



**THE *YOUNG ADULT* ALTERNATIVE: RE-DESIGNING A
READING PROMOTION PLAN FOR THE ENGLISH SUBJECT IN
THE FIRST YEAR OF BACHILLERATO**

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**LA ALTERNATIVA *YOUNG ADULT*: REDISEÑANDO UN PLAN
DE FOMENTO DE LA LECTURA PARA INGLÉS EN PRIMERO
DE BACHILLERATO**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this master thesis is to re-elaborate an attractive, feasible and innovative Reading Promotion Plan for the English subject in the first year of Bachillerato, based on Young Adult fiction. The original Plan was chosen from a public high school in the city of León, in the north of Spain. It contained just a few guidelines for the implementation of reading activities in every subject. With this as its foundation, and sustaining the work on the *Spanish Educational Organic Law (L.O.E.)* and the modifications introduced by the *Educational Quality Improvement Organic Law (L.O.M.C.E.)*, as well as on the basis set by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)*, an authentic proposal for the implementation of compulsory Reading Promotion Plans in the English subject in Bachillerato is described. Its design has strong roots in the development of the student's civic, aesthetic, critical and democratic competences, and it is primarily focused on the objective of making literature or, in terms of EFL skills, *reading*, attractive and pleasant for them. To do so, research stages were fulfilled, creating and passing a survey to actual students and teachers in order to assess the degree of satisfaction and consecution of several objectives stated in the original plan. The results were analyzed and weak aspects of the current design and development of the plan were highlighted.

On a more abstract layer, it is necessary to recall the fact that literature is an expression and an extension of any culture given and as such, teachers of EFL should include it in their syllabuses not only to promote reading itself, as compulsory state plans demand, but also to make it approachable for students to know more about the broad English speaking community around the globe. That includes presenting them with current problems and concerns that preoccupy not only the English-speaking countries, but the whole contemporary society, and thus students as individuals and global citizens. Accordingly, this work reclaims the value of reading promotion plans as effective tools that can, and certainly should be used by EFL teachers to contribute to the students' achievement of better *reading comprehension* skills, as well as to the development of the *Cultural Expressions Competence* stated by the L.O.M.C.E and the aspect of *interculturality* present in the Spanish curriculum for the English subject.

Secondarily, and through active work according to the Plan's proposal created, *writing* and *listening* skills, *oral expression* and *oral interaction* are developed as well.

The proposal offered revolves around contemporary texts written in English. They all are labeled as Young Adult (YA) fiction, written particularly for teenagers and they offer specific traits that make them adequate for this Plan. Since they are aimed at teenagers, the topics dealt with in their plots are supposed to be more appealing for young students and they could contribute easier to the development of civic and intercultural skills, as well as to the engagement of students in stories that are familiar to them. The complete version of the Plan, thought of as a practical worksheet to be implemented by anyone interested, is offered at the end of this thesis, including specific objectives for the plan, an overview of the implementation, activities and assessment.

2. JUSTIFICATION & CONTEXT

2.1. METHODOLOGY

2.1.1. Legal framework

The *Spanish Educational Organic Law* (L.O.E.) and the modifications introduced by the *Educational Quality Improvement Organic Law* (L.O.M.C.E.), represent the main legal aspect to be taken into account for this work since they are the current regulations of the Curriculum of Compulsory Secondary Education and Bachillerato (CSE from now on). The requirements set there in terms of ESL teaching are very clear about grammar but they also include other aspects, such as interculturality or literary and cultural knowledge, whose teaching is not specified in the law. This fact allows for the inclusion of such aspects in the Reading Promotion Plan, making it very relevant to cover for those aspects which are left out by traditional methodologies or teaching techniques. Moreover, the communicative side of ESL teaching, also present in this Plan, is based firstly on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR) in order for this work to meet the European requirements in terms of effective, useful and quality English learning.

LOMCE establishes several *competences* that must be developed throughout the academic year in the teaching-learning process of every subject. These competences refer to abilities that the students must develop in order to be prepared for the job market and adult life. The *Cultural Competence* (CEC in the Spanish Curriculum) is defined as the ability to know, appreciate and critically evaluate different cultural and artistic representations, always being respectful. It also allows students to use those cultural manifestations as a source of pleasure and amusement, as well as knowledge, also considering them as humankind inheritance. They must develop certain aesthetic skills in order to creatively produce artistic works but also to critically deconstruct and understand symbols, codes and references. This competence –among others- must obligatorily be present in the implementation of the Plan. It is mandatory to include CEC-related aspects and work with them for a correct fulfillment of the Plan's objectives and furthermore, it collaborates to structure the activities suggested.

2.1.2. Theoretical framework

The corpus of thoughts and opinions that triggered the elaboration of this work is based not only on personal interest in the area of literature in English and how to include it in the Curriculum of Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE from now on), but also on fieldwork and close observation taken place during my in-training at *Legio VII*, a public high school, as part of the Master's degree in CSE and Bachillerato of the University of León, Spain. Based on that experience, I could realize that ESL teaching tends to be restraint by classical methodologies which focus mainly on grammar and forget any communicative aspect of the English learning. In order to give all these thoughts a theoretical background, I chose Byram's theories which coincide as well with major works regarding ESL also included in this work, such as the CEFR.

Byram, Professor Emeritus at the University of Durham, has carried out research into the education of linguistic minorities, foreign language education and student residence abroad. All these investigations blended in his theories about what he called *Intercultural Communicative Competence* and *Intercultural Communicative Citizenship*, reflected on many of his published works. Byram's *Intercultural Communicative Competence* (Byram, 1997) could be summarized as the ability for the learner to

“engage with both familiar and unfamiliar experience through the medium of another language [...] enabling learners to use that language to interact with [...] native speakers, as well as in lingua franca situations” (Byram 1997: 3) Byram’s foundation has a solid background and diverse branches which include many of the aspects that appear in the Spanish curriculum, making his theory a wise blending of CEFR guidelines, Spanish CEC, *interculturality* and democratic skills, sociolinguistic content and many others. In the words of Byram, “it is clear that language teaching has a political potential, a potential to contribute to social change” (Byram, 2003: 74). He believed students should be prepared to engage in talks to foreign peers about those aspects that are relevant to their lives, from education itself to current news. Following his guidelines and adapting his theory to the Plan that is being offered, dealing with issues of race, gender and sexual identity, family, isolation, depression or many others that may appear in YA texts will allow many students to externalize their own anxieties or doubts and strongly develop civic competences and intercultural skills, all of it of the greatest relevance in order to live in the globalized world of today.

Furthermore, and rephrasing just some of Byram’s objectives included in the various sections of his *Intercultural Communicative Competence* (Byram, 1997: 34-64) learners must achieve the following:

- The raising of awareness about one’s own values which allows a conscious control of biased interpretation.
- Knowledge about social groups and their cultures in one’s own country, and similar knowledge of the interlocutor’s country on the one hand; knowledge of the processes of interaction at individual and societal levels, on the other hand.
- Interest in discovering other perspectives on interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in one’s own and in other cultures and cultural practices.
- Social distinctions and their principal markers, in one’s own country and one’s interlocutor.
- Willingness to seek out or take opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of equality, distinct from seeking out the exotic or the profitable.
- Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and about one’s own.

As it can be observed, Byram's competence is detailed and complete, and represents a basis for this work and for the creation of the reading plan proposal and its objectives, aims and learning outcomes. Also, taking his theory into account, along with the guidelines from the CEFR It would be fair to state that EFL teaching research progresses towards an integrated model –working the four skills: Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking- where communication, mutual understanding and respect, and Multi/Interculturality have a great presence. All this has been intended to appear in the Plan proposal.

Bearing in mind the theoretical and legal background previously explained, and the results of the research done (See 4. *Research & Analysis of Results*), I have designed a proposal for the implementation of the Reading Promotion Plan in the first year of Bachillerato. The Plan is not only a way to develop the *reading* skill –and secondarily, the rest- or *CEC* and *Intercultural Communicative* competences. It is also created as a means to highly engage students in reading in English through the exploration of a genre they feel close to their interests: young adult fiction. One of the objectives is to make students face activities designed to please their hunger for recent cultural texts and issues but also get their curiosity about canonical literature on the topic activated. They receive a fair amount of linguistic and thematic input in order for them to prepare for any production made by them or to take tests. The reasoning behind the choice of young adult fiction and its suitability for students could be summarized in the necessity of finding literature that is attractive to its readership and will become interested in reading. As extracted from May's study about children's literature

perhaps we can then understand that children will grow up to be adults who will pick up books that best fit their own needs – or they will grow up to be non-readers. That choice will largely depend on how they perceive literature and its meaning. If they only read those stories everyone "must" know, they will not develop the pleasurable habit of looking for materials to read and share that contain new and interesting stories. (May, 1995: 189)

The focus of the Plan and the activities proposed is on content and meaning, not on form, as the use of literature suggests. Since it is an annual plan, it should not be a challenge for any professional to devote some sessions per term to content-based

instruction. Furthermore, it would allow the students to enjoy the whole experience in a more relaxed way and develop every skill and competence while dealing with authentic and appealing material. This should be positive and help every student achieve the objectives required. However, during some of the activities, some grammatical constructions might be particularly present. Students should not necessarily be aware of them, but it can also be part of the session planning. In the case of creative tasks, form can also be highlighted, although it should never account for more than one third of the mark. Otherwise, students' perception of the plan, and by extension, of literature in English, will not be as positive as expected.

2.2. CONTEXT

The high school where the research took place, and for which the plan is originally designed, IES Legio VII, is located in the old part of the city of León and has a relatively good name among the public high schools of the city. The high school offers both CSE and Bachillerato classes in the morning and also in the afternoon for those students over eighteen years old. CSE is bilingual, consisting on two *minor* subjects taught in English apart from the English subject. These subjects vary each year, but PE, Arts or ICT are some of the usual ones. The CSE years present three groups of students each, with an average number of them of 28. The Bachillerato years are still not bilingual, and students who reach them can choose three itineraries. The first one is Social Sciences, including electives such as Economy or Geography. Also Sciences, the most populous choice, with a subdivision among the Environmental Science and Biology group and the Physics and Technical Drawing one. Finally, the Humanities group attends electives such as Greek, Latin or World Literature. The average number of students per group in Bachillerato is 32, although some early withdrawals must be taken into account, since the number is reduced in 2 or 3 students per group after Christmas.

Students' demographics at the high school are slightly different between CSE and Bachillerato. In the former we find working class family backgrounds, with presence of some students living in foster care or State shelters for underage teenagers, as well as an average number of immigrant students per class of 20%. The latter shows a higher

social extraction, with middle-class and solid professional family backgrounds. There is less presence of immigrant students as well, and there is a big amount of new students coming from state-funded private schools in the area. Not necessarily as a result of the facts mentioned before, the environment in the centre is generally good and reasonably satisfactory, and the results gotten by students at the university entrance exam are among the best in the city. It could be concluded that it allows the implementation of plans such as the one offered later in this work, since there are no major problematic aspects.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this master thesis are the following:

- To evaluate the current role of literature in the ESL classroom, as observed in a specific high school.

- To gather students' and teachers' opinions on the implementation of a Reading Promotion Plan in the English subject

- To draw conclusions from the objective data obtained.

- To offer an alternative proposal for the implementation of a Reading Promotion Plan in the English subject in first year of Bachillerato, based on YA texts and available for any professional to use it and/or modify it.

- To sustain the proposal on a solid theoretical framework, as well as the choice of YA literature.

- To meet the legal requirements set by the Spanish and European legislation for the ESL teaching.

4. RESEARCH & ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The time spent at the high school, one and a half months, regularly assisting one of the English teachers with punctual attendance to others' sessions as well, allowed

me to realize that literature has been mistreated along the history of English teaching. What had previously been a preconception based on my own experience during the high school years has become now a painful reality. Although the Reading Promotion Plan had to be implemented in the classroom and it was compulsory for the English teacher to include three pieces of literature in each of the academic year's curriculum and for the students to read them, it was relatively easy to observe the evident flaws in the process of implementation. In order to narrow down the research done and the conclusions obtained and make this work feasible, the focus was put on the years of Bachillerato, using students from the second year to evaluate their own experience. Literature was certainly present in the curriculum, via the previously mentioned compulsory readings, but it did not seem to be actively worked inside the classroom. The reading of the *Reading Promotion Plan* for the high school was the starting point of the research. The objectives stated in it seemed not to be fulfilled and more importantly, students seemed not to like what was being done. In order to gather objective data, and supplement mere observation, a survey about the degree of satisfaction and fulfillment of the objectives set in high school's Reading Promotion Plan in the English subject .

It would be passed to students in their last year of Bachillerato and some of their English teachers at the end of May, right before the end of the last term. The information collected after the surveys' results, would clarify the weak and strong points of the current state of the question and would help suggesting guidelines for improvement.

Before defining the items in the survey, an overview of what was being done must be mentioned, based on my observation. The books that students in the first and second year of Bachillerato had to read at home were always graded readers, or, in other words, adaptations of authentic materials, usually classics, going from Conrad's *Lord Jim* to Greene's *A Day Saved*. All the work revolving around the books consisted in completing the activities in the book itself –there are a few exercises after each two or three chapters- and handing them in once or twice a month. There was no active work in class whatsoever. No commentaries about the authors or relevant topics in the book were made and there were not debates or presentations. These activities accounted for a 25% of the mark devoted to *various activities* along with *active participation*,

speaking skills and others. The teacher would devote 20 minutes to call students one by one to hand the exercises in and have a look at them in order to grade them “*done*” “*more or less done*” or “*not done*”. No evaluation of the implementation of the plan itself was carried out at the end of the year.

A first version of the survey was created for the students (See *Appendix I*). The items included in it were elaborated focusing on objectives set by the high school’s Reading Promotion Plan. Some of them (4, 5, 11, 12) were adapted to fulfill specific purposes of the English subject but some others were left as they appear in the original plan (3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). A version in Spanish was passed to the students in order to get honest and accurate answers, although the one included in this work has been translated into English. There were two items designed to evaluate the students’ own work (1 and 2) and one referring to the students’ engagement and interest on the texts (3). Also, two items related to the improvement of reading skills in English and vocabulary were introduced (4 and 5). Literary knowledge was evaluated through items 6 and 7. Items 8, 9 and 10 were included to measure the development of critical thinking and item 11 was linked to reading promotion itself by asking students about their intention to read in English in the following months. Finally, there was one last item about their general perception of the literary experience in the English subject.

A slightly different version was created for teachers (See *Appendix II*) eliminating questions that referred to personal intentions of the students or were not relevant to be compared with the teachers’ perception (10 and 11 in the Student’s survey). The idea was to compare and contrast the perception of teachers and students regarding the degree of satisfaction and fulfillment of the objectives set by the plan and other interesting educational purposes achieved. Both students and teachers were given the option to write any relevant comment or suggestion about the reading plan.

A number of 53 students in their second year of Bachillerato completed the survey. They belonged to two different groups, Social Sciences and Science (Physics and Technical Drawing group), with very different results in the English subject: 53% pass against almost 90% pass. On the other hand, three teachers from the department answered to the survey. In order to analyze the results, I will go in depth only in those items which lead to interesting conclusions about what is being done and I will devote a final paragraph to comments made by students and teachers.

When asked about the degree of satisfaction and interest in the texts read (Item 3), a worrying 25% of the students answered with the lowest option and an overwhelming 45% partially agreed with the statement. 28% of them were mostly satisfied and just a tiny 2% of them were fully happy with the books. The figures here reinforce the idea that the texts chosen, grade readers consisting in adaptations of classics, were not the most adequate for the majority of the learners. The use of materials that are not original and authentic can lead sometimes to discouragement of the students, as it seems to have been the case. It could also be possible that the topics and themes in the texts were not perceived by students as relatable.

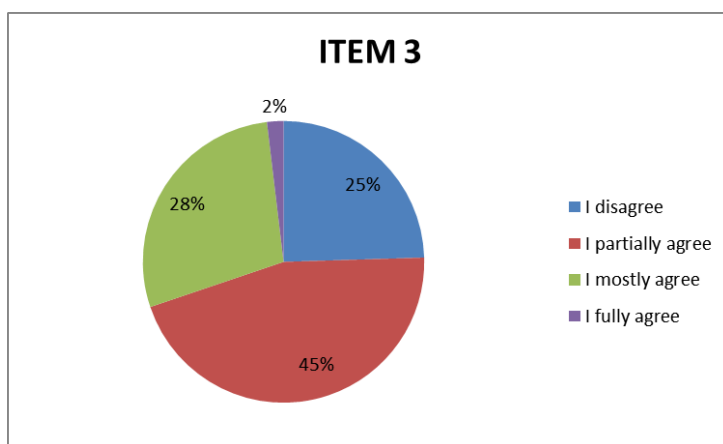


Fig.1. Students' response to item 3: *The experience of reading these texts has been satisfactory and interesting.*

The first dissimilarity appears when comparing the students' response to Item 3 with teachers'. Among the latter, two thirds of them are convinced the materials were mostly interesting and satisfactory for the students and one third just partially agrees. It seems clear there is a disconnection between the teachers' perception of students' preferences and the students' real ones.

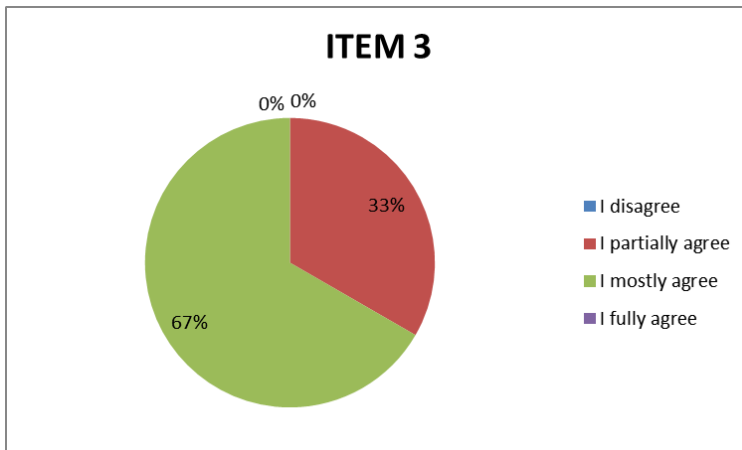


Fig.2. Teachers' response to item 3: *The texts chosen have been satisfactory and interesting for the students*

Regarding the improvement of reading skills, it could be said that a majority of the students (55%) answered positively to Item 4 –putting those who expressed full and large agreement together-. However, 45% of them –*disagree* and *partially agree* options put together- did not perceive a solid progression in their reading comprehension skills, which is highly alarming and indicates something has not been done right.

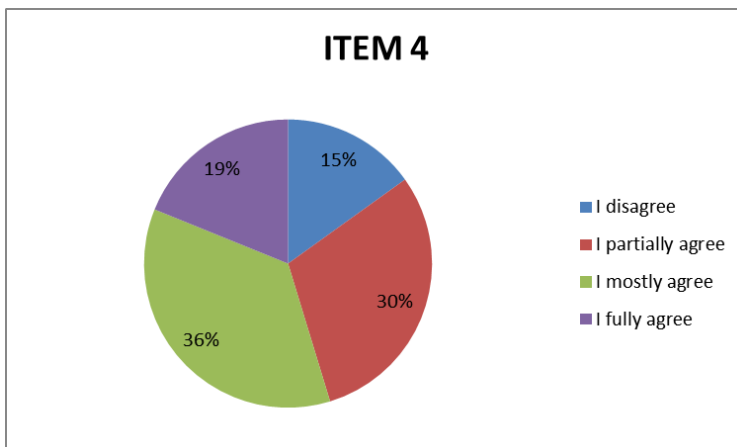


Fig.3. Students' response to item 4: *The experience of reading these texts has improved my level of reading comprehension in English.*

Again, when analyzing teachers' response, dissimilar perceptions are found. Surprisingly, two thirds of them answer mostly positively and one third fully agrees.

The need of scanning students' perception after the end of some project arises as crucial for teachers in order to evaluate their own work and not to assume wrong conclusions about the students' degree of satisfaction.

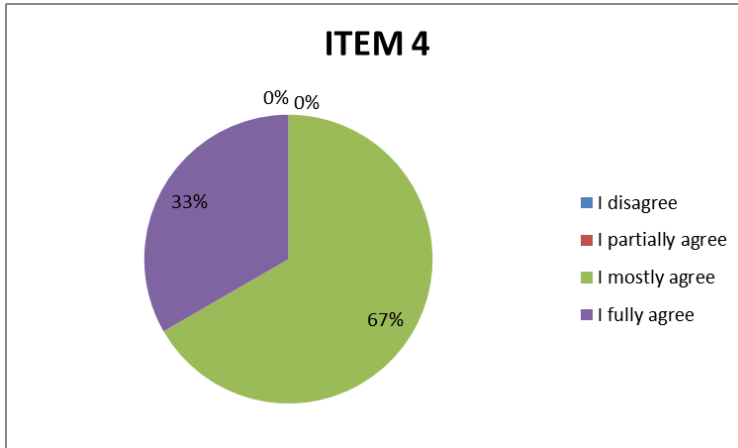


Fig.4. Teachers' response to item 4: *The experience of reading these texts has improved the students' level of reading comprehension in English*

Similarly, solid improvements in vocabulary were perceived by 56% of the students whereas 44% of them answered mostly negatively.

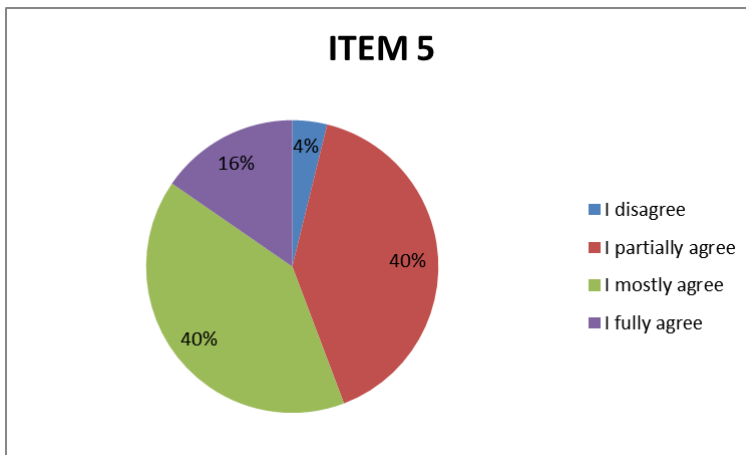


Fig.5. Students' response to item 5: *They [compulsory readings] have enriched my English vocabulary*

Once more, teachers' perception was hugely more positive, showing a great gap between each of the two groups' vision:

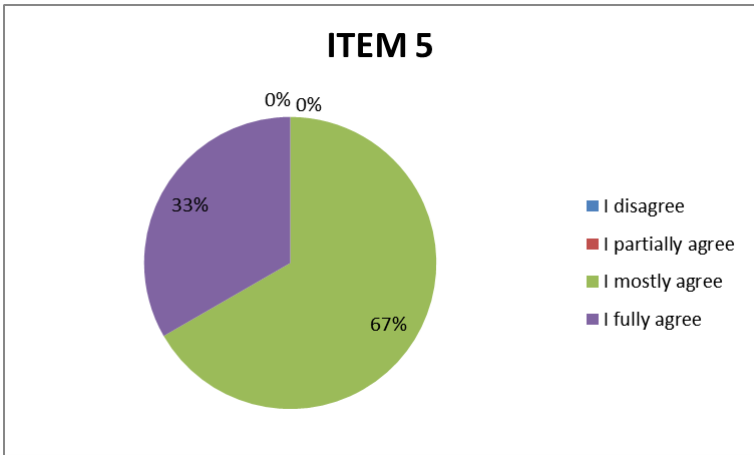


Fig.6. Teachers' response to item 5: *The experience of reading these texts has enriched the students' vocabulary in English.*

It is interesting to mention the results for item 6, since it shows a clear negative response both from teachers and students. If the main aim of a reading promotion plan is to promote reading, something must be revised when students do not show any interest in authors, genres or works derived from those dealt with in the English class (55%), or show just a little (36%). Those results account for a 91% of mostly negative response.

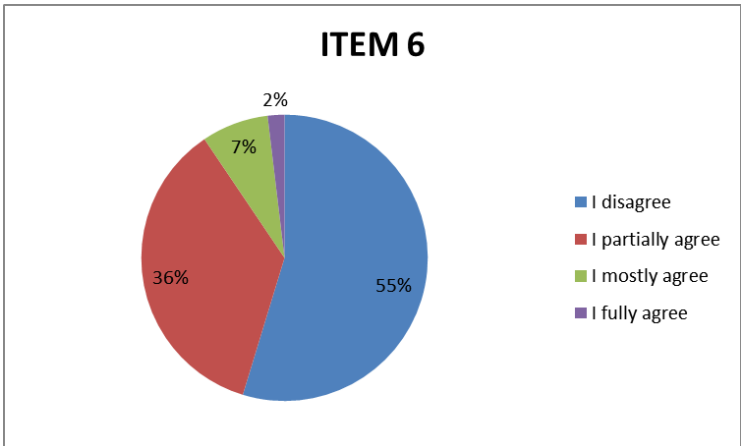


Fig.7. Students' response to item 6: *The experience of reading these texts has boosted my interest in other titles, authors or genres.*

Nevertheless, teachers showed a 100% mostly negative response, thus making it clear they are also conscious that some of the basic objectives of the plan were not being fulfilled.

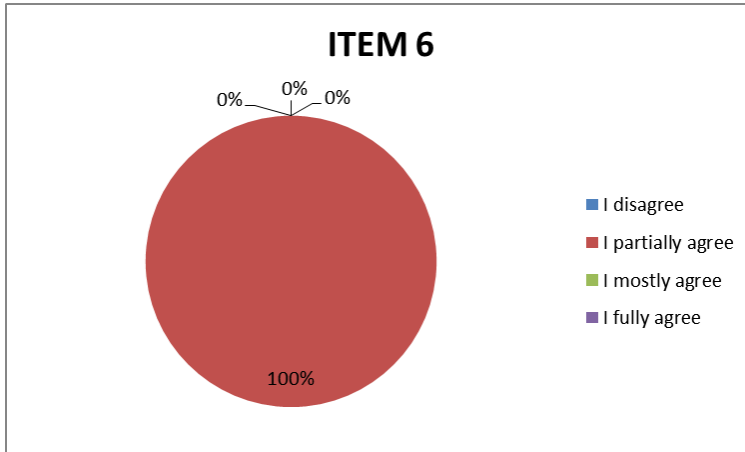


Fig.8. Teachers' response to item 6: *The experience of reading these texts has boosted the students' interest in other titles, authors or genres.*

Furthermore, students were asked about their intention to approach literature in English in the following months for pleasure. Their answers showed that just 38% of them were more or less convinced to do so –*fully agree* and *mostly agree* options put together-.

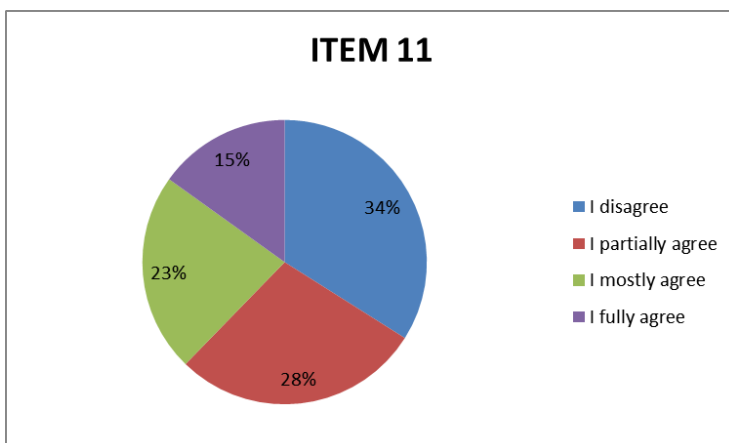


Fig.9. Students' response to item 11: *In the following months, I will read some kind of literature (novel, comic, play) in English as a means of personal amusement.*

One of the aspects in which the high school's existing Reading Promotion Plan insists the most is the necessity of developing the students' critical thinking skills. Interestingly enough, 31% of them perceive no contribution on this regard. Even worse, 40% of them believe the compulsory readings have just slightly contributed to the fulfillment of this objective.

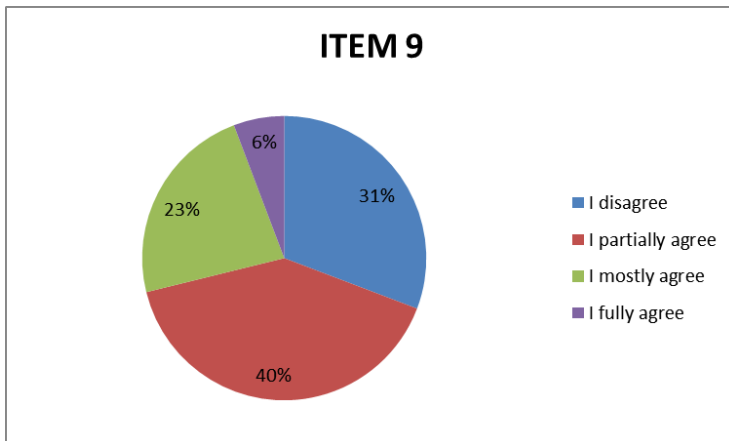


Fig.10. Students' response to item 9: *Reading these materials has improved my critical thinking about hot topics*

Two thirds of the teachers, on the other hand, show a positive perception on this issue, although there is one third which fully disagrees and must be taken into account.

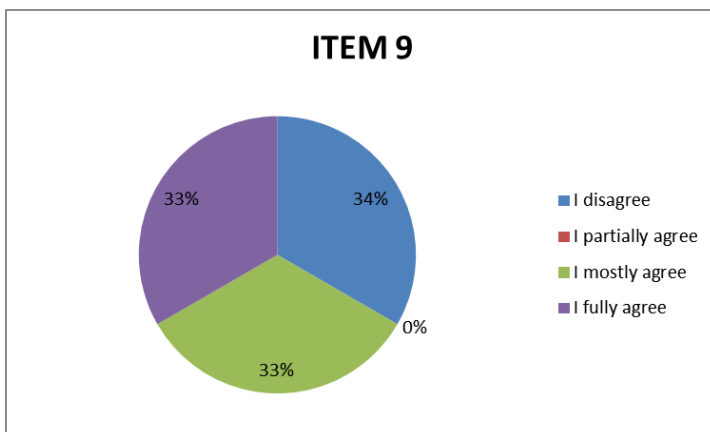


Fig.11. Teachers' response to item 9: *Reading these materials has improved the students' critical thinking about hot topics*

Although students' perception is rather negative for many of the items, it should be remarked that 53% of them answered positively to the final question on their

general opinion about the literary experience in the English subject. This shows an overall consciousness about the importance of including literature in the ESL class. Nevertheless, almost one half of the students are not convinced about it. It should be the duty of any ESL teacher to bring back the educational value of literature in the foreign language and transmit it to the students through careful elaboration of effective reading plans.

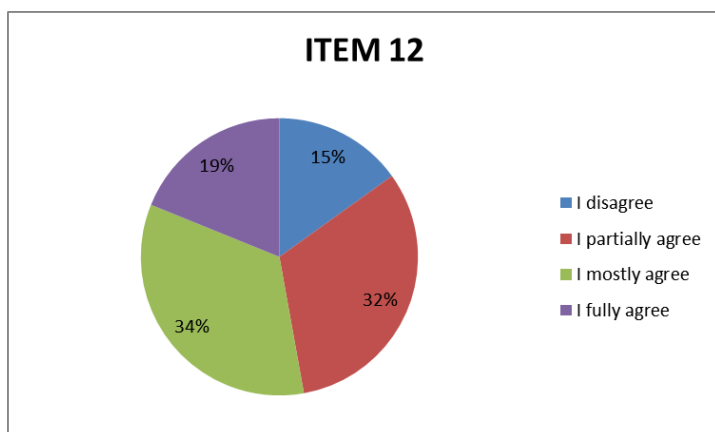


Fig.12. Students' response to item 12: *In general, the literary experience in the English subject has been positive and relevant for my education*

To conclude with the analysis of the surveys' results, I would like to mention some fragments of translated commentaries left anonymously by the students:

"The amount of work for home was too much since all this [compulsory reading] accounts for a very small portion of the final mark"

Also, "I honestly believe 90% of my classmates have copied the activities from the Internet. I haven't"

And finally: "Reading should be a pleasure but this has been a pain. And turning reading into a pain is one of the worst things you can do to a student"

These –and other- comments made by the students, along with the results gathered from the surveys, show a general low opinion of the way the reading plan was being implemented in the English subject and reinforce and justify the idea that it ought to be carefully assessed and improved in order to effectively achieve the objectives set and make reading and, specifically, reading in English, attractive and appealing for the learners.

5. READING PROMOTION PLAN

5.1. WHY YOUNG ADULT FICTION?

Before developing my proposal for the implementation of a reading promotion plan in the English subject in the first year of Bachillerato, I would like to go through the reasons behind the choice of YA literature as the core genre of the texts.

First of all, it is clear that none of the objectives previously set could be accomplished if readers/learners were not engaged in the books presented. The necessity of finding stories that are appealing for the majority of the group is crucial. Teenagers' preferences change over time but nowadays, we have a few hints about what stories teenagers like to read about: those they can identify with.

Teenage years imply an overwhelming process of discovering the adult self. As such, hedonistic attitudes rise and the main focus for the average teenager becomes him/herself. The construction of identity is a central aspect of those years as well. Taking this into account, having teenage protagonists in the books offered will clearly attract students more than other options. Giving ESL learners the opportunity to read stories about the struggles they are going through –although set in other cultural backgrounds- seems quite accurate and would contribute to the development of the previously mentioned *Intercultural Communication Competence*. In her study about teenagers and literature, Bilz beautifully describes the teenage turmoil as follows:

Academic, artistic and athletic ability, physical appearance, acceptance by peers, employment, and appeal to the opposite (or same) sex are all aspects of self-definition. [...] the adolescent struggles to develop an independent identity while maintaining ties to the family. Personal identity is the integration of all the aspects of self that the adolescent incorporates to discover and decide who he is (Bilz, 2004: 36)

In such a context, it seems adequate to provide students with examples of stories of teenagers that deal with situations they can easily relate to. Furthermore, those stories can represent a helping hand for students undergoing difficult situations, as example settlers for them. As Bilz summarizes it,

Lacking a close friend himself, a young adult might find a suitable substitute in the pages of a book. The friendship might not be real, but the advice and actions of a

novel's character could prove valuable to the reader, offering him insight and suggestions about a troubling situation (Bilz, 2004: 120)

In addition, YA texts offer a high amount of diversity and promotion of civic and respectful attitudes towards others. Educational purposes beyond mere language improvement must also be met, and, by using this genre and choosing the right texts, we are promoting a responsible, critical lifestyle and readership. The YA genre allows students not only to cope with struggles they are going through but it also helps them experience things they have not necessarily lived, thus developing their respect skills. Bilz focuses on how young adult fiction explores issues regarding sex and sexuality and helps teenagers understand what they might not:

Young adult fiction covers issues such as teenage pregnancy, dating, sexual behaviour, AIDS, abusive relationships, and homosexuality. By reading such fiction, young adults can both learn the facts about sexual matters and vicariously experience some of the feelings and consequences of sexual activity; [...] Teenagers can also learn about and better understand those whose sexual orientation differs from their own (Bilz, 2004: 103)

Also, through the careful selection of diverse texts which include unusual voices or characters –understood in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, ability, religion, place, immigration status or LGBT identity- we are providing students with new perspectives about the world they live in and also the English-speaking society, which tends to be reduced to stereotypical identities. Luckily, it has become easier to find this diversity in young adult novels, making it more feasible for the teacher to find the right choice. “Increasingly, publishers [...] are trying to make previously silent voices audible. With each new voice, maybe, we’ll all be able to look tentatively towards a more tolerant future” (Paul, 2009: 98)

Nevertheless, other options could be explored regarding core genres for the reading plan. The high school reading plan itself, for example, suggests using science fiction due to its appealing nature for teenagers. That could also be valid in terms of engagement, although I perceive it as less suitable to develop all the objectives set. If I had to apply it, I would suggest the use of fragments and/or complete versions of works such as: Roth's *Divergent*, Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*, Collins' *The Hunger Games* or Moore's graphic novel *V for Vendetta*.

Contemporary classics –written in the 20th Century- could also be an option, always trying to look for teenage or young protagonists. In this case, I would suggest using books such as Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Salinger’s *The Catcher in The Rye* or Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. Even though this option could seem valid, it could only be implemented in a group with already advanced English skills, because the vocabulary found in these works will be more difficult for the students to understand since they were not written specifically for teenagers.

5.2. MATERIALS

The materials chosen for the reading plan are three different young adult novels, written by different authors: *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell (2014), *We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart (2014) and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky (1999). The reasons for this selection are:

- The three texts belong to the YA genre and have been written in English.
- The three novels have been relevant and have received critical praise.
- They cover diverse issues relevant to the educational objectives, from race, bullying and sexuality to social class and the construction of identity during teenage years.
- None of them has become extensively famous in Spain, so most of the students will not have read them beforehand.
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* was made into a movie in 2012, providing the teacher and the students with more audiovisual material to work with.

The original high school plan makes it clear there should be one text per term, so the sequencing proposed can be observed in Fig.1. *Eleanor & Park* fits in the first term as the longest one whereas *The Perks...* is more suitable for the third since it is written in the form of short letters, making it easier for the students to read it during the most stressing period of the academic year. The ideal timing will involve devoting one session per week to working with the books through different activities and resources that will be explained later in this proposal, although variation due to local holidays, exams or any unexpected reason should be taken into account.

1 st Bach	
TERM 1 (Sept. - Dec.) 12-15 sessions	<i>Eleanor & Park</i> by Rainbow Rowell
TERM 2 (Jan. - March) 9-12 sessions	<i>We Were Liars</i> by E. Lockhart
TERM 3 (April – June) 10-13 sessions	<i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i> by Stephen Chbosky

Fig.14. Sequencing of the novels by term.

Eleanor & Park deals with teenage love between two unexpected outsiders: a big girl from a poor background struggling with an abusive father and a biracial, lonely boy who loves comics and taekwondo. It is interesting to mention that it does not have a happy ending, thus serving as a kind reminder for teenagers that relationships are complicated. However, the characters' reactions and behaviours in general are really authentic, and students will feel much related to them.

In *We Were Liars*, students will find a critique to economic elites, a mystery plot and a challenging trip through lost memories and friendship. The protagonist is infused with a great amount of isolation and pain and must reconstruct the story of her summers until the fifteenth, when she woke up with her head hurt and no recent memories.

The Perks... presents a fifteen-year-old protagonist coping with the suicide of his friend. To overcome the fear and anxiety of starting high school alone, he writes letters to an unknown friend. Through these letters, students will find out about his and his new friends' struggles with friendship, fluid sexuality, love, bullying, shyness and ultimately, memories of sexual abuse. This novel is highly engaging for any reader, especially adolescents, and offers opportunities to discuss and debate several conflictive issues.

5.3. OBJECTIVES

As for the statement of objectives for my Reading Plan, it would be useful to revise those already set by the Spanish L.O.E. (Article 33), which are general for the whole curriculum of Bachillerato. Out of them, I have chosen the ones which are relevant somehow for the plan:

- Exercise democratic citizenship, from a global perspective and acquire a civic, responsible conscience, inspired by the Spanish Constitution and the Declaration of Human Rights in order to construct a fair society.
- Consolidate personal and social maturity to act autonomously and responsibly and develop critical thinking. Foresee and solve personal, family and social conflicts in a pacific way.
- Promote gender equality in terms of rights and opportunities, analyze existing inequality and foment non-discrimination of disabled people.
- Efficiently communicate in one or more foreign languages.
- Get to know and critically approach contemporary issues, historical antecedents and the factors involved in their development. Participate in making the social environment better.
- Develop artistic and literary awareness, as well as a certain aesthetic criteria as tools for cultural personal growth.

All of these objectives for Bachillerato are developed up to a certain degree throughout the plan, making sure it meets the official requirements. Also, taking into account the existing Reading Promotion Plan at the high school, it is interesting to highlight some of the aspects there that would fit, in the form of objectives, in the proposal offered:

- Engage the students in reading.
- Improve the students' level of reading comprehension.
- Enrich the students' vocabulary.
- Boost the students' interest in other titles, authors or genres.
- Make the students aware of misinformation and media manipulation.
- Improve the students' critical thinking about hot topics.

Nevertheless, in order to establish clear guidelines to be followed when implementing my Reading Plan proposal, I have established a principal objective, and three secondary objectives. Also, I attach two expected learning outcomes that should be taken into account when assessing the effectiveness of the plan. All of them are present throughout the sessions and must be present in the process of teaching and learning.

·Principal Objective:

- To promote reading and, specifically, reading in English among the students and improve the students' level of *reading* (and secondarily *writing, listening and oral*) skills in English.

·Secondary Objectives:

- To develop the students' *Intercultural Communicative Competence* and *Cultural Competence (CEC)*
- To consolidate attitudes of respect and curiosity towards others' identity, culture, racial background, faith, sexuality or beliefs, trying to analyze different perspectives on conflictive issues, and reflecting on experiences of discrimination.
- To promote mature thinking and reflection, as well as democratic and civic attitudes.

·Learning outcomes:

- Students' interest in fiction written in English, in terms of genres, authors and/or works should have been boosted.
- Students are expected to have reflected on and challenged their own perspectives and attitudes towards the world surrounding them.

5.4. INTRODUCING THE PLAN

From the first session, the compulsory readings must be introduced to the students, so they are aware of them as part of the English subject. Dealing with the problem of keeping students engaged and interested and looking forward to come to the literature sessions can seem hard, but there are some strategies recommended, in order to achieve good results from the very first moment.

One of the most important aspects is to present the compulsory readings as part of the subject, not as something *extra* or separated from the subject course. By doing this, we make sure students understand the dimension and importance of the reading itself and the activities related to it.

ESL teachers must transmit the relevance of the literary experience. One highly recommended way of doing so is making it account for a fair amount of the final mark. If students perceive it as crucial for their marks, they will make an extra effort. At the same time, they must feel the work devoted to compulsory readings is accordingly reflected on the assessment percentage belonging to it. The recommendation would be to present a sheet with percentages and activities which account for each of them on the first day. This is a good practice not only in the case of implementing a reading promotion plan, but in every field of CSE instruction, since it gives students clear and fair information on how they are going to be evaluated from the beginning of the year.

A list or table with the titles and authors can be provided to students, similar to the one in *Fig.14*, in the previous section of this work. That is a good moment to scan if any student knows any of the texts and ask him/her to make a quick spoiler-free summary for the rest of the group. If not, the teacher should tell a bit about the plot to engage students and make them want to know more.

One session per week will be devoted to working with the texts so students should be aware of the day we establish as *reading day* and about the fact that the only material needed on that day will be the novel. Handing them a reading plan with the chapters they are expected to read for each week could also be useful so they can organize their time.

Ideally, when telling students they will have to read complete novels in English, the teacher should make them aware of the importance of it, making reference to personal growth aspects, reading skills improvement, artistic and aesthetic experience and vicarious knowledge leading to tolerance and curiosity, as well as to critical thinking. They should perceive it as something positive for their integral academic and personal growth.

5.5. ACTIVITIES

In this section, I provide an overview of several examples of activities that can be done with students in order to work on the texts included in the reading promotion plan in the English subject. It is the job of the teacher to select and/or modify them according to the students' needs, their level of English and the group's general response to the plan.

-Reading aloud and debates. One of the first activities that can be implemented in the reading sessions is asking students to read aloud fragments. If they have been asked to read one or two chapters at home, the teacher can ask them to select one fragment that is interesting or relevant for them, or one that is linked to a topic worth commenting on, and then ask someone to read it aloud. After that, a debate or discussion can start in order to hear everyone's opinion on, for example, a specific character's behavior or the treatment of a controversial aspect. After some weeks, groups can be organized to elaborate more complex debates, in which each group must, for example, defend a character or point of view on the book. The teacher can also be the one to choose the fragment that suits best the debate planning for the day.

-Games and trivia. After some weeks of reading, the teacher can ask the students to elaborate a trivia setting groups and topics for each of them, for example: characters, locations, characters' traits or important events. The idea would be to work in class, devoting two sessions to the activity: one to prepare it with the guidance of the instructor and one to play it. Other games can be organized, such as language contests (find three adjectives, two tree names and one adverb with six letters in chapter 4).

-Presentations. Developing students' presentation skills is highly demanded by the Spanish curriculum. To do so, the teacher can ask students, individually or in groups, to prepare and deliver PowerPoint presentations on aspects of the books that they can feel engaged to, such as for example, specific songs that appear in *The Perks...* and *Eleanor & Park* (students can play the song and introduce the band or singer and what the lyrics are about). If the students' command of English is good, more academic aspects can be included in the presentations, making them choose one or two

paragraphs and explain how racial prejudice, LGBT discrimination or gender inequality, to mention only some of the possibilities, are depicted in the fragments chosen.

-Essays. Working on literary analysis of the novels via essays, trying to go beyond mere plot summarizing can be a good idea, particularly if students are going to be asked to write a final piece for a test. Being that the case or not, the teacher must provide students with instruction on how to write an essay beforehand, which can be done during the regular sessions. Moreover, there must be enough room for scaffolding, asking them to create a draft and then giving them feedback before they hand the final version, for example. It would be advisable to give them examples of authentic or fake authentic –written by the teacher- fragments of essays so they can discover mistakes or weak reasoning, thus improving their own writing skills and performance. Also, before giving them individual feedback on the final version of their essays, it is always a good idea to collect general mistakes and present them anonymously on a PowerPoint so students can use peer assessment.

-Creative writing. For this kind of activities, more indicated for the final weeks of each term, we can begin with a modeling session through, for example, short stories taken from fan fiction websites on other very well-known books. Then, we can ask our students to write a piece of fiction following some specific instructions. For example, an imaginary encounter between characters from different books (Eleanor from *Eleanor & Park* meets Charlie from *The Perks...* and they talk about their childhoods). If we consider it necessary we can guide the creative sessions through more detailed instructions and steps (how to create a description, how to write a conversation...). Also, we can encourage peer revision and suggestions among classmates. It could also be a good idea to organize a creative writing contest, in which the winner gets another young adult book, for example.

-Another idea would be to ask groups of students to prepare and act scenes from the books. They might feel brave enough to choose fragments they feel attached to and, if it goes well and they feel encouraged to do it, it can even be part of the high school festival.

-Audiovisual material. Every young adult story has a big amount of fan art uploaded to the Internet, as well as clips made by readers. The teacher can choose some of this material and present it to the class, or students can be asked to select and

present them. In the case of *The Perks...*, fragments from the movie can be shown in class to compare them to the book or even the whole movie can be played, followed by some meaningful activity. Moreover, music that appears on the books, which has already been mentioned, can be a good resource to work with.

5.6. INDICATIONS TO DEVELOP COMPETENCES

As stated by the objectives for this plan, developing the students' *Intercultural Communicative Competence* set by Byram, and *Cultural Expressions Competence* set by the Spanish curriculum is vital for a satisfactory fulfillment of the design. Both can be worked in similar ways, and the fact of using YA texts provides an excellent opportunity to do so.

First of all, students should understand some of the conventions and values that may take place in certain cultural environments, such as festivities, traditions or beliefs. To do so, the teacher can introduce some of these aspects that may appear in the novels in the discussions, essays or presentations. It is also a good idea to push students to compare those habits with the ones in their own culture, and recognize when they might clash. Since the three books deal with American background, high school and subjects are a good starting point, but prom night, the 4th of July, religion or family values can also be treated later on.

Parallel to the previous point, the teacher must make sure students develop a certain awareness of cultural stereotypes and although every opinion should be heard, individuals holding wrong beliefs about the foreign culture must be invited to reflect on them.

Throughout every activity, active listening to classmates and the teacher, as well as correct manners and ways of interrupting or expressing disagreement should be enhanced, in order for the students to improve their interpersonal and conversational skills in English, necessary for any communication, from local to intercultural.

Empathy is a key aspect to be developed. When facing conflictive situations on the stories, students should be invited to reflect on their own experience and contextualize the characters' behavior. A good activity that can be done in this respect would consist on asking students to write or say what they would do if they were the

ones in trouble. Also, the teacher can suggest to discuss or create a paragraph on a situation lived by each of the students in which they felt the same as the characters. By doing this, students will prepare themselves to talk to real people from other cultural backgrounds undergoing similar situations. Also, they will learn how to respectfully approach people who are suffering due to any circumstance.

Finally, the artistic value of books as sublimations of a specific culture must be highlighted for the students. They must learn to appreciate the difficulty behind any artistic creation –this can be achieved through creative writing activities- and the effort needed to encode –and deconstruct- poetic language and metaphors, among others.

5.7. STUDENT ASSESSMENT

There are several options that could fit in the purpose of making the whole process fair for the students and accordant to the amount of work done. If one session per week is going to be devoted to working with the texts, its weight for the term assessment should be of at least 30%, ideally 35% if we take into account the hours of work done at home reading the novels.

How this percentage is divided highly depends on the activities done, and every professional should elaborate their own assessment material. Nevertheless, there are some general orientations that everyone might want to follow.

Specific and relevant tasks, such as essays, presentations or organized debates in groups should have their own rubric, according to which the teacher can carry out a fair and objective evaluation. Needless to say, students must be very aware of the requirements for each task beforehand. If the assignment is not a final one, there might be no need to elaborate an exhaustive rubric, but rather a checklist. As an example, let's imagine students have been asked to write a creative piece on the encounter between two characters from different books. In *Appendix III*, a checklist-based assessment chart for this activity can be observed.

Considering continuous assessment, we can elaborate a complete document with every aspect evaluated and give each of them a percentage. Ideally, there will be a separated rubrics chart or checklist for each of the items, in order for the whole process to be as transparent and fair as possible. It is the duty of the teacher to make

them according to the requirements of the activities organized. However, I provide a proposal of aspects evaluated and points -out of 100- devoted to each of them (See *Appendix IV*). In this proposal, a final written task and a presentation made by the student have been included as important assessment items with their own percentage. Again, this will depend on how the plan is implemented by each professional.

5.8. PLAN EVALUATION

In order to evaluate the degree of achievement of the objectives set by the plan, and to introduce modification where needed, some kind of assessment must be carried out. The suggestion is to pass the students and the teacher(s) involved a survey where these objectives are expressed and they can mark their degree of agreement with the consecution of each of them.

Similarly to the surveys presented previously in this work (See *4. Research & Analysis of Results*), some items related to the students' own work must be included, as well as questions related to the objectives and the students' satisfaction with the materials and activities. Also in the version for the learners, they should be asked about their intention to read in English for pleasure in the following months. A proposal of survey for the students can be regarded in *Appendix V*.

Moreover, honest reflection on the results of the implementation of the plan must be done by the teacher(s) and weak and strong points should be recognized. In order for a plan of these characteristics to be maintained in time with an optimum degree of effectiveness, some elements in it might have to be changed over time, according to the high school's resources and the students' needs, level of English and literary preferences. The selection of materials can also be changed by newer, more adequate or different ones. As it has been mentioned before, it is the teachers' duty to adapt it to their necessities and continue developing it.

6. CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

After having reviewed the theoretical background concerning updated trends in the development of *Intercultural Communicative Competence* in the ESL classroom and the objectives set by the Spanish curriculum relevant for the work, as well as the implications and benefits of using YA literature with teenage learners, a proposal for the implementation of a Reading Promotion Plan in Bachillerato has been offered. Given the limited scope allowed for this work, the proposal covers only the first year, although ideally, the plan should be developed and applied in the whole educational stage.

Moreover, real surveys assessing students' and teachers' perception of the way the plan was being currently developed have been analyzed, leading to interesting conclusions. Also, the process of designing the plan and its elements has triggered some thoughts on the implementation of the ESL curriculum in the classrooms.

First of all, the surveys' results showed the students' worryingly low perception of the quality of work done around compulsory readings. The majority of them expressed negative thoughts on the achievement of many of the items, including the ones referred to their degree of satisfaction with the texts chosen and their intention to read in English for pleasure in the following months. Teachers, on the other hand, had a surprisingly better vision, showing that according to them, for example, the texts chosen had been satisfactory and interesting for the majority of the students. Contradictions like these establish an important gap between the teachers' perception and the students' opinions and reinforce the necessity to develop better plans and materials, as well as to carry out research and assessment on the plans once they have been implemented for a year.

Furthermore, the importance of taking risks for the ESL instructor needs to be highlighted. Stepping out of the comfort zone and implementing new, innovative materials and plans turns out to be of utter relevance, in order to get students engaged and interested in the lessons. Classical methodologies involving just the textbook do not work anymore and they cover just some aspect of the ESL instruction. That is the reason why the plan that has been provided focuses on communication among students through debates, presentations and peer cooperation. A Reading

Promotion Plan must meet classic teaching requirements, but also help students' develop their competences for life and their skills in many aspects that go beyond mere English instruction. Responsible citizenship, *intercultural communication* and mutual understanding are just some of the fields that can and must be included in the ESL sessions. Teenagers should be pushed to challenge their misjudgments about others, their cultural misconceptions and their prejudices. Also, by the end of the year, they must have acquired certain attire for reading in English for personal amusement as well as a better literary sensibility.

In conclusion, if ESL teachers want to keep themselves and their lessons updated and attractive for learners, they should develop new materials and integral plans, implement new strategies, or improve the existing ones, always looking for a better education and ESL instruction for learners, content-based, engaging and meaningful for them. Putting in practice projects such as the one developed in this work is just one step in the teacher's lifelong-learning journey of educating teenagers for a multicultural, globalized and eventually respectful world.

7. APPENDICES

7.1. APPENDIX I – STUDENTS’ SURVEY



Please, according to your personal opinion, mark the degree of agreement with the following statements. Be as honest as possible. Remember this survey is anonymous.

Regarding the compulsory readings for the English subject throughout Bachillerato (graded readers)...	I disagree	I partially agree	I mostly agree	I fully agree
1. I have read all of them.				
2. I have done all the activities based on the readings autonomously and individually.				
3. The experience of reading these texts has been satisfactory and interesting.				
4. The experience of reading these texts has improved my level of reading comprehension in English.				
5. They have enriched my English vocabulary.				
6. The experience of reading these texts has boosted my interest in other titles, authors or genres.				
7. I have known classical and contemporary texts, as well as well-known and canonical authors.				
8. After reading the texts and working with them, I feel more protected from misinformation and media manipulation.				
9. Reading these materials has improved my critical thinking about hot topics.				
10. Reading these materials has changed my point of view about some relevant current topic (politics, environment, human rights, immigration...)				
11. In the following months, I will read some kind of literature (novel, comic, play) in English as a means of personal amusement.				
12. In general, the literary experience in the English subject has been positive and relevant for my education.				

If you will, you can write any comment or suggestion regarding compulsory readings in the English subject and/or your experience with them:

7.2. APPENDIX II – TEACHERS’ SURVEY



Please, mark the degree of agreement with the following statements. Be as honest as possible. This survey is anonymous and it refers to the Reading Promotion Plan and its implementation in Bachillerato in the English subject via compulsory readings or *graded readers*. Remember it is about results, not objectives. Thank you for your participation.

Regarding compulsory readings for the English subject in Bachillerato, I believe...	I disagree	I partially agree	I mostly agree	I fully agree
1. Students have read all of them.				
2. Students have done all the activities based on the readings autonomously and individually.				
3. The texts chosen have been satisfactory and interesting for the students.				
4. The experience of reading these texts has improved the students’ level of reading comprehension in English.				
5. The experience of reading these texts has enriched the students’ vocabulary in English.				
6. The experience of reading these texts has boosted the students’ interest in other titles, authors or genres.				
7. Students have known classical and contemporary texts, as well as well-known and canonical authors.				
8. After reading the texts and working with them, students are more protected from misinformation and media manipulation.				
9. Reading these materials has improved the students’ critical thinking about hot topics.				
10. In general, the literary experience in the English subject has been positive and relevant for the students’ education.				

If you will, you can write any comment, suggestion or further explanation about the Reading Promotion Plan and its implementation and/or results in the English subject in Bachillerato:

7.3. APPENDIX III – STORY CHECKLIST PROPOSAL

Checklist	
Less than 5 grammar mistakes	1
Less than 3 word order mistakes	1
Story according to instructions (situation)	0,5
Brief description of character 1	0,5
Brief description of character 2	0,5
Brief description of a setting	0,5
Character 1 acts/talks according to the book	1
Character 2 acts/talks according to the book	1
Coherent dialogues	1
Original dialogues	1
Rich and accurate vocabulary	1
Conclusion/ending/agreement/moral	1
Total points	__/10

7.4. APPENDIX IV – CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT PROPOSAL

Name:	
ASPECT	MARK
Engagement in debates and discussions	_ / 10
Comprehension of the texts (as showed during discussions and in essays, assignments, etc.)	_ / 15
Intercultural Communicative Competence (respect, curiosity towards others' values, beliefs, ideas)	_ / 10
Weekly written production	_ / 10
Oral Production	_ / 5
Oral Interaction	_ / 5
General Participation	_ / 5
Presentation	_ / 20
Final essay	_ / 20
TOTAL MARK:	_ / 100

7.5. APPENDIX V – PLAN ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Please, according to your personal opinion, mark the degree of agreement with the following statements. Be as honest as possible. Remember this survey is anonymous.

Regarding the three novels you have read this year and the work and activities done about them...	I disagree	I partially agree	I mostly agree	I fully agree
1. I have read all of them.				
2. I have participated in all the activities based on the readings.				
3. The experience of reading these texts has been satisfactory and interesting.				
4. The experience of reading these texts has improved my level of reading comprehension in English.				
5. They have enriched my English vocabulary.				
6. The experience of reading these texts has boosted my interest in other titles, authors or genres.				
7. My writing skills have been improved				
8. I feel more prepared to communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds.				
9. Reading these materials has improved my critical thinking about hot topics.				
10. I feel more prepared to respectfully discuss in English about others' identity, culture, faith or beliefs.				
11. I have challenged my preconceptions regarding gender equality, sexual identity, others' racial and ethnic background, and/or the experience of migrants.				
12. I can now appreciate better the artistic and cultural value of literature.				
13. In the following months, I will read some kind of literature (novels, comics, poetry) in English as a means of personal amusement.				
14. In general, the literary experience in the English subject has been positive and relevant for my education.				

If you will, you can write any comment or suggestion regarding the novels or the work done with them

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