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The adolescent as an accidental reader of literary texts: literary reading habits in Secondary Education

El adolescente como lector accidental de textos literarios: hábitos de lectura literaria en Educación Secundaria

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Abstract

This study aims to find out which titles are included in the reading habits of students in the 4th year of ESO and to find out which classics of universal children's and young people's literature they know in order to analyse, finally, what relationship exists between this data and the nature of the different educational centres of origin. A representative sample of 647 secondary education students was selected, with sample valuation d = 0.05, who answered a questionnaire about their reader profile. The results show four reader groups: nonreaders, accidental, middle and frequent readers. Significant results are found: students categorized as nonreaders and accidental readers of universal literary works show the same number of readings for pleasure as frequent readers. From the results of the research, the creation of formative routes is defended, including titles of student´s interest along with classical pieces of work for a literary education.

Resumen

Este estudio pretende conocer los títulos que se incluyen en los hábitos de lectura de los estudiantes de 4º de ESO y averiguar qué clásicos de la literatura infantil y juvenil universal conocen para analizar, finalmente, qué relación existe entre estos datos y la naturaleza de los distintos centros educativos de procedencia. Se ha seleccionado una muestra representativa de 647 alumnos, con valoración muestral d=0.05, que respondieron a un cuestionario para determinar los distintos perfiles lectores. Los resultados indican cuatro grupos lectores: no lectores, lectores accidentales, medios y habituales. Se comprueba de manera significativa que alumnos categorizados como no lectores y lectores accidentales de obras académicas concentran el mismo número de lecturas por placer que lectores habituales. Se demuestra que existe una base común de lecturas a todos los jóvenes que son títulos con gran calado en el mercado editorial. Se verifica que la mayoría de los centros concentran una población lectora accidental. Los resultados de la investigación ofrecen argumentos para defender la necesidad de itinerarios formativos donde se incluyan títulos del interés del alumnado junto con obras canónicas para una educación literaria.

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Introduction

We shall start from this premise: making the most popular literature visible in the reading canon for schools is one of the tasks for a literary education in accordance with today's readers. The opening and renewal of the school literary canon (Ballester, 2007; Mendoza, 2008; Cerrillo, 2012, 2013; Bermúdez &Núñez, 2012) must begin by bringing the adolescent's vernacular readings to light, as literary journeys will then be arbitrated between the readings that they feel as their own (Margallo, 2012) and compulsory readings. As a starting point, knowing what young people like to read, what subjects are they interested in, which titles are the most popular or how they share their readings, will serve the teacher as a cornerstone (Romero, Jiménez & Trigo, 2015) to plan the meeting with the authors of the academic canon from the design of didactic proposals (Martín, 2017; Romero, Trigo & Moreno, 2018) that address the connections between works of youth literature and literary texts linked to such school canon (Gallagher, 1995; Velázquez, 2011; Miller, 2017).

These ideas lead us to the objective of this research: identifying the habits and consumption of literary reading within a sample of 647 students of Year 4 of Secondary Education, so that the results obtained can shed light on the diversity of reader profiles in formation and serve their characteristics to create literary readers within the school canon.

Theoretical framework

One of the lines that guides the epistemological configuration of language and literature teaching focuses on the literary reader's education (Munita & Margallo, 2019). This task requires a methodology that focuses not only on the memorisation of authors and literary movements, but also on the reader's active participation. In this sense, the training, beliefs and attitudes of Language and Literature teachers are closely linked to the methodology and, by extension, will condition the establishment of school readings. Sometimes, the selection of certain works -mainly the canonical ones- to the detriment of others -usually the youth literature- has been justified by the fact that teachers are trained in strongly philological disciplines where, according to Díaz-Plaja (2009), the presence and training in children's and young adults' literature is quite scarce; so they have assumed the prejudices against this type of literature that they consider far from canonical quality. However, according to other authors, educational systems (Dueñas, 2019) and publishers (Hermida & Cañón, 2002; Núñez, 2007) have collaborated in the strategies for selecting readings of the school canon together with the teachers, and have sometimes contributed to the rejection of reading the academic canon.

Even so, these mediators -institutions, teachers and publishers- interrelate to build a reading itinerary for adolescents in Secondary Education (hereinafter, "ESO"), which is essential for the creation of a personal reading canon:

> The reader slowly builds a variable personal canon that is born from the canon that is presented, taught, imposed [...]". This has been and still is one of the fundamental functions of schools: to offer a selection of works which, in the best case, will serve as the basis for the first readings of future competent readers and, in the worst case, will constitute just compulsory readings. (González, 2012, p.14).

Therefore, a common space that aspires to the literary education of the adolescent is created based on the selection of the school canon to impact on the construction of the personal canon. From the didactic perspective, Cerrillo (2013) proposes that the selection criteria for the school canon should be established taking into account the literary quality of the texts and the suitability of the works to the readers' interests and skills.

In parallel with the selection criteria for school readings, the issue of how literary

reading is dealt with at school and the competence to access the literary text are a key aspect. The literary text should lead the reader towards interpretation; however, we have traditionally been taught to read for understanding purposes (Tabernero & Dueñas, 2003). The development of the reading competence does not imply that of the literary competence; both competences are not identifiable (Mendoza, 2008). However, the mastery of the former is the basis for the construction of literary competence, understood as the knowledge required to understand and interpret literary texts (Culler, 1978; Mendoza, 2004).

Guiding the ways of reading in the classroom towards the interpretation of texts by linking them to the adolescent's previous knowledge, experiences and ideas from his own reading skills, as indicated by Romero (2009), extends the reading process from decoding to interpretation. Reading for interpretation purposes enables the dialogue between the works of the personal canon with those of the academic canon based on the universality of the themes they share. But in order to progress from comprehensive reading to interpretative reading, it is essential that the adolescent feels accompanied by the teacher throughout the entire reading.

All these agents that converge in the education of the literary reader under the broad wing of the school are an interesting variable that should be taken into account in the development of the habit of reading. We start from the premise that schools are diverse ecosystems (Romero & Trigo, 2019; Romero, Ambròs & Trujillo, 2020) from an institutional point of view -public, subsidised and private- and a linguistic one -bilingual, non-bilingual-. In this sense, knowing how this plurality is articulated in the reading and literary education of the ESO student becomes one of the objectives of this study.

Method

This research is framed within the empirical-analytical paradigm, the hypothetical-deductive method -given that the aim is to verify the assumptions put forward-, the quantitative method and the experimental design.

Objectives and assumptions

The overall objective is to determine the diversity of reader profiles in formation according to their characteristics in order to create literary readers within the school canon. It is outlined in concrete objectives and assumptions correlated in table 1:

Table 1
Description of the objectives and assumptions of the research

Assumption	Objectives
a. Difference between the preferences and reading tastes of adolescents and classic texts	1. Knowing the number of works read by the adolescents from a corpus of classics of universal children's and young adults' literature.
	2. Analysing other works that make up your reading habits.
b. Diversity of readers in training in the secondary education classroom	3. Linking reading habits to the various characteristics of educational centres.

Instrument

The questionnaire technique (Appendix) has been chosen and its contents were validated by experts. As for the structure, it consists of two parts linked to the objectives set:
– A rating scale, in order to find out the number of works read by the adolescents from a corpus of classics of world literature and which are the best rated among them. The corpus of works has been selected based on their characteristics for literary education: a) titles of universal children's and young adults' literature (Cerrillo, 2014) that can be incorporated into the subjects of Spanish Language and Literature and Foreign Language (English) (Rivera, 2018); b) classic texts of the educa-

tional publishing market through adapted, unabridged editions and graduated readings (Rivera, 2018); and c) texts from the collective thinking of young people, since they "are part of the social mind and are fed by multiple communication elements, such as the cinema, advertising, the Internet or topical issues" (Romero, 2016, p. 17).

– Another open question, in order to find out other works among the reading habits of ESO students.

Participants

A sample of 647 students from the last year of ESO was used (table 2). The sample assessment gives an accuracy d=0.05, indicating that any estimated proportion (p) is at p ±0.05. As heterogeneity criteria are followed, they come from bilingual centres: public (25.8%), subsidised (23.3%) and private (2.9%) and non-bilingual: public (21.8%), subsidised (21.5%) and private (4.6%). The method used to define the sample is multi-stage sampling, a combination of methods sequenced in a series of stages (Bisquerra, 2004). Based on accessibility and intentionality criteria, the study sample is made up according to the following stages:

– Stage 1. Primary sampling units (municipalities): the geographical scope is the metropolitan area of the Bay of Cádiz.
– Stage 2. Secondary sampling units (centres): selected by cluster.
  • First selection: an initial selection was made in each municipality by the cluster *bilingual/non-bilingual centres*: two bilingual and two non-bilingual centres per municipality.
  • Second selection: among the bilingual centres in each municipality, a public centre and a private one were selected; as well as for non-bilingual centres, a public centre and a private one. This means a total of 26 educational centres.
– Stage 3. Final units (individuals): randomly selected according to their academic year. In each centre, a Year 4 class has been randomly chosen because this is the level at which the student has completed theit literary education during the compulsory schooling stage.

Description of the sample: categories of readers

The first data analysed showed that a large proportion of the sample was concentrated around individuals who had not read any works

Table 2

Distribution of the sample

		Primary sampling units (municipalities)					
		Cádiz	Chiclana	Puerto Real	Rota	San Fernando	El Pto. de Sta. Mª
Secondary sampling units (centres)	PNB	25	22	27	21	26	20
	PB	32	29	20	28	28	30
	CNB	22	21	30	22	23	21
	CB	24	25	24	20	30	28
	PRNB	-	-	-	-	-	29
	PRB	-	-	-	-	-	19
	Total sample of students						647

Note: PNB: public, non-bilingual; PB: public, bilingual; CNB: subsidised, non-bilingual; CB: subsidised, bilingual; PRNB: private, non-bilingual; PRB: private, bilingual

Table 3

Number of classical works read per informant

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid proportion	Cumulated proportion
0 works	146	22.6	22.6	22.6
1 works	94	14.5	14.5	37.1
2 works	104	16.1	16.1	53.2
3 works	83	12.8	12.8	66.0
4 works	76	11.7	11.7	77.7
5 works	54	8.3	8.3	86.1
6 works	35	5.4	5.4	91.5
7 works	25	3.9	3.9	95.4
8 works	20	3.1	3.1	98.5
9 works	7	1.1	1.1	99.5
10 works	3	.5	.5	100.0
Total	647	100.0	100.0	

(22.6%) or, at most, around one and three books (14.5%, 16.1% and 12.8%, respectively). This led to grouping the results and segmenting the sample into categories of readers. The response percentages obtained in terms of the number of classical works read (table 3), significantly indicated that the higher the number of works read, the lower the number of readers:

The review of other research on adolescent reading habits served as a basis for decision making regarding the criteria for segmentation of informants. Some of the references for deciding to group the sample according to the variable of the number of universal classics read (table 4) were: the classification of readers proposed by Dueñas, Tabernero, Calvo and Consejo (2014) of "academic canon readers", "non-readers" and "social canon readers" according to the mediation received; the proposals of Larrañaga and Yubero (2005) around "non-readers", "occasional readers" and "regular readers" according to the time dedicated to voluntary reading and the number of books read per year; the research by Manresa (2009) which deals with adolescent reading habits based on the categories "excellent", "strong", "standard" or "weak" readers; and the types of adolescent readers established by Tejerina *et al.* (2006) according to

the number of books they read per year and their self-concept as readers. Thus, those adolescents who reported that they had not read any of the classics presented were considered *non-readers*. The following groups have been distinguished within the range of readers: 1-3 works = Occasional reader; 4-6 works= Average reader; and 7-10 works = Regular reader.

The response percentages have indicated significant differences between the reading groups, especially with regard to the accidental reader profile. This assignment will be taken as an independent variable to be cross-checked with the results of the second part of the questionnaire, in such a way that the data obtained on which other works make up the reading habits of the adolescents can shape the reading behaviour of each group. To this end, they were asked for the titles of five books they had read and they indicated from 1 (a little) to 4 (a lot) how much they liked them, ruling out those classic titles that had appeared previously in the questionnaire.

Results

a) O1. How many works from the corpus of classics of universal children's and young adults' literature have been read by the adolescents?

Table 4

Segmentation of the sample based on the number of classical works read

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid proportion	Cumulated proportion
Non-reader (0 works)	146	22.6	22.6	22.6
Occasional reader (1-3 works)	281	43.4	43.4	66.0
Average reader (4-6 works)	165	25.4	25.4	91.4
Regular reader (7-10 works)	55	8.6	8.6	100.0
Total	647	100.0	100.0	

As can be seen in table 5, 3.9% of the students have not provided any title; 4.2% have indicated only one; two, 9.4%; three, 12.5%; four, 19.2% and almost 51% have indicated five titles of books they have read:

By grouping this data with the number of classical works read by each informant (table 3), the following contingency table has been obtained (table 6):

It is significant that more than half of non-reading students and accidental readers of Part 1 (academic works) read between 4 and 5 works for pleasure. Therefore, a characteristic that will define accidental readers is their dual reading dimension: when reading academic literary texts, they are heteronomous readers (Sánchez, 2014; Romero & Trigo, 2019), as they seem to need a mediator to access these works. However, they are also autonomous readers since they are able to read titles they are interested in and

share them. And, most importantly, they value these books very positively. According to Bellver (1996), the encounter, therefore, that takes place between accidental readers and academic literary texts is a random reading, in the sense that it seems to be accessed by chance. This way, two types of reading converge in the personal canon of accidental readers: one optional and intentional, linked to the vernacular readings, and another compulsory and guided, with the literary works of the curriculum. Therefore, we can interpret that these results highlight the difference between the adolescent's reading preferences and tastes and the classic texts that we initially marked as assumptions.

As far as average readers are concerned, it can be seen from the results that their reading intertext includes both classical texts and other works of interest to them, since most of this group concentrates their other readings around 5 titles. Average readers have more autonomy than

Table 5

No. of other works read

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid proportion	Cumulated proportion
0 books	25	3.9	3.9	3.9
1 books	27	4.2	4.2	8.0
2 books	61	9.4	9.4	17.5
3 books	81	12.5	12.5	30.0
4 books	124	19.2	19.2	49.1
5 books	329	50.9	50.9	100.0
Total	647	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

Link between no. of other works read and Reading Groups

	Reading groups				
	Non-reader	Occasional reader	Average reader	Regular reader	Total
0 works	14	8	3	0	25
1 works	9	14	3	1	27
2 works	21	27	10	3	61
3 works	19	42	16	4	81
4 works	26	48	38	12	124
5 works	57	142	95	35	329
Total	146	281	165	55	647

accidental readers when reading classic texts and are shaped as possible regular readers. In the group of regular readers, the above situation is repeated, with the largest number of readers grouped around 5 extra works. However, unlike average readers, regular readers seem to have a consolidated reading habit and a defined reading identity.

In short, in all categories of readers there is a common denominator: vernacular readings. Even among non-readers of academic works. Therefore, it is confirmed that there is a common base of readings for all young people, which are their own readings. Given such a wide range of readers, the starting point for tackling Literature teaching in Secondary Education must begin with those readings that they all share and that are of interest to them must be.

b) O2. What other works make up their reading habits?

In total, 619 titles have been identified in the second part of the questionnaire as other readings of the 647 informants. In order to make data handling easier, the analysis gathered here focuses on those works whose frequency accounts for 50% of the sample and aims at responding to the objective set from the introduction: giving visibility to the most popular literature.

What do young people like to read? What topics interest them? First of all, the study of the titles shows a great preference for trilogies (*The Hunger Games, Canciones para Paula*), sagas (*Divergent, Twilight, The Maze Runner, The Chronicles of Narnia, A Song of Ice and Fire -A Game of Thrones-*) and series (*Harry Potter, After, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Geronimo Stilton*). Based on these results, it can be seen that young people are especially attracted to reading *serial narratives* (Martos, 2016) and that the topics that interest them revolve around the fantasy genre and its derivatives (Sotomayor, 2006): fantasy, epic fantasy, vampirism, medieval aesthetics and science fiction. In this line, other titles such as *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit* are identified. On the other hand, there are also YA bestsellers such as *The Fault in Our Stars* and *Paper Towns* and other works such as *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and *Fifty Shades of Grey* which, although not initially intended for young audiences, are quite popular among young people (Rivera, 2019). In short, we can point out that those books common to the different reader profiles are not works from the academic curriculum, but books with great impact on the publishing market.

c) O3. Is there a relationship between reading habits and the diversity of educational centres?

Table 7 shows the relationship between the type of centre and the number of works read. The

Table 7

Type of centre and no. of works read

	No. of works read											Total
	0 works	1 work	2 works	3 works	4 works	5 works	6 works	7 works	8 works	9 works	10 works	
PNB	27	20	24	24	22	7	7	3	6	0	1	141
PB	35	25	30	23	17	16	8	7	3	2	1	167
CNB	45	16	20	14	20	9	7	3	4	1	0	139
CB	36	30	26	15	13	11	8	9	2	1	0	151
PRNB	3	3	4	6	4	4	1	0	5	0	0	30
PRB	0	0	0	1	0	7	4	3	0	3	1	19
Total	146	94	104	83	76	54	35	25	20	7	3	647

results obtained show that there is no great disparity between the type of centre and the "non-reader" profile:

Around 20% of students are non-readers in most of the schools selected, except for non-bilingual subsidised schools, where the percentage of non-readers is 32%. The lowest percentage of non-reading students belongs to private schools. However, this is not significant given that the number of private centres in the sample is at a disadvantage compared to the others. On the other hand, the most striking thing is that most schools, regardless of their nature, concentrate their reading population in the category of accidental readers and, as one advances in the following categories (average reader and regular reader), the number of students who have read 4 to 6 works, on the one hand, and from 7 to 10 on the other, decreases. Therefore, we can see that the variable "type of centre" is not a determining factor when it comes to forging regular readers.

Conclusions

After exploring the students' personal canon, reading profiles are identified providing interesting data to advocate for the inclusion of works of interest to students in school reading plans and the updating of Language and Literature teachers in those titles of interest to their students. The particular characteristics identified around each

of the different reader profiles and the emergence of a marked accidental reader category, confirm the first assumption of the research, since it is verified that classic texts and vernacular readings are compared in the personal canon of accidental readers. In this sense, the interrelations between autonomous reading by adolescents and compulsory reading in schools to promote reading had already been shown (Colomer & Manresa, 2008). If we compare the data obtained with previous similar studies, we obtain results -most of the titles that adolescents read and prefer correspond to the field of youth literature (Latorre, 2007)- and similar conclusions: the subject matter of the books that young people read must be one of the ways to promote the reading habit (Martín & Muñoz, 2009).

On the other hand, if, as previous studies show (Molina, 2006; Gil, 2011; Whitten, Labby & Sullivan, 2016), the influence of recreational reading affects academic performance, it is necessary, in accordance with the results obtained, to continue committing to lines of research that focus on the diagnosis of adolescent reading profiles that contribute to making young people's reading consumption visible and, by extension, can provide guidelines for the methodological work of language and literature teachers that result in higher success rates. Analysis of the titles that teenagers read is providing evidence that by taking advantage of the bestsellers

consumed by the students, it will be easier to bring them closer to classic works -those that are not among their reading tastes and are usually rejected because of their compulsory nature- from the recognition of the connections that some texts have with others. In this sense, according to the data collected, the creation of literary readers within the school canon, based on teaching intervention, is analysed from two fundamental actions: the extension of reading with a school stamp and the creation of moments of interpretative and intertextual reading.

From the analysis of the relationship between reading habits and the diversity of educational centres, the second assumption under study is confirmed and interesting questions arise for reflection on the treatment of universal literature in Secondary Education. Contrary to the widespread belief that links bilingual centres with greater exposure to foreign languages, the data of our study question the space occupied by universal literature in the processes of teaching and receiving literature in the L2 classroom. The results seem to reinforce the idea that bilingual centres focus their efforts on the acquisition of language skills rather than on the reading of literary texts, which is why we advocate for the inclusion of universal classics not only in the Spanish Language curriculum, but also in the planning of readings in the L2 classroom from a literary and cultural perspective (Council of Europe, 2002).

In this sense, it has been found that bilingual public schools concentrate a greater number of non-readers (35%) than non-bilingual public schools (27%). This nascent line of research should be studied in greater depth because, although there are studies on reading habits in foreign languages (Pérez, Gutiérrez, Soto *et al.*, 2018) and reflections on the construction of bilingualism in schools (Abdelillah-Bauer, 2011), there is still little research available that brings us closer to what bilingual schools are really contributing to the development of a literary competence based on universal texts, apart from their

instrumentalisation in service of language. This would allow for a broader view of dealing with literary reading in the language subjects of the curriculum based on the methodologies used in bilingual centres.

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APPENDIX

PART I

We are presenting a series of works of world literature below. What should you do?

Circle the box from 1 (little) to 4 (a lot) how much you liked these works. If you have not read it, circle the box with a 0.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland	0	1	2	3	4
Dracula	0	1	2	3	4
Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde	0	1	2	3	4
The Canterville Ghost	0	1	2	3	4
Frankenstein	0	1	2	3	4
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes	0	1	2	3	4
Gulliver's Travels	0	1	2	3	4
Oliver Twist	0	1	2	3	4
Robinson Crusoe	0	1	2	3	4
Romeo and Juliet	0	1	2	3	4

PART II

Now we would like to know your reading preferences. What should you do?

Please name five books you have read that do not appear in the first part. Circle the box from 1 (little) to 4 (a lot) how much you liked them. If you have not read any book, circle the box with a 0.

1.		0	1	2	3	4
2.		0	1	2	3	4
3.		0	1	2	3	4
4.		0	1	2	3	4
5.		0	1	2	3	4