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**Enhancing student engagement with authentic materials: reading
activities based on *Blackwater I: The Flood* in the Spanish Baccalaureate**

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Abstract:

Authentic materials hold strong pedagogical value when integrated through innovative lesson design. By positioning the classroom as a space for creativity and interaction, teachers can foster autonomy, critical reading and language development. This paper explores the use of the novel *Blackwater I: The Flood* as the basis for designing English reading lessons. The aim was to use real-life texts, such as excerpts from updated novels, to enhance student engagement and provide meaningful learning experiences. Two 55-minute sessions were designed for a group of students in their final Spanish Baccalaureate year, in a public high school in Spain. Although not implemented, the design process revealed both the opportunities and challenges of working with authentic literary texts. The analysis suggests that such materials are affective for short instructional units, supporting both linguistic competencies and cultural awareness. Overall, this study highlights the potential of authentic materials to increase student motivation, participation, and engagement in language learning.

Key words: authentic materials in EFL, language teaching, literature in the classroom, reading competence.

Resumen:

Los materiales considerados como auténticos, poseen un elevado valor pedagógico cuando se integran en el diseño de lecciones innovadoras. Al concebir el aula como un espacio de creatividad, interacción y reflexión crítica, el profesorado puede promover tanto la autonomía del alumnado como el desarrollo de la competencia lectora y lingüística. Este trabajo de investigación explora el uso de la novela *Blackwater I: The Flood* como el recurso central para el diseño de actividades de lectura en inglés. El objetivo principal fue utilizar textos reales, como por ejemplo extractos de novelas actuales, con el fin de fomentar la motivación de los alumnos y aportarles experiencias de aprendizaje significativas. Para ello, se han diseñado dos sesiones de 55 minutos dirigidas a un grupo de estudiantes de 2º de Bachillerato en un instituto público en España. Aunque las sesiones no se implementaron, el proceso del diseño identificó las oportunidades y los retos de trabajar con textos literarios auténticos. El análisis sugiere que este tipo de materiales son efectivos en periodos cortos de tiempo, respaldando tanto las competencias lingüísticas como el conocimiento cultural. En general, este estudio destaca el potencial de los materiales auténticos para incrementar la motivación, participación y el compromiso del estudiante en el aprendizaje de la lengua.

Palabras clave: enseñanza de la lengua, competencia lectora, literatura en el aula, materiales auténticos en ILE.

Index:

1. Introduction.....	p. 1
2. Aims	p. 4
2.1 General	p. 4
2.2 Specifics	p. 4
3. Theoretical framework	p. 5
3.1 Demotivation and learning anxiety on students	p. 5
3.2 The importance of teaching reading skills	p. 7
3.3 Reasons for using literature in an English classroom	p. 9
3.4 Use of authentic materials in the FL classroom	p. 11
4. Innovative design	p. 13
4.1 Context	p. 13
4.2 Addressees	p. 15
4.3 Purpose	p. 16
4.4 Planification	p. 17
4.4.1 Phases	p. 17
4.4.2 Resources	p. 18
4.4.3 Activities	p. 19
4.4.4 Evaluation criteria	p. 27
5. Conclusion and critical review	p. 28
6. References	p. 30
7. Annexes	p. 33

1. Introduction

The ability to read is one of the many brilliant skills that we, as human beings, can achieve. When we read a text, our minds travel into a completely new world, where our imagination can fill in every detail that the story in front of us is describing. The importance of being able to read a text and understand it can help our students to live the marvelous experience of enjoying when reading a text. Not only the capacity of understanding a text could be useful, but also the possibility of applying all this new knowledge into their daily lives. According to Analí: “Good reading habits are known to produce a wide range of positive impacts. Nowadays, it is one of the most important activities for personal education, intelligence development, will, imagination, and many other cognitive and affective aspects, all of them vital for a person’s maturity and autonomy.” (Carmen et al., 2016). However, sometimes people struggle with the fact that not all the texts that are available suits them. If we take into consideration the classics of literature, such as William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and so on, their work could be quite a challenge for those who face difficulties when reading a text in a foreign language. And it is here precisely where the role of teachers gains a great need to explore the different pathways of teaching this skill.

Teaching reading skills in secondary schools has evolved to address the needs of increasingly diverse student populations and the demands of modern literacy. Current methodologies emphasize a combination of strategies that develop comprehension, critical thinking and engagement with complex texts. As Duke and Pearson (2002) explain, “Good readers use a repertoire of comprehension strategies, applied in a flexible and purposeful way, to make sense of text.” The role of teachers is to introduce and model specific strategies to help students understand and analyze texts; activating prior knowledge in order to encourage students to connect new information to what they already know, or teaching students to use the “inferring process: “bringing together what is spoken (written) in the text, what is unspoken (unwritten) in the text, and what is already known by the reader in order to extract and construct meaning from the text.” (MacEwan, 2007). Both these processes are among those strategies that teachers could integrate into lesson plans across subjects. A further strategy considered in the current methodologies could be the support for diverse learners: teachers employ differentiated instruction to address the varied skill levels and needs of students, including those with learning disabilities or English as a second language.

Techniques such as scaffolding and peer tutoring are essential instructional strategies in reading education, particularly for fostering comprehension and critical thinking. Both approaches are grounded in sociocultural learning theories, emphasizing collaboration, structured support, and increments progress towards independent learning. Scaffolding provides adaptive support that helps students tackle tasks they cannot yet complete independently. As van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen (2010) note, “Because scaffolding is such a dynamic intervention finely tuned to the learner’s ongoing progress, the support given by the teacher during scaffolding strongly depends upon the characteristics of the situation like the type of task ... and the responses of the student” (p. 273). This support is gradually removed, as their competence grows. Techniques such as using visual aids and concept maps, helps students organize and process information more effectively.

Moreover, teachers can customize scaffolding to accommodate individual learning needs, making it effective inside classrooms where students may require varied levels of support to achieve its goals. All the same, peer tutoring involves pairing students to learn collaboratively, where one of the students performs the role of a tutor, so as to reinforce their understanding while helping their classmate. According to Alexander, the intentional pairing of students can lead to more positive outcomes at every grade level (Alexander, 2024). This strategy is especially effective in improving reading comprehension, as students often feel more comfortable exploring the possible complex ideas with their classmates than with their teachers.

Teachers face challenges such as ensuring engagement, addressing skill gaps and managing the different needs of students. However, there are a plenty of resources, such as innovations like gamified learning and project-based approaches, which can be explored to make reading instruction more affective and appealing. The importance of creating a motivation for students to enjoy the lesson is such, that Dörnyei describes it as it follows: “A motivated learner with limited ability can achieve better results than an unmotivated learner with greater language aptitude, demonstrating that motivation is one of the key factors influencing success in second language acquisition.” (Dörnyei, 2001, p.25). Therefore, the use innovative procedures inside the classroom could be considered as an important step into the achievement of greater results from our students. Textbooks are widely known for been used inside the classroom as a source of information from where teachers can access and make use of the reading texts. Nonetheless, it is precisely by using only textbooks where there is an existing conflict; as Guo (2011) mentions: “While textbook

materials provide valuable information to learners; students seem to have little interest in them.”. Therefore, the usage of real-life materials gives students the possibility of interacting with cultural and linguistic background, for example, those materials enhanced language skills, as students are exposed to varied vocabulary, real-life syntax and diverse language structures. This exposure improves reading comprehension and inferencing skills by encouraging learners to understand context and deduce meaning from unfamiliar words.

Moreover, the use of realia increases the motivation and engagement within students, as learners often find authentic materials more engaging because they provide a connection to the real world; for example, a great pathway of enthralling our students would be to leave them choose their own source of reading among a chosen variety, selected previously by the educator. This way of engaging creates a further development of their critical thinking, as the analysis of real-world content promotes deeper thinking, in order to evaluate the content’s authenticity. Authentic materials often reflect the culture and norms of English-speaking communities. As Gilmore said: "By embracing authentic materials, we encourage learners to interact with language as it is genuinely used, thereby developing not just linguistic but also pragmatic and cultural competencies" (Gilmore, 2007, p. 97-118). Therefore, learners gain insight into traditions, values and everyday language use, fostering intercultural competence and preparing them for effective communication in global contexts.

Taking into consideration the vast amount of accessible investigation about reading as a skill, this paper does not aim to revise all this work already done, but to deal with the manner in which we can present the different reading activities to our students. More precisely, the general objective of this composition is to create reading activities by using real-life materials, such as updated books, with which students would be able to identify themselves. Therefore, in order to fulfil our main purpose, this paper presents an innovative design of two full sessions with a group of final Spanish Baccalaureate year, working with a fragment of a chosen book and creating the activities from the start. Moreover, a rubric for critical assessment of both these sessions will be presented as well. Finally, general conclusions and limitations regarding this whole research will be provided.

2. Aims

This project focuses on using real-life materials, such as contemporary book excerpts, to enhance student engagement and reading comprehension by connecting texts to their personal experiences and interests. Through careful selection of excerpts, the design of meaningful comprehension and collaborative tasks, and implementation in a supportive classroom environment, the project seeks to create effective and interactive reading activities.

2.1 General aim

The primary goal of this project is to use real-life materials, such as excerpts from updated books, in reading activities inside an FL classroom, to foster students' engagement with the content and to promote reading as an essential and enjoyable skill. By incorporating authentic and relatable materials into the classroom, we aim to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world application, helping students see reading as a meaningful and practical tool for personal and professional growth.

2.2 Specific aims

1. Acknowledge diverse learning styles and proficiency levels, ensuring accessibility for all students. By leveraging engaging and contextually rich materials, the activities will encourage critical thinking, stimulate curiosity, and enhance the students' ability to derive meaning from texts.
2. Implement collaborative work among students by designing group-based reading tasks using real-life materials. Group-based activities will include discussion prompts, role-playing, and collaborative analysis of texts, all aimed at creating a dynamic and interactive learning environment.
3. Improve engagement and reading comprehension through the use of authentic reading materials, in order to enhance students' motivation and relate the contents to their current interests.

3. Theoretical framework

Through the next section, we will explore the different features that this project has taken into account when contextualizing the importance of using authentic materials as the main asset for implementing new reading activities.

3.1 Demotivation and learning anxiety on students

Learning a foreign language (FL) can be a rewarding yet challenging endeavor for students. Among the various components of FL acquisition, reading often elicits a unique set of obstacles, including demotivation and learning anxiety. These affect not only students' performance but also their overall attitudes toward the language learning process. Understanding the root causes and manifestations of these issues is essential for teachers aiming to create more effective and supportive learning environments.

Demotivation, defined as a reduction in the drive to engage with learning tasks, often emerge in FL contexts due to factors such as perceived difficulty, lack of relevance, or inadequate teaching methods. Dörnyei (2001) identifies demotivating factors as external, such as unsupportive instructors or tedious materials; or internal, such as lack of self-confidence. When faced with FL reading tasks, students often confront texts that are linguistically dense or culturally unfamiliar, exacerbating their sense of helplessness. This sense of failure can create a feedback loop, where reduced effort leads to lower performance, which, in turn, further diminishes motivation (Huang, 2012).

The association of reading with assessments further compounds demotivation. As Lucantoni (2019) points out: "Reading is so often linked to tests... it isn't really so surprising that there is little enjoyment for students." The constant pressure to perform well on comprehension tasks or standardized exams discourages students from engaging with texts for pleasure or curiosity. Instead, reading becomes an obligation, stripped of its exploratory or imaginative potential. This dynamic leads many students to approach reading passively, doing the bare minimum required to fulfil academic expectations. Such passivity has alarmed teachers, who are now endeavoring to find pathways and sources to encourage students to read more actively.

Learning anxiety is another significant barrier in FL reading lessons, defined as a negative emotional response to perceived difficulty or the fear of failure. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) categorize FL anxiety as encompassing communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These aspects are particularly relevant in reading contexts, where students often worry about misinterpreting texts or failing to meet comprehension standards. Anxiety can impair cognitive functioning, limiting a student's ability to process new vocabulary, infer meaning, and synthesize information effectively. According to Saito, Garza and Horwitz (1999), students experiencing high levels of FL reading anxiety tend to avoid challenging texts, thus restricting their exposure to diverse materials and opportunities for skill improvement. This avoidance behaviour further isolates learners from the language, reinforcing their anxiety. Additionally, cultural elements within reading materials may amplify anxiety. Students might feel alienated when encountering texts laden with unfamiliar idioms, references, or perspectives. Eysenck et al. (2007) assert that anxiety consumes cognitive resources that would otherwise be available for comprehension, making these culturally rich texts appear even more daunting.

To counteract these issues, educators should adopt strategies that prioritize student engagement and emotional well-being. Scaffolding techniques, such as breaking texts into manageable sections or pre-teaching vocabulary, can reduce the cognitive load and foster confidence (Nation, 2009). Furthermore, incorporating diverse and relatable reading materials can help bridge cultural gaps and make lessons more inclusive. Creating a supportive classroom environment is also critical. Encouraging cooperative learning, rather than competition, allows students to share their strengths and build collective confidence. Positive reinforcement and the normalization of mistakes as part of the learning journey can reduce fear and demotivation, as noted by Brown (2007). Finally, teachers must consider integrating tasks that allow students to explore reading beyond its academic purposes, holding a connection between the material and their personal interests. Additionally, technology, such as interactive e-books or gamified reading tasks, can rejuvenate the learning experience. These tools often offer instant feedback, helping students track their progress and maintain motivation.

Demotivation and learning anxiety in FL reading lessons are complex challenges that require

thoughtful interventions. By addressing these issues through tailored teaching strategies, teachers can empower students to approach reading hopefully and with curiosity. As Dornyei (2001) states: “Motivation is not a static state but a dynamic process that fluctuates in response to a variety of internal and external influences.” Recognizing and mitigating these influences can transform the reading experience, encouraging not only linguistic competence but also a lifelong appreciation for learning.

3.2 The importance of teaching reading skills

Reading skills form a cornerstone of language acquisition, equipping learners with the tools necessary to interpret and engage with texts in meaningful ways. Effective reading instruction often hinges on the balanced integration of intensive and extensive reading strategies, both of which play vital roles in raising comprehension, vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency. While intensive reading enhances analytical skills through close engagement with texts, extensive reading encourages fluency and a love for the language by promoting wide and a self-directed reading.

Intensive reading emphasizes close, detailed examination of texts to foster a deeper understanding of language features and content. It often involves short passages and focuses on accuracy, helping students develop skills such as critical thinking, vocabulary recognition, and grammar awareness. As Nation (2009) explains: “Intensive reading allows learners to process language at a micro-level, breaking down the text into manageable units to analyse its linguistic and conceptual elements.” This approach is particularly useful for academic contexts, where precision and comprehension of the text are essential. However, inside the classroom, intensive reading is typically guided by teachers, who scaffold students’ understanding through pre-reading tasks, guided questions, and follow-up discussions. For example, by dissecting a paragraph’s structure or identifying the purpose of specific vocabulary, students become skillful at navigating through complex texts. Nonetheless, one drawback of intensive reading is that it can be perceived as monotonous or overly academic, if it not reinforced with engaging activities (Day&Bamford, 2002). Thus, it is key for teachers to maintain a balance, ensuring that intensive reading sessions are interactive and contextualized.

While intensive reading focuses on depth, extensive reading emphasizes extensiveness, encouraging students to read widely for enjoyment and general understanding. Extensive reading programs provide learners with access to a variety of texts, allowing them to choose materials that align with their interests and proficiency levels. This autonomy not only boosts motivation but also reinforces the notion that reading can be an enjoyable activity. Krashen (2004) advocates for extensive reading, stating that: “free voluntary reading is the most powerful tool we have in language education. It builds vocabulary, grammar and writing competence effortlessly.” Therefore, extensive reading exposes students to language in context, promoting incidental learning of new words and phrases. The repetition and variation through texts help reinforce language patterns, enhancing fluency and comprehension skills. In addition, it builds cultural knowledge and critical thinking, as students engage with diverse perspectives through authentic materials. Waring and McLean (2015) argue that extensive reading: “allows learners to develop reading speed and fluency while encountering language in meaningful contexts, fostering a natural acquisition process.”

Despite its benefits, extensive reading requires to be careful when teachers implement it. Without proper guidance or accessible materials, students may struggle to sustain motivation or encounter texts beyond their linguistic capacity. Teachers play a vital role in facilitating resources, setting achievable reading goals, and celebrating students’ progress to maintain enthusiasm and also commitment, which is quite a challenge.

All in all, the most effective reading instruction combines intensive and extensive approaches, as each complements the other in addressing different learning needs. For instance, intensive reading equips students with the analytical skills to confront challenging texts, while extensive reading builds fluency and confidence by allowing students to encounter language in a more relaxed environment. As Grabe and Stoller (2020) assert, “reading development is best achieved through a blend of strategies that address both depth and breadth, enabling learners to apply their skills across contexts.” In real-life situations, teachers might use intensive reading to introduce specific grammar points or vocabulary, followed by extensive reading activities that allow students to encounter these elements in broader contexts. Moreover, incorporating technology such as e-libraries or reading apps, can further support this integration by offering diverse materials and tracking student progress. Encouraging discussions, book clubs, or reflective journals can also help to bond the gap between these

approaches, enhancing a more comprehensive reading experience.

Teaching reading skills is a multifaceted process that demands attention to both intensive and extensive reading strategies. While intensive reading cultivates detailed comprehension and analytical progress, extensive reading fosters fluency, motivation and enjoyment. By adopting a balanced and student-centered approach, teachers can unlock the full potential of reading as a tool for learning and personal growth in their students.

3.3 Reasons for using literature in an English classroom

The inclusion of literature in English classrooms has long been upheld as a means of enriching language learning and fostering critical thinking. Literature offers authentic language use, cultural insights, and opportunities for personal engagement, making it an indispensable tool for reading activities. When effectively integrated, literature promotes linguistic, cognitive and emotional development, creating a multidimensional learning experience. Literature exposes students to authentic and varied language use, presenting vocabulary, idioms and sentence structures in meaningful contexts. Unlike invented language examples in textbooks, literary texts demonstrate how language works in diverse and complex manners.

According to Lazar (2009): “Literature provides a rich context for language learning by showing the nuances and variation of language in use.” Whether through a classic novel or a contemporary poem, students encounter expressions that deepen their understanding of English grammar and style. Moreover, literature enhances critical reading skills. As McRae (1991) explains, literary texts “require readers to infer meaning, interpret symbolism, and consider multiple perspectives,” all of which are essential for developing a higher-order thinking. Such analytical engagement encourages a more profound appreciation of language and equips students with strategies for interpreting both literary and non-literary texts.

Another significant benefit of using literature in reading activities is its capacity to offer cultural insights. Through literature, students explore different societies, histories and worldviews, broadening their understanding of human experiences. For instance, reading works by authors from diverse backgrounds can illuminate cultural norms and values, helping

to create a global perspective. Duff and Maley (2007) emphasize that: “literature humanizes learning by offering glimpses into the lives, struggles, and joys of others, promoting empathy and cultural awareness.” These cultural explorations also contribute to language development. When students analyze how cultural context influences a narrative, they become better equipped in order to comprehend idiomatic expressions, figurative language and pragmatic distinctions. Such skills are essential for advanced language proficiency, and for interpreting texts that go beyond literal meanings.

Literature’s capacity to resonate on a personal level makes it a powerful motivator for reading activities. Students often relate to themes, characters, and conflicts in literary texts, which can inspire meaningful classroom discussions and personal reflections. This personal connection not only enhances comprehension but also fosters a positive attitude toward reading. Collie and Slater (2008) note that “stories captivate the imagination, drawing students into the world of the text and encouraging them to explore language in new and creative ways.” For example, assigning novels that reflect adolescent challenges can help students feel understood, creating an emotional bond with the material and increasing their motivation to read. This engagement supports the intrinsic motivation needed for sustained reading practice.

Different genres of literature – poetry, drama, novels and short stories – offer unique opportunities for developing specific reading skills. Poetry, with its condensed language and rhythmic qualities, encourages close reading and appreciation of stylistic devices. Drama provides dialogue-rich texts, ideal for practicing spoken language and exploring pragmatic aspects of communication. Short stories, being concise and varied, are particularly effective for classroom reading activities, as they offer manageable yet rich texts that cater to a range of proficiency levels (Carter & Long, 1991). For example, analyzing a poem might focus on metaphors, while reading a play might explore intonation and conversational cues. Such varied approaches not only keep lessons dynamic but also address different aspects of language learning. Literature challenges students to think critically about themes, conflicts and characters, fostering a deeper engagement with the texts. It is also open to interpretation, encouraging students to form and defend their opinions.

As Rosenblatt (1995) highlights in her transactional theory, “the reading process involves a dynamic interaction between the text and the reader, where meaning is co-constructed through

interpretation.” This interaction enhances critical thinking and promotes creativity, as students imagine alternative scenarios or empathize with complex characters. Therefore, using literature in English classrooms enriches activities by exposing students to authentic language, cultural diversity and personally booming themes. Its ability to engage students emotionally and intellectually makes it a versatile tool for developing linguistic and cognitive skills. As Lazar (2009) assert: “the value of literature lies not only in its language but in its power to transform and inspire learners.” Incorporating literature into reading activities enables teachers to create an impactful learning experience, equipping students to handle the nuances of both language and real-life experiences.

3.4 Use of authentic materials in the FL classroom

Authentic materials have become a keystone of contemporary foreign language (FL) instruction, offering learners access to real-world language use and cultural context. Defined as texts or media created for native speakers rather than language learners, authentic materials include everything from newspapers and podcasts to menus and social media posts. Their use in FL classrooms enriches learning by encouraging linguistic competence, cultural awareness and engagement. When effectively integrated, authentic materials bridge the gap between classroom instruction and practical language application, preparing students for real-life communicative situations.

One of the primary reasons for using authentic materials in FL instruction is their ability to expose students to genuine language in use. Unlike textbook materials, which are often simplified and predictable, authentic materials present the complexities, idiomatic expressions, and varying registers of the target language; in this case, English language. As Gilmore (2007) observes, “authentic materials reflect the dynamic and unpredictable nature of real communication, providing learners with an essential resource for developing their linguistic competence.” By interacting with authentic texts, students encounter vocabulary, grammar and discourse patterns as they naturally occur. For instance, reading a magazine article introduces students to rhetorical structures and specific terms related with this domain, while listening to a podcast familiarizes them with pronunciation, intonation, and conversational dynamics. These experiences enhance both receptive and productive skills, making learners more confident and capable of communicating.

Authentic materials also serve as cultural windows, allowing students to explore the norms, values, and traditions of the target language community. When learners engage with authentic texts, they gain insights into cultural practices, humour and idiomatic expressions, which are essential for successful communication. According to Berardo (2006): “using authentic materials fosters intercultural competence by presenting the language within its cultural framework, making lessons more meaningful and contextually relevant.” Therefore, a travel brochure can introduce students to the geography, customs and landmarks of a foreign city, while a menu offers insights into local cuisine and dining etiquette. Such cultural exposure not only enhances comprehension but also nurtures empathy and global awareness, helping students become well-informed language users who can navigate diverse cultural contexts.

Another compelling advantage of authentic materials is their ability to capture students’ interest and motivation. Because these materials are designed for native speakers, they often resonate with learners on a personal level, making lessons more engaging and enjoyable. Authentic materials provide real-life relevance, showing students the practical applications of the language that they are studying. As Peacock (1997) notes, “Authentic materials create a sense of purpose and realism in language learning, encouraging students to see the language as a living tool for communication.” To cite an instance, analyzing social media posts can connect students to contemporary trends, while watching a short film offers an entertaining yet educational pathway to practice listening skills. When students see the immediate utility of their language skills, they are more likely to remain committed and motivated.

Despite their benefits, authentic materials also have challenges, particularly for beginners who may find the language too complex or the cultural references too unfamiliar. To address this, teachers must carefully select materials that align with their students’ proficiency levels and interests. Simplifying tasks, such as focusing on specific vocabulary or asking students to infer meaning from context, can make authentic materials accessible without diminishing their value. Furthermore, teachers should provide scaffolding and support, as mentioned before, to guide students through challenging texts. Pre-reading or pre-listening activities, such as discussing key themes or introducing essential vocabulary, can help students approach authentic materials with confidence. As Tomlison (2011) emphasizes: “the key to successful use of authentic materials lies in careful selection, thoughtful task design, and a clear

understanding of learner needs.”

The ultimate goal of language learning is to prepare students for effective communication in real-life situations. Authentic materials play a key role in achieving this goal by simulating the unpredictability of real-world language use. They encourage students to move beyond the safety of classroom language, equipping them with the skills and strategies to interpret and respond to spontaneous communication. Using authentic materials also fosters a sense of autonomy and self-directed learning. When students engage with materials like news articles or online videos outside the classroom, they develop the ability to look for and process language independently. This habit not only reinforces classroom learning but also ensures long-term language retention and growth.

Therefore, the integration of authentic materials in the FL classroom is an essential practice that enhances linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and learner engagement. By showcasing real-life language in relevant contexts, authentic materials empower students to deal with the nuances of language and communication with confidence. As Gilmore (2007) said: “Authentic materials transform language learning into an active, dynamic process, connecting learners to the lived experiences of the language and its speakers.” With thoughtful implementation, these materials can empower learners to become proficient and culturally aware language users, ready to engage with the global community.

4. Innovative design

The usage of authentic materials in an FL classroom has long been recognized as a mean to enhance learners’ exposure to real-life language and foster communicative competence (Gilmore, 2007, Krashen, 1982). Therefore, the best manner to achieve their full potential would be by using innovative instructional designs that scaffold learners’ engagement with authentic texts. This body of research clarifies the context in which the innovative lesson design is effective, identifies the intended audience, outlines the objectives we aim to achieve through its implementation, and describes the activities that will be used to accomplish them.

4.1 Context

The proposed innovation will be implemented in a public secondary school located in the Comunidad Valenciana. The institution offers courses from the first to the fourth year of

compulsory secondary education, as well as the first and second years of upper secondary education (Bachillerato). For the purposes of this proposal, the model group selected will be Bachillerato stage, in specific the second year, as the reading of the novels will be high level. The school provides different academic pathways, including Social Sciences and Arts, Technology and Sciences, and Humanities, which reflects its diverse educational orientation.

The facilities of the institution are suitable for the integration of innovative methodologies. Each one of the classes has a computer for the teacher, an interactive board for students to be able to follow the sessions, two pens of different colors to write on it, and 25 tables with its chairs. The school itself also has two computer laboratories, each with capacity for 25 students, allowing the incorporation of digital resources and multimodal learning into the lessons.

Even though the facilities of this center cover the basic needs of students, there was an urgent need of creating a space where students could focus their attention on reading in a relaxed atmosphere that encouraged concentration. Moreover, students' lack of space inside their classrooms to create this corner was an issue that teachers were eager to solve. Therefore, the students worked on a formal request to create a reading corner in a support classroom, and the school council approved it. This space includes access to books, dictionaries and other reference materials that can be consulted during the sessions. The reading corner is equipped with a carpet covering the entire floor, as well as cushions and beanbags, designed to provide a comfortable and welcoming environment.

From a legal perspective, the Valencian educational system emphasizes inclusive and accessible education for all learners. According to Article 52 of *Law 8/2024 on Universal Accessibility* (BOE), the regional education authority must guarantee access on equal terms to all persons with disabilities to a public, inclusive, and quality education," ensuring reasonable adaptations in curriculum, methodology and assessment. Furthermore, the resolution of July 27, 2021, instructs educational teams to identify barriers, provide individualized support measures, and create inclusive learning environments within mainstream schools (BOE).

The innovative lesson plan aligns with these mandates by incorporating strategies that support students with special educational needs (SEN). Through scaffolded tasks, flexible grouping,

multimodal materials and accessible resources, SEN students are actively included and supported in meaningful reading activities. By combining a carefully designed physical learning environment with pedagogical innovation, the plan ensures that all learners can participate fully, improve comprehension, and develop critical thinking skills in the foreign language.

4.2 Addresses

The lesson plan is designed for a group of 15 students in a small high school, whose overall proficiency level corresponds to a B1+ on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). According to CEFR descriptors, learners at this level can understand the main points of clear, standard input on familiar topics, describe experiences and events, and produce simple connected text (Council of Europe, 2020). They are able to interact with a degree of fluency, although they may still struggle with more complex structures, abstract topics or idiomatic language.

This proficiency profile makes the group particularly suitable for an innovative lesson design based on authentic materials. While B1+ students can manage accessible authentic texts such as short newspaper articles, blogs, interviews or adapted literary excerpts, they require scaffolding strategies to fully engage with meaning. The CEFR emphasizes that learners at this stage benefits from developing both comprehension strategies (e.g. skimming, inferring meaning from context) and productive strategies (e.g., summarizing, expressing opinions, negotiating meaning) in order to bridge the gap between receptive skills and more advanced communicative competence. Innovative classroom design – through structured pre-reading activities, collaborative tasks and multimodal resources – provides this necessary support while maintaining authenticity and engagement.

Moreover, the lesson plan will take into account all those students with special educational needs (SEN) within the classroom. Innovative lesson designs are particularly relevant in this regard; for instance, Elleuch (2024) highlights that positive psychology – informed approaches in language education: “hold the promise of cultivating enriching and effective learning environments” for SEN students, as they provide multiple entry points to authentic materials through differentiated tasks, multimodal input, and collaborative activities. By incorporating varied strategies – such as visual support, flexible grouping, and scaffolded

comprehension activities – we as teachers can ensure that SEN learners participate actively in reading instruction alongside their classmates.

4.3 Purpose

The main purpose of creating an innovative design in an FL classroom is to transform reading activities into a process that would be engaging, meaningful and reflective of the real-world language use. Traditional textbook-driven reading activities often limit students to controlled texts and mechanical comprehension tasks, which may reduce motivation and hinder the development of critical thinking (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Therefore, innovative designs seek to place reading as an active practice that connects the learner with authentic contexts. By incorporating authentic materials into the classroom, students expose themselves to a wider range of topics and situations that those typically found in textbooks. These resources also introduce current vocabulary, expressions, and grammatical structures – showing how the language is used in real – life social contexts. In doing so, learners not only practice reading but also engage with the cultural and pragmatic dimensions of the language, making their experience more meaningful and relevant (Assiddiq, 2019).

At the core of this innovation is the goal of enhancing motivation and engagement. Research shows that students are more likely to invest effort in reading when texts are authentic, culturally rich, and relevant to their interests (Gilmore, 2007; Ushioda, 2011). An innovation lesson design creates opportunities to work with materials in ways that are far more accessible, collaborative and motivating than traditional textbooks. This not only encourages learners to read more frequently, but also motivates the student to explore new knowledge through a foreign language.

Another key purpose of innovative lesson design is to promote students' awareness of the fundamental value of reading as a pathway to construct new knowledge. Reading in a foreign language engages learners in a complex cognitive process that goes beyond the recognition of single words. Through the use of different strategies, such as scaffolding, learners are guided to decode, interpret and integrate meaning, allowing them to access not only the literal message of the text but also its broader sense.

Fundamentally, the purpose of innovation is to bridge the gap between classroom learning and

the outside world. By introducing authentic materials into creative and innovative lesson plans, educators prepare the students to use reading as a tool for communication, cultural awareness and personal growth. In this way, innovative classroom design ensures that reading instruction contributes to developing not only competent language students but also critical, motivated and autonomous learners.

4.4 Planification

In this section, we are going to explain the different points that were taken into account to successfully develop the main body of our project: the configuration of our innovative lesson designs: the organization of the sessions, the creation of the materials, the implementation of the sessions and the creation and implementation too of the evaluation criteria.

4.4.1 Phases

This lesson plan is structured over three connected sessions, all unified by a central aim: to use reading as a gateway to reinforce key language skills in the foreign language classroom – vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and more. Each session will center on an excerpt from a chosen novel, making the reading the center of in-class learning. *Blackwater I: The Flood* was the chosen book for two main reasons. First, it addresses a gap in students’ cultural awareness through immersion in a past literary world. Second, since the series is already popular among the students, it motivates them to read and engage. By integrating a book that students enjoy into classroom activities, this approach presents reading not only as a dynamic tool, but also a powerful way of learning a language in upper secondary school.

In the second phase, the lesson plan was structured as follows: firstly, at the beginning of each session, students will engage in a brief introductory activity designed either to introduce the main topic of the session or to review the content covered in the previous one. At the end of each class, the teacher will facilitate a short activity where students summarize what they have learned during the session, or work to revise them at home. The aim is for students to work collaboratively within the classroom, ensuring that any questions or doubts can be handled by the teacher and peers. Throughout the rest of the session, two or three primary activities will be done, guided by the reading of the first chapter from the book, which starts on the first session of this lesson plan.

According to the Real Decreto 1105/2014, dated December 26, 2014, which establishes the basic curriculum for Educación Secundaria Obligatoria and Bachillerato in Spain, the subject Primera Lengua Extranjera I in 2º de Bachillerato is organized into four main blocs:

1. Comprensión de textos orales (Listening comprehension)
2. Producción de textos orales: interacción y expresión (Oral production: interaction and expression)
3. Comprensión de textos escritos (Reading comprehension)
4. Producción de textos escritos: expresión e interacción (written production: expresión and interaction)

These blocks are designed to develop students' linguistics skills in a comprehensive manner, aligning with the objectives and competences outlined in the curriculum. Therefore, all the activities created in this lesson plan are lined according to these four main blocks, and in each one of the different sessions, a wide variety of resources will be used, in order to adapt the needs of SEN if there were none.

Finally, in the third phase, the evaluation criteria were studied. According to the activities that were created, we have assigned different kind of assessments: the majority of the activities will follow a continuous assessment, so students can add it up to the rest of the activities that they will be doing through the semester. In addition, there is also a self-assessment criterion for the teacher; according to the Augusta University (2023), teacher self-assessments empower teachers to practice autonomy in setting goals and creating action plans for improvement. Moreover, there is also a reading assessment criterion for a reading test.

4.4.2 Resources

To achieve the main goal of this project, several resources will be required. First, a reading corner should be set up inside the classroom used, where students can quietly read their books. This space will also include monolingual dictionaries. For those activities where students may need access to the Internet, they will use their own tablets, instead of relying on the school computers.

In addition, individual tables and chairs will be necessary, since students will complete the reading test independently. For those activities where they have to work in groups, they can set

the tables accordingly. Other essential resources include a blackboard with markers, a projector for the teacher to share visual materials, and HDMI cable to connect the laptop to the projector, and photocopies for students to complete assigned activities.

From a scheduling perspective, the teacher will require two sessions, ideally within the same week. As for human resources, both students and teachers will actively participate in the project.

4.4.3 Activities

The activities created to implement this innovative design have been multiple. However, before starting to put the main focus on the kind of activities used to carry on with this project, we want to focus on the methodologies we used to create them. Firstly, the CLIL was considered, as using authentic materials to teach a lesson promotes also the learning of specific content, f.e. history, through English language. *Blackwater* depicts the situation of American Deep South of the 1950's; therefore, students do not only learn English per se, but the whole cultural and social context of that period of time. Moreover, the CLT methodology it was also considered in the performance of these activities, as the main focus was to create situations where students could simulate real-life communication exchanges. This helps students to express ideas fluently and also prepare them for the real-world use.

As it was mentioned previously, according to the Real Decreto 1105/2014, dated December 26, 2014, which establishes the basic curriculum for Educación Secundaria Obligatoria and Bachillerato in Spain, the subject *Primera Lengua Extranjera I* in 2º de Bachillerato is organized into four main blocs:

1. Listening comprehension. In this innovative lesson design, listening comprehension will be addressed through teacher-led reading. In activity 2 of the first session, the teacher will read the prologue of the book, which provides a detailed description of the setting and serves as the best resource for introducing the story. Students will follow along with the text while listening, simulating an audiobook experience.
2. Oral production: interaction and expression. In this innovative lesson design, oral production will be addressed through students' participation in the warm-up activities, as they are all oral, as well as through the oral presentation of the collaboratively written text, or through debates on topics such as predicting the continuation of the story.
3. Reading comprehension. In this innovative lesson design, the book serves as the central resource for the session. Students will read various sections of the book and complete a

reading comprehension test to demonstrate their understanding of the text.

4. Written production: interaction and expression. In this innovative lesson design, written production will be addressed through the creation of a collaborative writing, where students will work hand to hand to produce a full text.

Focusing now on the lessons, these are divided into two sessions of 55 minutes each. The main objectives of both these lessons are:

1. Students will develop reading comprehension and critical analysis. Students will read sections of the book and identify main ideas, themes, and narrative techniques, to demonstrate a full understanding of the plot, characters and literary style.
2. Students will enhance oral and written expression. Through discussions, debates and collaborative writing tasks based on the text, students will improve their ability to express opinions, summarize content, and support arguments both orally and in writing.
3. Students will raise engagement and cultural / literary awareness. By exploring the book's setting, context, and cultural references, students will develop a greater appreciation for literature as a medium to understand human experiences and social themes.

For this reason, each one of the sessions contains:

- A warm-up activity, with which we activate the prior knowledge of the student and contextualize the focus of the present session. This kind of activity helps the student to lose up a bit and start focusing on the main aim of the lesson.
- Two – three main activities per session.
 - 1st session: for the first activity, the teacher will use the aid of some visuals to show students a map of the location of the village depicted on the book. This will help students to contextualize the cultural background. After that, they will carry on with the second activity, the creation of a vocabulary index, which is a powerful tool because it turns passive exposure to words into personalized and organized learning. It also boosts students' memory, as they have to retain the words mentioned before and revising the index regularly strengthens vocabulary acquisition. After that, they will follow with the third activity, a collaborative reading, which promotes active engagement from the students, as well as

encourage peer learning and build confidence and motivation on them. Moreover, it helps to develop communication skills, as students sometimes negotiate meaning when encounter words they do not know, or engage in academic discussions from that. Finally, a wrap-up activity summarizes the whole session, as students consolidate the key points from the lesson and encourages reflection, since students think about how they learned, not just what they learned.

- 2nd session: on the first activity, students are going to use the resource of Word Art to create a word cloud of the previous session. By doing this, students will refresh the previous knowledge, and it will be easier to follow up with the lesson. After that, they will have the main activity of the session, a reading test. This activity has been created in order to check the comprehension of the text. The test consists on two main activities: an open – answer questions, and true/false sentences. The sentences that result false on this section would have to be justified. After doing this, students will have the next activity, a collaborative writing. This is a perfect dynamic activity, as it combines different ideas and perspectives of the different students and develops communication and negotiations skills on them. Finally, the last activity is the configuration of a chapter review paper: it encourages active learning, as students are actively engaging with the text rather than passively reading, and it also reinforces comprehension, as they must identify main ideas, supporting details and key vocabulary.

It is advisably to remark that at the end of both sessions, the teacher will have a self- assessment paper, where teachers evaluate their own teaching practices, strategies and effectiveness in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses areas for improvement. Moreover, the use of warm-up activities and wrap-up activities, to start and finish the sessions, helps students to identify when the lesson has started or ended. The use of gamification in them can be highly effective, as it boosts motivation and engagement while providing immediate feedback for the students.

Therefore, here we present the session planning using tables, with the established times for each activity, and a brief explanation for both the teaches and the students. It is important to remark

that some activities have been adapted for a SEN student with a hearing disability of the 35%.

Teacher's name: Marina Berenguer	Date: 09/2025
Course: Reading <i>Blackwater I: The Flood</i>	Duration: 2 sessions of, 55-minutes
Subject: English as a Foreign Language	Level: 2 nd of Bachillerato

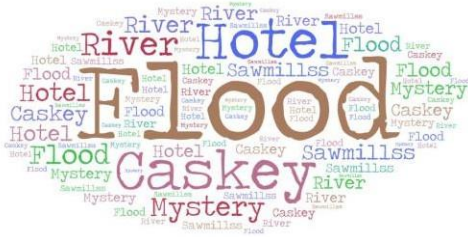
1 st Session

Time	Content & Teacher Activity	Student Activity
5 min	<p>Warm-up:</p> <p>The teacher will show students a picture (a map) from Perdido, the city where the plot of the novel takes place. T will ask few questions about it in order to make students guess what is the novel going to talk about. Here there are a few suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of town do you think Perdido is, judging by this map? (rural, industrial, small town) - How does this map help you imagine the setting of the story? - What atmosphere do you expect in a town like Perdido in 1919? - Some family homes are marked on the map. What might this tell us about social class, family importance, or power in the story? - What role could the rivers, the levee or the sawmills play in the novel? Do they suggest conflict, survival, community life ... - Why do you think the author might include a map like this before starting a story? - Looking at the map, what kinds of themes do you expect to find in the novel <i>Blackwater</i>? (family, secrets, nature, survival) <p>The SEN adaptation for our student would be to add some visual support, as we project the map; and to write the questions on the</p>	<p><i>Okay guys, today we are going to start by looking at a map of Perdido, the town where our novel takes place. I'm going to ask you some questions about it so we can guess what the story might be about.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at the map, what kind of town do you think Perdido is? Is it rural, industrial, or a small town? • How does this map help you imagine the setting of the story? • What kind of atmosphere do you expect in a town like Perdido in 1919? • Some family homes are marked on the map. What do you think this tells us about social class, family importance, or power in the story? • ...

	<p>board so they can read them. Moreover, we can pair them with a peer who can repeat or summarize orally spoken instructions if needed.</p> <p>The picture of the map is included in the Annex I</p>	
5 min	<p>Activity 1. Presentation of the setting</p> <p>The teacher will ask students to create predictions about the previous brainstorming activity. Students will write down few sentences in groups of 4 and they will work together for a couple of minutes. After that, they will put them in common with the rest of the group.</p> <p>The SEN adaptation for our students would be to write down the guide for the group activity, and to write down also their predictions, to make it easier for them to follow.</p>	<p><i>Now we are going to make some predictions based on the brainstorming we did earlier.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will work in groups of 4 and write down a few sentences about what you think might happen in the story. • Take a couple of minutes to discuss and write your ideas together. • After that, each group will share their predictions with the whole class.
15 min	<p>Activity 2. Introducing the book</p> <p>Before beginning the first chapter of the book, the teacher will guide students in creating a vocabulary index, which will be used throughout the sessions to write down and organize any new words.</p> <p>After doing that, the teacher will read the Prologue of the book, and students will follow through in each of their copies.</p> <p>The SEN adaptation here includes: to write down the instructions for the vocabulary index and the prologue as well – they would already have their own book -; highlighting the words they do not understand in the text, and using speech-to-text app such as Google Docs Voice Typing.</p> <p>The example of the vocabulary index is included in the annex II.</p>	<p><i>Listen up! We are going to start a vocabulary index to keep track of all the new words you find in the text.</i></p> <p>-You should bring your index to every class so you can check it whenever a word comes up again.</p> <p>-After I finish reading the prologue, write down in your index any words you didn't understand.</p>

25 min	<p>Activity 3. Collaborative reading</p> <p>The teacher will assign Chapter 1, from page 21 to the middle of page 26, to be read in class. For this activity, a different dynamic will be introduced: students will read out loud until they reach a stop point, at which they may either continue or pass the turn to a classmate. To ensure participation, each student must read at least three complete sentences before handing over. As they read, students are encouraged to highlight any expressions or passages that they find difficult to understand.</p> <p>After that, teacher will organize them in groups of 4 people to find out together the meaning of the different words and expressions.</p> <p>The SEN adaptation in this case would be the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Text in advance for them to preview the text visually. -Written instructions for reading turns -Highlighting text - Allow the student to contribute with writing answers when discussion in a group. 	<p><i>Now we are going to start reading the text out loud.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each of you will read up to three full sentences. After that, you can either continue or pass the turn to another classmate. • While you're reading, highlight any words you don't understand. <p>Once we finish reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get into groups of four and work together to figure out the meaning of the words you highlighted. • You can use dictionaries, but only monolingual English dictionaries are allowed.
5 min	<p>Wrap-up activity:</p> <p>During the final five minutes, the teacher will encourage students to personalize their books with a stamp and briefly express the sensations or emotions the books evoke. Some prompt questions could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did these pages make you feel while reading them? - If you could describe the book in one word or sentence, what would it be? <p>The SEN adaptation in this case would be to write down the instructions, as the book stamp is already visual.</p> <p>Some examples of the stamp books that they can use are attached in annex III</p>	<p><i>In the last five minutes of class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can personalize your books with a stamp. • Take a moment to think about the sensations or emotions the book has made you feel and share them briefly.

Time	Content & Teacher Activity	Student Activity
5 min	<p>Warm-up:</p> <p>In this first activity of the second session, the teacher will use the webpage Wordart to brainstorm words learned in the previous session. In order to do that, the teacher will project the image on the blackboard. This is an example of how would the Word Art look like when they</p>	<p><i>In our first activity today, we're going to use Wordart to brainstorm the words we learned in the last session.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will project the Wordart on the blackboard so everyone can see it. As we go, we'll add the words you remember from

	<p>finish it:</p> <p>The SEN adaptation would be the same as in the previous warm-up activity.</p> 	<p>the previous class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an example of how the Wordart will look when we're finished.
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25 min	<p>Activity 1. Reading test.</p> <p>In this session, the first activity that students will have is a reading test. The teacher will give each of the students a small piece of text, an excerpt of the book, and some questions to answer. The first exercise of the test will be a few open questions about the text, followed by some true/false sentences. It is important to remark that all the false sentences should be justified.</p> <p>The SEN adaptation would be as it follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Written instructions -Make sure the excerpt is printed individually -Remind the 20 minute limit visually <p>The reading test is included in the Annex IV.</p>	<p><i>The next activity is going to be a reading test.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will give each of you a small excerpt from the book along with some questions. The first part of the test has a few open questions about the text. The second part has true/false sentences. Remember: if a sentence is false, you must explain why it's false. You have twenty minutes to complete the test.
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20 min	<p>Activity 2. Collaborative writing.</p> <p>In this activity, the teacher will organise students in groups of three people, and they will assign each group a short excerpt or scene from the book. In 15 minutes, the group must rewrite the scene from different perspectives for each group. For example: another character’s point of view, a modernized version of the same moment, a “what if” version if a key detail had changed ... The group has to produce</p>	<p><i>I want you to organise in groups of three.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each group will get a short excerpt or scene from the book. • You have 15 minutes to rewrite the scene from a different perspective. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Another character’s point of view
	<p>a short paragraph and they will do it as a chain writing: one student writes the first sentences, then pass it on to the next classmates, who continues on writing, and so on.</p> <p>Finally, if the time allows it, a few groups can read their rewritten scene aloud. The class discusses how shifting perspective changes the story.</p> <p>The SEN adaptation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Written instructions -Use writing or gestures to communicate -Give them the excerpt in advance so they can see it. - Give them the option to share their part in writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ A modernized version of the same moment ◦ A “what if” version if a key detail had changed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your group will write a short paragraph using chain writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ One student writes the first sentences, ◦ Then passes it to the next student, who continues, and so on. <p>If we have time, a few groups can read their rewritten scene aloud, and we’ll discuss how shifting perspective changes the story.</p>
5 min	<p>Wrap-up activity:</p> <p>In this activity, the teacher will give students a piece of white paper, and they will give them instructions to create their own chapter review paper. The teacher will explain the students that after each chapter, they will have to create one of these reviews. If they do not have enough time, students can finish at home.</p>	<p>As we have a few minutes until finishing, you’re going to create your own chapter review paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’ll give each of you a piece of white paper and instructions on how to make it. • After each chapter, you’ll need to create one of these reviews.

	<p>In this document, there is an example they can follow attached in the annex V.</p> <p>The SEN adaptation goes as it follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Written instructions -Visual examples -Give them the alternative to write or draw their review -Flexible time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you don't finish it in class, you can complete it at home.
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4.4.4 Evaluation criteria

In order to evaluate the different activities students are going to do, this innovative lesson design suggest a continuous assessment, as the teacher can observe the participation of the students while doing the daily activities, and marking them. The main purpose when dealing with continuous assessment, as Dylan William (20122) suggested, is: “to improve learning, not simply to measure it.” Therefore, when we as teachers choose to evaluate with a continuous assessment, we will bring out students the opportunity to make every day counts.

However, not all the activities on both these sessions are going to be on a continuous assessment. Students will have a reading test in the second session. So, to assess that, we will use a rubric: we have created a table with the criterion and the different levels that students need to achieve to evaluate the reading comprehension. The table has a score from 1 to 4 in each of the criterion; been 1 the least and 4 the maximum grade. Each of the criterion have been chosen wisely according to the kind of activities that students are going to perform on the test. Moreover, we want to add that feedback will be given to students in open - answer questions, that require full sentences (annex VI).

Last but not least, we think it is important for us, as teachers, to be also evaluated, as our work is key in the comprehension, motivation and engagement of our students. That is why we have created a table where there are a few statements about the normal functioning of the classroom, a score from 1 to 5 and a side for notes to comment if we want to give ourselves some feedback about it (annex V).

5. Conclusion and critical review

The use of authentic materials in the foreign language classroom has been widely recognized as an effective way to bridge the gap between language learning and real-world communication. In the specific case of reading skills, authentic texts provide learners with exposure to real-world language use, offering not only linguistic input but also cultural and contextual as well. Unlike artificial texts, authentic materials encourage students to engage with the language as it is naturally used, which can improve comprehension strategies, critical thinking and overall motivation. Furthermore, integrating literature or other real-life resources into classroom practice creates meaningful opportunities for students to combine language learning with cultural and social dimensions, showing the reading process as more relevant and engaging.

The primary aim of this research was to demonstrate that an updated novel or book could serve as an effective tool for teaching English. Our findings suggest that, although challenges related to timing, planning and task difficulty were encountered, the use of authentic materials is possible for guiding several class sessions, even if not for an entire semester. The selected novel, *Blackwater*, proved to be valuable, as it not only supported language learning but also encouraged cultural awareness by immersing students in the social and historical context of the 1950s America. These results underline the potential of authentic literary texts to provide a full learning experience, combining cultural insight and linguistic skills. Overall, this study demonstrates that integrating authentic materials into a classroom can be both practical and meaningful, offering a different way to engage students with the language while increasing their cultural and historical contexts.

During the process of working on this project, we encountered several challenges, which we will now elaborate on. First and foremost, it proved to be quite difficult to integrate grammatical explanations directly from the novel. In many cases, we found that the most effective approach as to provide explanations in context – for example, by extracting sentences from the text and focusing on verbal tenses, sentence structures, or other grammatical elements. We recognize that grammar cannot be taught solely through deductive methods; both deductive and inductive approaches are essential. Consequently, we suggest the development of activities that specifically highlight grammatical structures within certain sections of the novel, enabling students to engage with the language more actively and meaningfully.

Another significant challenge was creating a reading test entirely from scratch. This was our first experience with such a task, and it required careful consideration of several factors, including the students' proficiency level, the time available to complete the test, and the length and complexity of each activity. However, we realized that the time allocated in a lesson plan often differs from the time students actually need to complete the exercises, which presented additional difficulties. Reflecting on this, we acknowledge that we could have been more deliberate in organizing the available time according to the difficulty of each task. Looking back now, some of our planned activities may have been overly ambitious given the constraints.

Furthermore, we needed to consider the inherent challenge of reading a novel set in the 1950s. The historical context introduces vocabulary and expressions that may be unfamiliar or outdated for our current students. While this added an extra difficulty, it also provided a valuable opportunity for cultural appreciation, allowing students to better understand the period and engage with the text in a historically manner. Overall, these challenges highlighted the importance of thoughtful planning and creativity in designing activities and assessments based on literary texts. They also emphasize the need to balance ambition with practicality, ensuring the tasks to be achievable for learning.

Although this project focused on using authentic materials, such as novels, future research could explore the practical viability of implementing similar projects in real-world classroom settings. While our findings suggest that using an updated or contemporary novel can enhance student motivation and promote a greater enthusiasm for reading, further investigation would be needed to determine whether such materials could effectively serve as the central framework for an entire semester of English. Future studies might examine how different types of authentic texts – from contemporary literature to digital media – can be integrated into curriculum planning, as well as how students' engagement, comprehension and language development are influenced. Additionally, research could investigate the challenges teachers may face in designing lessons around a single literary text, for example when adapting materials for diverse proficiency levels.

6. References:

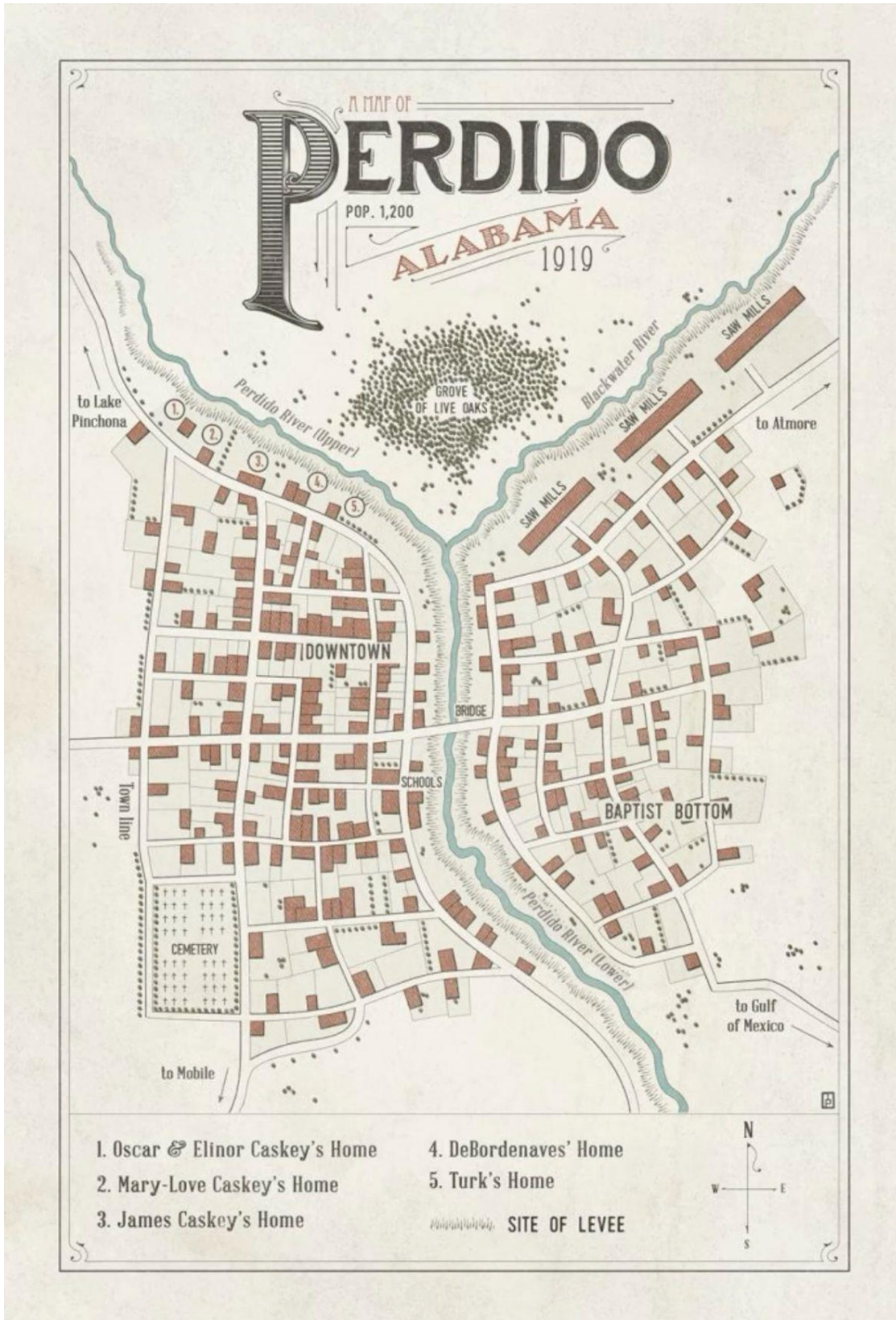
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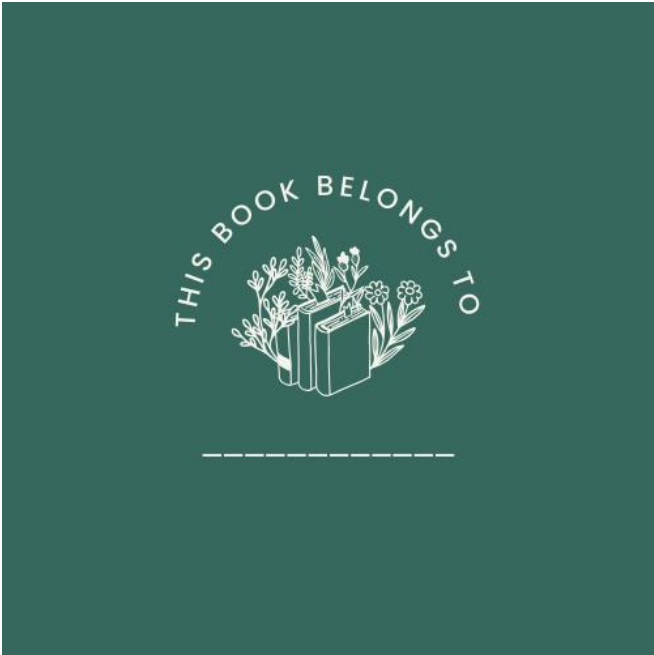
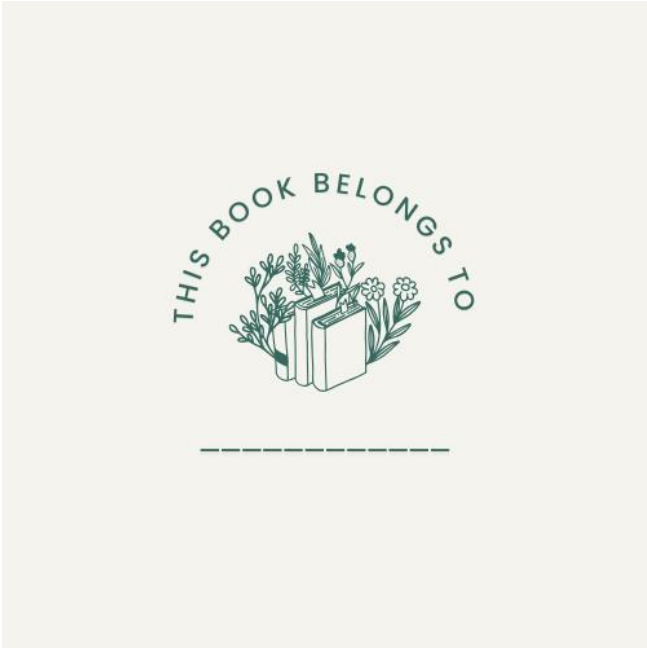
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7. Annexes

Annex I: Map of Perdido



Annex III: Book Stamps



Annex IV: Reading test

Reading test

Name and Surname:

Read the text and answer the questions below.

From the live oak where Bray Sugarwhite deposited Oscar Caskey and the rescued Elinor Dammert a wagon track ran through the pine forest. It went past the Zion Grace Church and the Driver house, crossed the Old Federal Road, and ended three miles farther on in a sugarcane camp run by a black family called Sapp.

Oscar Caskey was the first gentleman of Perdido; even in a town so small, that distinction goes for something. He was first gentleman not only by right of birth – being the acknowledged heir of the Caskeys – but also by his appearance and his natural bearing. He was tall and angular, like all the Caskeys, but his movements were looser and more graceful than those of either his sister or his mother. His features were fine and mobile, his speech was careful and elegantly facetious. There was a brightness in his blue eyes, and he seemed always to be suppressing a smile. He had a courtly kind of manner that did not alter according to whom he spoke – he was as courteous to Bray's common-law wife as he was to the rich manufacturer from Boston who had come to inspect the Caskey lumberyard.

On Easter morning, as Oscar and Elinor walked along, the sun behind them shone through the top branches of the pines. Steam rose out of the dew on the underlying carpet of pine needles, and billowed around them. Great sheets of water, still and steaming, lay now and then in slight depressions on either side of the track where the water table had risen above the level of the ground.

"That's not river water, that's groundwater", Oscar pointed out. "You could get down on your hands and knees like a dog and lap it." He stiffened suddenly, with the fear that this had perhaps been an impolite suggestion. To cover up the possible awkwardness, he turned to Miss Elinor and asked, "What did you drink in the Osceola? I believe, Miss Elinor, that it's just not possible to drink flood-water without dying on the spot".

"I didn't have anything to drink at all", replied Elinor. She didn't seem to care that she mystified him.

"Miss Elinor, you went thirsty for four days?"

"I don't go thirsty", said Elinor, smiling. "But I do go hungry." She rubbed her stomach as if to soothe rumblings there, though Oscar had heard none and Miss Elinor certainly did not give the appearance of having gone four days without food. They continued some yards in silence.



Reading test

1. How does the author show that Oscar Caskey is considered important in his town? Give examples from the text.

2. What do the descriptions of the forest, the steam, and the water tell you about the setting? How do they make you feel as a reader?

3. How are Oscar and Elinor different in the way they think about things like hunger and thirst? What does this tell you about their characters?

4. Why do you think Oscar is careful about being polite, even to people he doesn't know well? What does this say about him?

5. In the conversation between Oscar and Elinor about drinking water, what can you learn about how they understand each other?

Annex V:

CHAPTER BOOK REVIEW

Technical sheet

Title

Book Name

Page numbers

Summary

Write here the main ideas of the chapter.
" This chapter focuses on .."

Key vocabulary and expressions:

Personal connection/ application

TRY TO COME UP WITH MAIN IDEAS FROM THE CHAPTER THAT ARE IDEAS RELATED WITH CONTEMPORARY EVENTS

Questions for further discussion?



Annex VI: Self-assessment Paper

ASSESSMENT *reflection*

Objective:

Class:

Date:

PLUS

What were my strengths?
In which areas was I most successful?

MINUS

What were my weaknesses? In which areas was I least successful?

IMPROVE

What are some specific strategies or activities I can undertake to improve particular skills for next time?

Annex VII: Reading assessment criteria

READING COMPREHENSION RUBRIC				
	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Needs improvement (1)
Understanding of the Text	High-quality understanding of the majority of the ideas and details	Correct understanding with secondary errors	Incomplete understanding: several of the main ideas are missing	Limited or no understanding of the text
Use of Evidence	Congruently defends answers with precise details from the text	Generally, defends answers with pertinent details	Sometimes uses proof, not always flawless	Hardly ever or never uses evidence from the text
Inference and Interpretation	Develops meditative deductions beyond literal meaning	Makes some deductions with reasonable exactitude	Hardly any deductions: limited interpretations or poorly defined	No deductions: answers remain literal and unfinished
Vocabulary and Language	Utilises accurate and academic vocabulary	Uses mainly suitable vocabulary with trivial errors	Restricted vocabulary; errors alter speech comprehension	Very restricted or mistaken vocabulary

(This rubric is inspired in a model retrieved from Canva)