asked to choose a scene from the graphic novel that they will have to represent by doing an improvised role play. They will be given 10 minutes to reread the scene they have selected, to assign roles to themselves and to practice their improvisation skills. Afterwards, each group will represent the scene they have chosen in front of the class.

Activity 4 (5 minutes): Reading of chapter 8 begins

Aim: To commence reading chapter 8 of the graphic novel and comprehend general and specific aspects related to the characters and the plot.

Classroom management: Students will work individually.

Type: Closure / routine activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Description: Students will be given the last five minutes of the session to start reading chapter 8 of the graphic novel so that they have to read less at home.

SESSION 4 (50 minutes)

For this session, pupils must have read chapters 8 and 9 of the graphic novel and they will accomplish a series of while-reading activities. This session focuses on gender representation and its purpose is for students to comprehend what gender stereotypes are and to analyze the way in which gender is depicted in *Nimona*.

Activity 1 (5 minutes): Debate on chapters 8 and 9

Aim: To assimilate what they have read and give their own personal interpretation of it.

Classroom management: Students will work in small groups of four.

Type: Warm-up / routine activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen and hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Discussion questions:

- Why do you think Nimona got so upset when Ballister offered to help her?
- Ballister mentioned that Nimona is hiding something that happened to her in the past from him. Do you agree? If so, what do you think that happened to her?
- The Director of the Institution said that they are not going to fight Nimona anymore, so what do you think the Institution is planning to do with her?

Description: Students will be shown some questions about chapters 8 and 9 of the graphic novel on the screen and they will be asked to get together in groups of four so that they can ask the questions to each other and discuss what they have read. Afterwards, the teacher will ask each group to share their opinions and thoughts with the rest of the class.

Activity 2 (15 minutes): What are gender stereotypes?

Aim: To comprehend the principal concepts explained in a video about gender stereotypes and reflect on the subject.

Classroom management: Students will work in small groups of four.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen and Internet access will be needed. Video about gender stereotypes: <https://youtu.be/Ulh0DnFUGsk>

Questions about the video:

- What are gender stereotypes?
- How did gender stereotypes originate?
- In what ways do gender stereotypes affect people's lives?
- Would you say that some of your personality traits are conditioned by gender stereotypes?

Description: Students will be shown a video about gender stereotypes and, in groups of four, they will be asked to orally discuss a set of questions about the video. Afterwards, each group will be asked to share their answers with the rest of the class.

Activity 3 (10 minutes): Word cloud (female and male gender stereotypes)

Aim: To generate lexicon related to personality traits that are generally attributed to a particular gender.

Classroom management: Students will work individually.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen and Internet access will be needed. Moreover, students will need to use their mobile phones.

Word cloud generator: <https://www.menti.com/npxrg719vs>

Description: Students will be asked to take their mobile phones out and go to menti.com. They will be asked to enter words related to personality traits that are conditioned by male and female gender stereotypes in order to create two word clouds, one for each gender. Afterwards, they will comment on the words that they selected.

Activity 4 (15 minutes): Gender representation in *Nimona*

Aim: To write a short text reflecting on the way in which gender is represented in the graphic novel.

Classroom management: Students will work individually.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* and printed copies of an adapted passage taken from an ND Stevenson's interview will be needed (see Appendix 3).

Description: Students will be asked to read a short passage taken from an interview in which ND Stevenson is asked about the representation of gender in *Nimona*. Afterwards, pupils will be asked to write a short essay (70 words) in which they will reflect on the portrayal of gender in the graphic novel. The essays will be handed to the teacher.

Activity 5 (5 minutes): Reading of chapter 10 begins

Aim: To start reading chapter 10 of the graphic novel and comprehend general and specific aspects related to the characters and the plot.

Classroom management: Students will work individually.

Type: Closure / routine activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Description: Students will be given the last five minutes of the session to start reading chapter 10 of the graphic novel so that they have to read less at home.

SESSION 5 (50 minutes)

For this session, students must have read chapter 10 of the graphic novel and they will conduct several while-reading tasks. This session focuses on inclusiveness. Pupils will analyze the main characters of the book to determine whether they are inclusive. Moreover, students will be given time to create their own inclusive character for the graphic novel, which they will have to include in their alternative endings.

Activity 1 (5 minutes): Debate on chapter 10

Aim: To assimilate what they have read and give their own personal interpretation of it.

Classroom management: Students will work in small groups of four.

Type: Warm-up / routine activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen and hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Discussion questions:

- How do you think Nimona got her shapeshifting magical powers?
- Do you think Nimona's powers are somehow related to the beast from the legend of Gloreth?
- Did you believe Ambrosius when he told Ballister that he shot him by accident in the joust? Do you think he is truly sorry about it?
- Do you think Ballister's plan to use Dr. Blitzmeyer's device for stopping Nimona from destroying the city will work?

Description: Students will be shown some questions about chapter 10 of the graphic novel on the screen and they will be asked to get together in groups of four so that they can ask the questions to each other and discuss what they have read. Afterwards, the teacher will ask each group to share their opinions and thoughts with the rest of the class.

Activity 2 (10 minutes): Describing the characters (Padlet brainstorming)

Aim: To generate lexicon related to the personality and the physical traits of the characters of the graphic novel.

Classroom management: Students will work individually.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona*, a computer, a projector, a screen and Internet access will be needed. Moreover, students will need to use their mobile phones. Padlet: https://padlet.com/edu_navy/age3vqhb6hwnc732

Description: Students will be asked to take out their mobile phones and go to padlet.com. They will be asked to enter words that represent personality and physical traits of the main characters of the graphic novel. Afterwards, they will debate on the words that have appeared.

Activity 3 (10 minutes): Debate on inclusive characters in film, television and literature

Aim: To orally express their personal opinions on inclusiveness in film, television and literature.

Classroom management: Students will work in small groups of four.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector and a screen will be needed.

Discussion questions:

- Would you say that the films, TV shows and books that you normally watch and read are inclusive?
- If so, what kind of inclusive characters are the most common ones?
- Think of a specific film, TV show or book that portray an inclusive character.
- Do you think that the representation of inclusive characters in entertainment media is important? Why?

Description: Students will be explained what the term “inclusiveness” mean. Then, pupils will be shown some questions about the representation of inclusive characters in the entertainment media on the screen and they will be asked to get together in groups of four so that they can ask the questions to each other and debate on the subject. Afterwards, the teacher will ask each group to share their opinions and thoughts with the rest of the class.

Activity 4 (20 minutes): Designing an inclusive character for the novel

Aim: To write a short text in which they describe an invented character for the graphic novel that presents inclusive features.

Classroom management: Students will work in pairs, following the pairs formed for the final task.

Type: Reinforcement activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector and a screen will be needed.

List of possible inclusive features:

- Body type.
- Facial features.
- Ethnicity.
- Sexual orientation.
- Gender identity.
- Disabilities.

Description: Students will be asked to get together in pairs. They will be asked to design a new character for the graphic novel that they will have to include in the alternative ending that they will create for the final task. Moreover, students will be explained that the characters that they

will invent have to be inclusive. The teacher will provide them with a list of characteristics that they can consider when imagining their characters. Furthermore, pupils will be asked to write a short text (100 words) in which they describe their characters. Each pair will also have to create a drawing of their character. When the students finish, they will be given the opportunity to present their characters in front of the class.

Activity 5 (5 minutes): Reading of chapter 11 begins

Aim: To commence reading chapter 11 of the graphic novel and comprehend general and specific aspects related to the characters and the plot.

Classroom management: Students will work individually.

Type: Closure / routine activity.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Description: Students will be given the last five minutes of the session to start reading chapter 11 of the graphic novel so that they have to read less at home.

SESSION 6 (50 minutes)

For this session, students must have read chapter 11 and the Epilogue of the graphic novel and they will complete some post-reading activities. First, pupils will participate in a Jeopardy competition in which they will test their understanding of the book. Second, students will be given time to start conducting the final task in the classroom. Thus, the objective of this session is for students to deepen their comprehension of the entire graphic novel and also to start working on the final task.

Activity 1 (10 minutes): Jeopardy

Aim: To consolidate what they have read and recall specific details of the story.

Classroom management: Students will work in groups of seven.

Type: Warm-up activity.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen and Internet access will be needed. Jeopardy game: <https://jeopardylabs.com/play/nimona-5>

Description: Students will be asked to get together in groups of seven and they will be told that they will play a Jeopardy game. The teacher will explain to pupils how the game works: there

is a panel divided into different categories, and each category is divided into several cells that represent different amounts of money/points. In each round, each group will select one of the cells, which contains a question about the graphic novel, and if they give the right answer to the question, they will get the amount of points that the cell is worth. If they give the wrong answer, the next group will have the opportunity to answer the question and get the points. Finally, the group that has more points wins the game.

Activity 2 (40 minutes): Creation of the comic strips

Aim: To create a comic strip in which an alternative ending for the graphic novel is portrayed and the character they invented in the previous session appears.

Classroom management: Students will work in pairs, following the pairs formed for the final task.

Type: Final task.

Resources: Hard copies of *Nimona* will be needed.

Description: Students will be asked to start creating the comic strips for the alternative endings they have to invent. The teacher will tell them that their comic strips must occupy two sides of a sheet. Moreover, pupils will be suggested to follow these steps:

1. Think of what is going to happen in your alternative ending.
2. Elaborate a draft of the drawings that you will include in your comic strip.
3. Create the dialogue that you will include in your comic strip.

Additionally, students will be told that they do not have to hand the final versions of their comic strips yet, since, if they do not manage to finish them during this session, they will have time to finish them at home until the following week. Finally, while the pairs are working on their projects, the teacher will move around the class to help students and to solve any doubts that they may have.

SESSION 7 (50 minutes)

In this session, the time capsule that was created in the first session will be opened and students will present their comic strips orally to the rest of the class. Thus, this session serves as a closure for the didactic proposal.

Activity 1 (10 minutes): Opening of the time capsules

Aim: To confirm if the predictions they made about the graphic novel in the first session finally happened.

Classroom management: Whole class.

Type: Warm-up activity.

Resources: The box containing the pieces of paper in which the students wrote their assumptions about the story will be needed.

Description: The teacher will open the time capsule and read the pieces of paper in which pupils added their suppositions. An oral commentary on whether those predictions were right or wrong will be made.

Activity 2 (30 minutes): Presentation of the comic strips

Aim: To orally present the comic strips that they have created and explain the events that take place in their alternative endings.

Classroom management: Students will work in pairs, following the pairs formed for the final task.

Type: Final task.

Resources: A computer, a projector, a screen and Internet access will be needed. Moreover, the teacher will have scanned the comic strips so that they can be displayed on the screen to allow a better visibility for all of the students.

Description: The teacher will display a pair's comic strip on the screen and that pair will be asked to come out and briefly explain what happens in the alternative ending that they have invented. This process will be repeated until all the pupils have presented their comic strips.

Activity 3 (10 minutes): Final voting

Aim: To make a decision in the final voting based on their personal opinions about their classmates' comic strips.

Classroom management: Whole class.

Type: Closure activity.

Resources: A blackboard, chalk and a box for collecting students' votes will be needed.

Description: Students will be asked to take a small piece of paper in which they will have to write the names of the two pairs that, in their opinion, created the best comic strips. When they finish, the teacher will collect the pieces of paper. Afterwards, two volunteers will come out and one will read the names that have been written on the papers and the other will keep track of the votes on the blackboard. Finally, the pair that receives the highest number of votes will be cheered.

3.8. Assessment

During the development of this didactic proposal, students will be assessed in a continuous way through the observation of their individual and group work. Since all of the activities are interconnected, there will be a focus on pupils' progress in order to analyze if they are building knowledge appropriately. Furthermore, there will not be a final exam on the graphic novel but the majority of the activities that focus on the contents of the book will serve as small tests to verify if students are reading and understanding the novel. For instance, Kahoot allows the teacher to review the performance of students during the game by examining the final classification and the points they obtained. In this way, the teacher can keep a record of the pupils who are either not reading the novel or having difficulties to understand it, which will permit the implementation of measures to guarantee the involvement of all the students.

Additionally, the final task that pupils have to conduct will be assessed through two analytic rubrics, one for the comic strips they have to create and another for the oral presentation they have to make. The reason why analytic rubrics will be used instead of holistic rubrics is that the justification of errors can be made in an efficient way and they also allow for an objective and equitable grading. The two rubrics can be found on the following pages:

	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Not so good (2)	Insufficient (1)
Vocabulary	Students make a varied use of vocabulary and they do not make any mistakes when applying it.	Students use an adequate range of vocabulary and they make 1 or 3 mistakes when applying it.	Students' use of vocabulary is not so varied and they make 4 or 5 mistakes when applying it.	Students make an unvaried use of vocabulary and they make 6 or more mistakes when applying it.
Grammar	Students use grammar structures perfectly and they do not make any mistakes when conjugating verbs.	- Students make a few mistakes when using grammar structures (1-3). - Students make a few mistakes when conjugating verbs (1-3).	- Students make several mistakes when using grammar structures (4-5). - Students make several mistakes when conjugating verbs (4-5).	- Students make numerous mistakes when using grammar structures (6 or more). - Students make numerous mistakes when conjugating verbs (6 or more).
Storyline	The alternative ending correlates with the storyline of the novel and it presents cohesion and coherence.	The alternative ending correlates with the storyline of the novel but sometimes it lacks cohesion and coherence.	Some aspects of the alternative ending do not correlate with the storyline of the novel and sometimes it lacks cohesion and coherence.	The alternative ending does not correlate with the storyline of the novel and it does not present cohesion and coherence.
Character construction	Students include their own inclusive character in the alternative ending and its contribution to the story is logical.	Students include their own inclusive character in the alternative ending but its contribution to the story lacks sense at some points.	Students include their own inclusive character in the alternative ending but its contribution to the story is not logical.	Students do not include their own inclusive character in the alternative ending.
Creativity	The drawings are handmade and the comic strips are presented in a creative way.	The drawings are handmade but the presentation of the comic strips is a bit simple.	The drawings are not handmade and the presentation of the comic strips is quite simple.	The drawings are not handmade and the presentation of the comic strips is excessively simple.

1. *Comic Strips Rubric*

	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Not so good (2)	Insufficient (1)
Vocabulary	Students make a varied use of vocabulary and they do not make any mistakes when applying it.	Students use an adequate range of vocabulary and they make 1 or 3 mistakes when applying it.	Students' use of vocabulary is not so varied and they make 4 or 5 mistakes when applying it.	Students make an unvaried use of vocabulary and they make 6 or more mistakes when applying it.
Grammar	Students use grammar structures perfectly and they do not make any mistakes when conjugating verbs.	- Students make a few mistakes when using grammar structures (1-3). - Students make a few mistakes when conjugating verbs (1-3).	- Students make several mistakes when using grammar structures (4-5). - Students make several mistakes when conjugating verbs (4-5).	- Students make numerous mistakes when using grammar structures (6 or more). - Students make numerous mistakes when conjugating verbs (6 or more).
Organization and structure	The presentation is perfectly structured and students make a varied use of connectors (4 or more).	The presentation is well structured and students use an adequate range of connectors (2-3).	The presentation is not so well structured and students do not use enough connectors (1).	The presentation is inadequately structured and students do not use connectors.
Pronunciation and intonation	- Students pronounce in a clear and comprehensible way. - Rhythm and intonation patterns are good.	- Students make a few pronunciation mistakes (1-3). - Rhythm and intonation patterns are generally good.	- Students make several pronunciation mistakes (4-5). - Rhythm and intonation patterns are generally not adequate.	- Students make numerous pronunciation mistakes (6 or more). - Rhythm and intonation patterns are bad.
Body language	Students maintain eye contact with the audience and they do not present clear signs of nervousness.	Students lose eye contact with the audience on rare occasions and they present a few signs of nervousness.	Students lose eye contact with the audience on multiple occasions and they present several signs of nervousness.	Students do not maintain eye contact with the audience and they present numerous signs of nervousness.

2. Oral Presentations Rubric

4. CONCLUSION

Considering the general objective that was established for this dissertation, a didactic proposal for the fourth year of *Educación Secundaria Obligatoria* based on ND Stevenson's graphic novel *Nimona* has been designed and presented. The proposal is composed of a variety of activities that develop the four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Furthermore, the proposal has been planned with the purpose of allowing students to experience a full linguistic immersion in which they will only use the foreign language for the completion of the tasks. Additionally, pupils will put their communicative competence into practice at all times, as the majority of activities require them to work in groups and to make a practical use of the foreign language. Therefore, one of the principal aims of the proposal is to improve the students' language proficiency in the foreign language.

Moreover, the proposal puts special emphasis on giving visibility to the LGBTQ+ community and the diversity of gender identities and expressions. Session 4 of the proposal focuses on gender representation in the graphic novel, and it provides students with an overview of what gender stereotypes are. Pupils will be given the opportunity to reflect on how gender conventions influence their lives and the way in which gender is portrayed in *Nimona*. In addition, session 5 is centered on giving visibility to discriminated collectives, so students will be able to analyze the characters of the graphic novel to determine if they are inclusive, and they will have the chance to create their own inclusive character for their alternative ending of *Nimona*.

Furthermore, regarding the specific objectives that were defined for this dissertation, it has been demonstrated that literature is extremely beneficial for EFL learners. The use of literature in the EFL classroom motivates students, develops their proficiency in the foreign language, and cultivates their creative minds. Moreover, the potential of graphic novels as educational materials has also been proven, as their mixture of text and visual elements normally draws the attention of teenage pupils, and reading them tends to be less complicated than reading other types of literary texts. Additionally, this dissertation illustrates that literature is an effective resource for approaching cross-cutting themes in the EFL classroom. If teachers select literary texts that portray social issues, they will be able to create discussions about those issues in the classroom that will contribute to the personal growth of students and the improvement of society. Therefore, the relevance of promoting values of equality and forbearance among pupils has also been evidenced.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Nimona's Backstory Jigsaw (Session 2 – Activity 2):



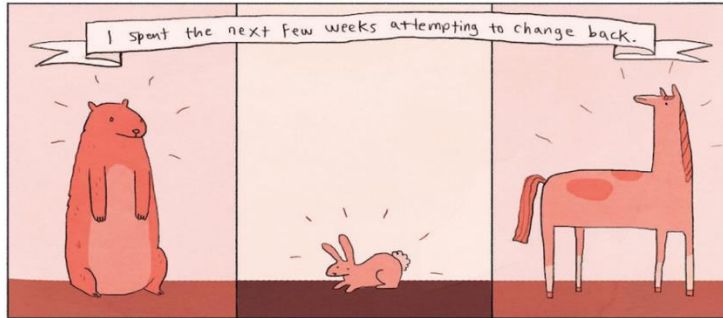




The witch had forgotten to show me how to change back, or even how to speak.



I had to run away and find a cave in the woods to hide in.



I spent the next few weeks attempting to change back.



Finally, I was able to transform back into myself.



I ran home as fast as I could to show my parents what I could do.



But when I got back, I found that the raiders had already come. Everyone from my village was dead, including my parents.

Appendix 2. Comic Strips without Dialogue (Session 2 – Activity 3):





Appendix 3. Adapted Passage from an ND Stevenson’s Interview (Session 4 – Activity 4):

Interviewer: Nimona and the other characters seem to exist without any concern for today’s gender norms. In what ways does the book *Nimona* exist entirely outside of gender expectations?

ND Stevenson: My approach was to explore and deconstruct gender stereotypes by ultimately ignoring them. Nimona is reckless and destructive and amoral – which is unusual for a female character, much less the central female character – but also, the main romance plot goes to the two male protagonists, and they’re both drawn with very similar ‘handsome’ designs while the women take on all kinds of shapes and sizes. The characters are essentially gender-swapped from what you’d expect from traditional gendered roles in stories like this, but there’s also nothing that is inherently gendered about any of them. I think the characters could be any gender and the story would unfold the same way. That’s only one way to play with gendered expectations in a story and it’s not more legitimate than stories that ARE gendered, but it was what I wanted to do with it here.