Beliefs, representations and knowledge of expert teachers in reading the classics in Secondary Education

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Abstract

The aim of this case study is to explore the beliefs, representations and knowledge of secondary school teachers, considered to be experts in reading the classics, one of the most debated issues in the teaching of literature, due to the low rates of reading these works among adolescents. For this purpose, six teachers with more than ten years' experience, philologists and with a doctoral thesis were interviewed. A focus group was also created. To analyse the data, both the interviews and the discussion group were coded with the help of Nvivo software, which resulted in a system of categories. Subsequently, this information was analysed from an interpretative-hermeneutic perspective. The results show that the reading of the classics is problematic for teachers, as in most cases there is a contrast between what they want and what they feel obliged to do because of the opposition between their self-beliefs and their hetero-beliefs.

Keywords: Beliefs; teachers; Secondary Education; classics (literature); literature.

Creencias, representaciones y saberes de profesores expertos sobre la lectura de los clásicos en ESO

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Resumen

Mediante este estudio de caso se pretende explorar las creencias, representaciones y saberes de docentes de Educación Secundaria, considerados como expertos, sobre la lectura de los clásicos, uno de los asuntos más debatidos en la didáctica de la literatura, en virtud de los bajos índices de lectura de estas obras que presentan los adolescentes. Para ello, se ha entrevistado individualmente a seis profesores con más de diez años de experiencia, filólogos y con una tesis doctoral. Asimismo, se llevó a cabo un grupo de discusión. Para analizar los datos, se realizó una codificación, con el apoyo del software *Nvivo*, tanto de las entrevistas como del grupo de discusión, que revirtió en dos sistemas de categorías. Posteriormente, esta información se analizó desde un prisma interpretativo-hermenéutico. Los resultados muestran que la lectura de los clásicos es problemática para los docentes, pues, en la mayoría de los casos, existe un contraste entre lo que desean y lo que se sienten obligados a hacer por la oposición que se da entre sus autocreencias y sus heterocreencias.

Palabras clave: Creencias; profesores; Educación Secundaria; clásicos literarios; literatura.

INTRODUCTION

The following article focuses on teachers' beliefs about reading the classics, one of the most debated topics in literature didactics (Ayuso-Collantes, 2020; Sotomayor, 2013). The aim is thus to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of this subject through the paradigm of teachers' thinking (Borg, 2003), in order to understand the meanings with which professionals live this experience (Richards & Lockhart, 1998).
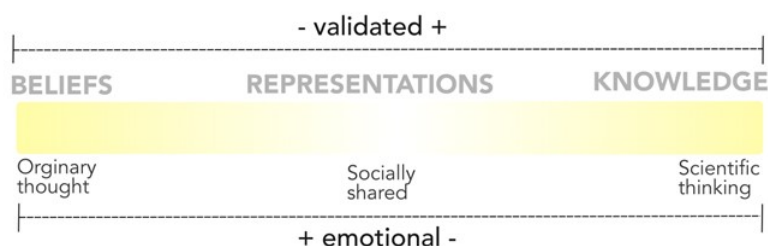
The teacher's thinking

In their practice, teachers make decisions according to their teaching culture (Richards & Lockhart, 1998), which is determined by their own personal and formative experiences (Borg, 2003). In this sense, teachers' thinking is distinguished by its syncretism, since it is constructed on the basis of personal and contextual references. In fact, there is some disagreement about the origin of the various influences, as the external often merges with the internal. In order to clarify the origin of the interrelated factors that determine teachers' beliefs and practices, two new terms have been introduced in this research: self-beliefs, which are formed around the self, and hetero-beliefs, which are influenced by knowledge of the other. The first set includes factors such as personality (Woods & Çakir, 2011), training (Stickler, 2021) and teaching experience (Wanlin, 2009), while the second set includes beliefs about learners (Chaharbashloo et al., 2020) and the educational, social and regulatory context in which teachers work (Stickler, 2021).

In reality, some of these factors collide, which could lead to a conflict between what teachers prefer and what they think they should do (Cambra & Palou, 2007). These tensions (Freeman, 1996), which hinder teachers' freedom to develop a practice that is compatible with their intentions, are generated by the interaction of core and peripheral beliefs (Birello, 2012). The former are stable and have a stronger influence on behaviour than peripheral beliefs, which are less persuasive (Phipps & Borg, 2009). The main cause of these clashes is the overlap between heterocentrism and self-belief, with teachers having to take actions that are often at odds with their ideal of teaching. These confrontations are often a source of 'vulnerability' when teachers feel they are suffering from a lack of control (Kelchtermans, 2009, Chaharbashloo et al., 2020).

Among the many paradigms proposed by researchers to study what teachers think, the Beliefs, Representations and Knowledge model (CRS, spanish acronym) has been used as a reference (figure 1), proposed by the PLURAL group from Universitat de Barcelona (Cambra & Palou, 2007):

Figure 1

Graphic representation of the CRS system

Source: Author's calculations based on Cambra and Palou (2007)

CRS on reading the classics

Defined as a model and part of the cultural heritage (Sullá, 1998), classical authors transcend time (Gadamer, 1977), offer endless readings (Calvino, 1993), influence the subjectivity and identity of their

readers (Bloom, 2000) and are a source of pleasure (Calvino, 1993). However, the Spanish education system has failed to promote reading of classic authors, with teenagers opting for fashionable bestsellers to the detriment of academic titles (Granado & Puig, 2014; Dueñas, et al., 2014).

According to scholars such as Sotomayor-Sáez (2013) and Cañamares-Torrijos (2019), the reasons for this failure could be the temporal and cultural distance and the uniqueness of their language; barriers that have also been identified in empirical studies on the reception of classics among secondary school students (Wood, 2017; Matruglio & Vale, 2019). Also the notion of obligatory nature that characterises their treatment in school, which is why many students refuse to read them beforehand (Munita, 2016; Cañamares-Torrijos, 2019). Another issue that arises is the maturity that their understanding requires of young people who are still forming as individuals (Sotomayor-Sáez, 2013). Moreover, Ayuso-Collantes (2020) points out that the many leisure activities available to students today overshadow other more intellectually demanding alternatives, such as contact with the classics.

Nevertheless, the academic literature attributes multiple benefits to reading them, which contributes to the holistic education of young people who need role models for their personal and intellectual growth. The classics are fundamental to the construction of their identity, since they represent an intersubjective experience of encountering great voices. Through the diachronic contextualisation of literary manifestations in distant times and cultures, students are able to relativise and analyse their place in the world. Arranged as open-ended works, they offer endless possibilities for classroom discussion and practice of students' interpretive skills. But above all, they are important for their pedagogical value: classics connect with the reading experience and at the same time illustrate the creative capacity of a language (Ayuso-Collantes, 2020). Therefore, despite initial barriers, academics argue that teachers need to promote reading so that students acquire the competence to make beneficial reading choices on their own (Cañamares-Torrijos, 2019).

In contrast to the abundance of studies on teaching beliefs in the specific field of language teaching, there is still a long way to go in the field of literary didactics. In this sense, studies on the didactics of classics focus mainly on teachers' reflections on whether these works should be read in secondary education, the corpus of readings used and the strategies most used to stimulate the reading of these works (Athanases & Sánchez, 2020; Elliot & Olive, 2019; Sanjuán, 2011). With the exception of López-Rodríguez and Núñez-Delgado (2023), none of the research studies the issue from the paradigm of teacher cognition, although this study neglects the influence of contextual elements. Nor is the incoherence that often exists between what teachers think and what they then do in the classroom, due to the intervention of external factors such as the curriculum, education laws or state assessment regulations.

Similarly, the socio-cultural context of the school and the students plays a very minor role in the studies carried out in Spain, in contrast to the English-speaking context, although neither Anglo-Saxon nor Hispanic research explores the influence of the digital world on students' cultural habits. Moreover, compared to other countries where the approach based on reading responses has prevailed for decades, studies show that it is still being implemented in Spain (López-Rodríguez & Núñez-Delgado, 2023). It is therefore worth continuing to study this process of establishment and how it fits into a philological tradition closely linked to a patrimonial conception of literature (Sanjuán, 2011).

Given this scarcity of studies, it is considered necessary to carry out an exploratory research that contributes to defining the didactics of Classics in Secondary and Baccalaureate from the paradigm of teaching cognition, especially considering that the didactics of Literature in Spain is in a situation of curricular and paradigmatic renewal with the entry into force of *Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación* (LOMLOE). In this sense, the present research was carried out in a period of coexistence between the previous law, *Ley Orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa* (LOMCE) and the LOMLOE.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

This research aims to understand the characteristics of reading literature by classical authors today through the paradigm of teacher cognition, in order to understand how such works are refigured in educational contexts. The specific objectives are set out below:

- To explore the beliefs, representations and knowledge that teachers express about reading classical authors.

- To find out how they describe students' performance in the teaching-learning process.

- To understand how they conceptualise the processes they use and the factors that impact their practice.

Design

Experimental research applied to the study of teachers' beliefs has ignored the affective and cognitive components that characterise knowledge directly linked to subjectivity (Tardiff, 2004). For this reason, this is framed within a qualitative methodology.

By facilitating the transmission of participants' experiences, the case study contributes to the emergence of experiential knowledge (Geertz, 1993), which forms the basis of our object of analysis. According to Stake's (1994) classification, this research is an intrinsic case study.

Participants

Six teachers considered to be "experts" participated in this research. The following inclusion criteria were used to define this quality:

- They are graduates in Hispanic Philology.

- They are secondary education and GSCE teachers of Spanish language and literature.

- They have more than 10 years of teaching experience.

- They have completed a doctoral thesis. These teachers not only bring a wealth of experience, but also a wealth of theoretical knowledge. This makes the data more reliable on a subject - reading the classics - that needs authoritative voices.

As the research is anonymous, teachers were given pseudonyms: Ignacio, Rodrigo, Marta, Beatriz, Teresa and Laura.

Data collection techniques

The semi-structured interview was used as it provides privileged access to the lived world of individuals (Kvale, 2013). The interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. As regards the transcription code, the proposal by Calsamiglia-Blancafort y Tusón-Valls (1995) (table 1).

Table 1

Transcription code

Symbol	Meaning
|	Short pause (1''- 3'')
||	Medium pause (4'' or more)
/	Ascending intonation
¿?	Interrogative intonation
::	Sound elongation
–	Speech abruptly interrupted
[text]	Enjambment
(( ))	Non-verbal event
X	Incomprehensible word
XX	Incomprehensible phrase
p	Low voice
f	*Forte* (aloud)
CAPS	Greater emphasis
italics	Word or phrase in another language
Speaking time symbols	
= =	At the beginning of a turn, to indicate that there was no pause after the previous turn.
=....= =....=	Overlap in two turns

Source: Calsamiglia-Blancafort and Tusón-Valls (1995)

Following the interviews, a focus group discussion was held with all participants. This method is appropriate because it brings us closer to the collective processes of assigning meaning (Barbour, 2013). As with the interview, a full transcription of the conversation was made, also using the code of Calsamiglia-Blancafort and Tusón-Valls (1995). The focus group was conducted through a Google Meet session, which was recorded with the permission of all participants (Ignacio, Laura, Rodrigo, Laura and Teresa). Marta was unable to attend the meeting.

Data analysis

In a first phase, three open pre-categories - "study matter", "students", "teaching strategies" - were selected and elaborated according to the objectives. After transcription, the pre-categories were transformed into macro-categories and several emerging macro-categories and sub-categories were added. Data coding was then conducted using the *Nvivo 12* tool. It should also be noted that the analysis of the categories, both from the interviews and the focus group, was carried out from a hermeneutic-interpretive perspective.
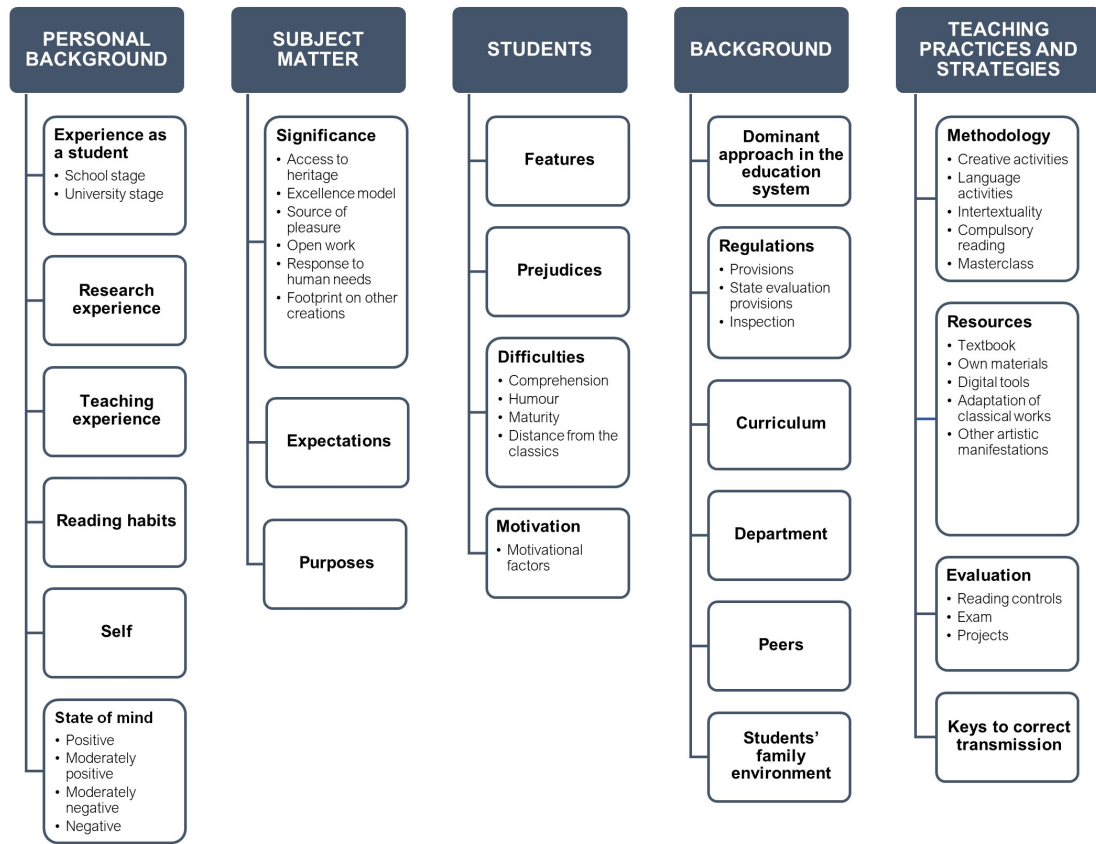
RESULTS

Interviews results

The system of categories of the interviews is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2

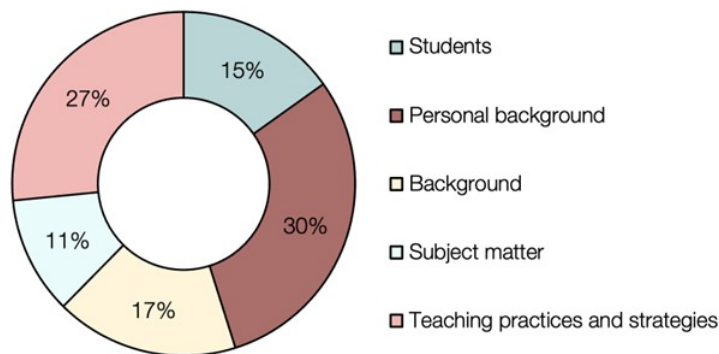*Framework of categories (interviews)*

Source: Prepared by the authors

According to figure 3, the macro-category 'personal background' has the highest percentage of coverage, followed by 'teaching practices and strategies'. These results show that teachers approached the issues from a personal and subjective perspective.

Figure 3

Saturation of each macro-category (interviews)

Source: Prepared by the authors

CRS on the personal background of the teachers

Among his categories, the return to their student days was the focus of many of their observations. All agree in emphasising the historicist approach that characterised his time at school, although the structuralist model also played a role. Nevertheless, the teachers have fond memories of their time at the school, which instilled a love of literature that continues to this day. Teachers recall that the historicist approach also dominated the classics teaching they received at university. As a result, the lack of pedagogical content on classics in both the undergraduate course and the Certificate of Pedagogical Aptitude –now replaced by a Master's degree– meant that teachers who passed the competitive exams entered the job market with a solid literary background but little pedagogical training.
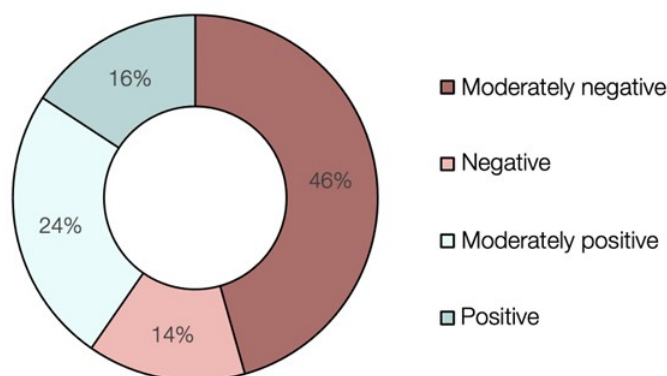
In general, knowledge of the informants' teaching practice has been generated through a process that is characterised by its arbitrariness and lack of certainty. Their learning, reinforced by testing, is based on a succession of successes and failures. This constant testing, and the wear and tear of error, has an effect on the approach of teachers, who inevitably become more practical:

> Teresa: "hombre, vas probando, vas probando y ves actividades que gustan más que otras:: es cuestión de ir adaptándose y rebajando tus expectativas" (You try, you try and you see activities that you like more than others:: it's a matter of adapting and lowering your expectations).

The development of their experience has led to the articulation of their self, characterised by their commitment to the work they do and their sense of responsibility. Rodrigo: "intento hacerlo lo mejor posible" (I try to do my best). Feeling obliged to perform activities in which the informants do not believe in has led to mostly negative feelings about their performance (figure 4).

Figure 4

Percentage coverage of the sub-categories of "State of mind".

Source: Prepared by the authors

Therefore, teachers feel that they are making great sacrifices in order to achieve minimum standards, even if this means abandoning their own teaching principles:

> Rodrigo: "me obliga a hacer cosas en las que realmente no:: no creo mucho pero por sentido del deber" (I am forced to do things I don't really believe in:: I don't believe in much, but out of a sense of duty).

However, teachers report that despite the difficulties, they find their job very rewarding when pupils get to experience reading. On an individual level, Ignacio only sees the positive side of his exercise.

In parallel with their teaching practice, they have built up research careers that have left their mark on their teaching projects. Teresa: "yo hice la tesis sobre libros de caballerías y la he conectado un poco con la novela fantástica actual"(I did my dissertation on books of chivalry and linked it a bit to the current

fantasy novel). Another aspect that determines their teaching practice and experience is their reading habits, which are directly linked to canonical readings.

CRS on teaching practices and strategies

Teachers report that they regularly carry out activities aimed at developing students' literacy skills, as well as their creativity and motivation. Everyone agrees on the importance of reading in class. This practice is fundamental to instilling a passion for literature and encourages a communal reading that encourages participation and a greater understanding of the text.

A more complicated issue is that of compulsory reading. While Ignacio and Laura try to leave the students some freedom of choice, Marta and Rodrigo question its voluntary nature, arguing that it is their duty to expose the students to works that are *a priori* inaccessible to them, but that will optimise their skills and their vision of the world.

The complete works to be read by students individually or collectively are always presented in an adapted version. Although the adaptations make reading easier, it is also true that they modify the first edition in one way or another. However, the objective is to give students an understanding of the motifs and history of the classical work; the enjoyment of the language as it was composed is secondary.

Teachers use three formats to assess Classics: Reading tests, examinations and assignments. The former are the most controversial. On the one hand, Beatriz and Teresa are absolutely against it, because its rigidity constrains the students' ability to express themselves, while its coercive nature contradicts any attempt to convey a pleasurable vision of literature. On the other hand, Concha, Marta and Rodrigo argue that this is the quickest way to get the students to read the books because they know they will get good grades if they do.

It is essential for teachers to give meaning to the subject they are dealing with so that students find an incentive to approach their works: it is a question of making them understand that reading is not a means of passing on or accumulating knowledge of general culture, but that it has a usefulness, an end in itself, which is directly related to their constitution as persons:

> Marta: "me parece fundamental | que vean que la literatura puede acompañar | y dar respuestas | que no es una imposición del instituto" (I think it is fundamental for them to see that literature can accompany them and give them answers, that it is not an imposition from the Institute).

In order to achieve this goal, informants reiterate the importance of linking the reality of the classroom with that of the student. To do this, teachers need to get to know the student before planning their methodology: to know their interests and, from this approach, what aspects of the works might appeal to them. Throughout this pendulum-like process, from approaching the students to approaching the classics, preparatory work is essential to pave the way. Mediators must therefore act as guides along a path that students would not follow without their guidance:

> Rodrigo: "el adolescente es inmaduro necesita esa confianza que le da el profesor por una vía o por otra" (adolescents are immature and need the confidence that the teacher gives them in one way or another).

CRS on the context

The restriction of teachers' autonomy is a recurring theme in informants' descriptions of state evaluation regulations, which they criticise for their historicism and rigidity. The abundance of literary units that they have to teach in the second year of the GSCE, from the 19th century to the limits of the 20th century, means that they have to teach a lot of content that they can only mention in their classes due to lack of time. This is because they recognise that the focus is mainly on the readings of the University Entrance Examination (hereinafter "EvAu"). Although they are aware that this approach promotes a very

superficial approach to literature, they feel a responsibility to follow their aims for the sake of the students' future, as this is what the EvAu requires:

> Rodrigo: "mi frase de este año es 'perdonad que he estado hablando sin parar' | porque si no sabes que no llegas a cumplir con todo | y ellos tienen que llegar a la selectividad bien preparados" (my phrase this year is 'sorry, I've been talking non-stop', because if you don't know, you can't do everything and you have to be well prepared for the EvAu).

If the inflexibility of the EvAu elicits a unanimous response, the teachers' view of the curriculum is rather the opposite in terms of its degree of flexibility. While Beatriz, Teresa and Ignacio celebrate the freedom stimulated by the curricula, which are open-ended and not very concrete, Laura and Rodrigo deplore the authoritarianism to which they submit for the sake of the students:

> Laura: "el currículo te condiciona mucho a no ser que uno se lo salte | pero tiene repercusiones para ellos porque todo el sistema se organiza a través del currículo" (the curriculum conditions you a lot unless you skip it | but it has an impact on them because the whole system is organised through the curriculum).

Departments also exercise their power in both selection and evaluation. As the school promotes the reading of the classics and makes it a central part of school policy, the teacher's job becomes much more enjoyable and accessible, they say. Although coordination between colleagues at different levels can be problematic, they also underline the mutual learning that coexistence between different professionals promotes, which also stimulates relationships of empathy and solidarity.

Contrary to the differences of opinion generated by the other components of the educational system, family culture is uncontroversial: all opinions stress its importance in consolidating the reading of the classics. Families with a reading habit, willing to spend money on books or who instil the values of culture are the first link in the chain.

CRS on students

Teachers' characterisation of students is defined by the concept of generational difference: students are not like them. The multiple stimuli of their environment have created a boundary between their current profile and the students they were. With so many leisure activities on offer, reading the classics tends to take a back seat.

Students also have certain prejudices about classical works. The historical approach leads students to imagine their reading as an obligatory visit to some ruins, so that they associate it with boredom and disproportionate sacrifice, which undermines their motivation. Learning the classics is meaningless for students:

> Laura: "llamarlos clásicos ya hacia ellos les hace: "jo un clásico" | les suena aburrido para la mayoría" (to call them classics makes them go like: "pfff, a classic" - sounds boring to most).

These preconceptions include a certain inferiority complex in the face of the greatness of the classic, which translates into an initial fear when confronted with its pages. However, when they overcome this self-imposed barrier, they enjoy the journey and are proud not only of the fact that they feel they can take on a prestigious mind, but also of the effort they have put in. As a result, the learner feels fulfilled by reading:

> Marta: "se creen incapaces de acceder a ellos | y cuando les obligan y lo consiguen es como hacer el test de Cooper en 8 minutos" (they think they are incapable of accessing them, and when they are forced to and they succeed, it's like doing the Cooper test in 8 minutes).

In order for this transition to take place, there are a number of motivational factors that directly influence students' behaviour towards literature. Teachers emphasise the work of the mediator, the

teaching approach and the texts as the main factors, since some authors, such as the poets of the Spanish '27 generation or Bécquer, tend to attract pupils because of their ability to stir the emotions of the recipients.

However, students' engagement in the teaching-learning process is not only a matter of attitudes: their skills are also crucial. In this context, teachers bring up the difficulties that pupils have in interpreting and enjoying the classics. The main problem is their poor reading comprehension, which prevents them from going beyond the literal. Directly linked to poor literacy skills, this fragile interpretive ability makes it impossible for them to understand complex structures and develop their own interpretations that would give them a true reading experience. Precisely because they only have access to a first-level reading, they are far from being able to identify deeper mechanisms, which border on the realm of the unspoken and require a certain capacity for abstraction. So humour and speaker-splitting techniques such as irony are a big problem.

> Laura: "no se ríen nunca con los pasajes | es que no entienden los juegos" (they never laugh at the passages | they just don't understand the games).

Moreover, because they are young and have not yet experienced disappointment or collapse, students can only be satisfied with a limited view of some fictional universes, which rightly occupy the pinnacle of literary history because they are rooted in the deepest and darkest part of the human psyche:

> Marta: "ellos no se plantean esos problemas | no tienen nada que ver con su vida | es una edad en la que | no hay madurez suficiente para alcanzar todos los objetivos que se pretenden" (they don't think about these problems | they have nothing to do with their lives | it's an age when | there's not enough maturity to achieve all the goals you're striving for).

Moreover, the distance between the implicit reader of the work and the student who receives it opens up a friction between the two instances that is manifested through language. Laura: "su escritura les resulta muy difícil muy lejana" (their writing is very difficult for them very distant).

CRS on the subject matter

Throughout the interviews, the meanings that informants attached to the category of classic emerged. Firstly, they stressed that these works could serve as a guide for their readers in the face of any life event. The impact of the classic goes beyond individual margins:

> Rodrigo: "esto desborda el individuo | o sea la literatura tiene un sentido para la especie humana" (this goes beyond the individual | i.e., literature has a meaning for the human race).

Because of the greatness of the classic, each work determines the next. Teachers thus see classical literature as a network of connections in which similarities prevail over differences. Moreover, the greater the knowledge of the canonical titles, the greater the enjoyment of any artistic manifestation. Because of their extraordinary quality, classical works have no single meaning, which frees the empirical reader from the implicit. Moreover, not only do they contain the essence of the human being, but also the reality of the environment in which they were born. This monumental value is the source of its didactic potential:

> Marta: "el clásico tiene un valor per se | que representa una época | una época de la que se puede aprender mucho" (classics have a value *per se* | they represent an era | an era from which much can be learned).

Based on these beliefs about the concept of classics, teachers teach the works of these authors for a number of purposes. From a theoretical point of view, the concept of a pathway is of paramount importance, i.e., that students should be aware that these degrees are the starting point of a pathway, without which the present cannot be understood. The most important thing, however, is to strengthen their reading habits. In relation to this objective, teachers try to make the lesson a reading experience that

can influence the student's identity, given the performative capacity that characterises the classical work as a sublime product:

> Rodrigo: "enseñamos porque queremos que la literatura sirva para algo para el ser humano" (we teach because we want literature to serve a human purpose).

Teachers share the conviction that only a collective proposal, supported by the entire educational system, will bring about a real evolution in the reading of the classics, since individual initiative is insufficient in the face of the multitude of circumstances that condition it:
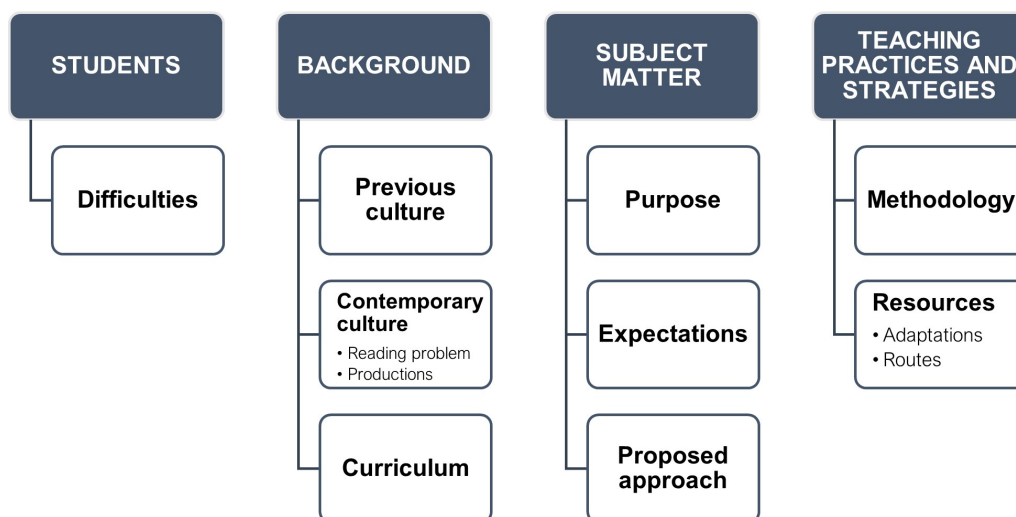
> Rodrigo: "tiene que ser una apuesta colectiva por resituar el sentido de la enseñanza literaria" (it should be a collective effort to reinstate the importance of literary education).

Focus group results

During the coding of the focus groups, it became necessary to delete some macro-categories and categories and to create new categories and sub-categories (figure 5).

Figure 5

Framework of categories (focus group)

Source: Prepared by the authors

In contrast to the individual interviews, in which idiosyncratic aspects were more important, in the focus group there were hardly any differences of opinion, but the teachers focused on what they had in common. In addition, for some questions, teachers reiterated what they had said in the individual interviews. In order not to repeat information, only the highlights of the group discussion are presented below.

CRS on the context

What the teachers noticed most was how the characteristics of contemporary culture condition the reading of the classics, both in terms of teacher and student practice. Firstly, reading the classics is part of a wider problem: society's poor reading habits. Since reading competence is a practice that is strengthened

by experience, the absence of a strong reading habit among citizens prevents them from acquiring the indispensable knowledge and skills to learn to distinguish the normal from the better:

> Rodrigo: "cultura es saber que algo es bueno | | si no se lee lo suficiente ni siquiera vas a leer o tener atención por lo bueno | como al fin y al cabo los clásicos tienen ese concepto de excelencia para poder saborear esa excelencia claro tienes que leer | y:: es un problema de lectura" (culture is knowing that something is good :: if you don't read enough you won't even read or pay attention to what is good :: as after all the classics have that concept of excellence in order to taste that excellence of course you have to read :: and :: it's a reading problem).

Among the circumstances that hinder the implementation, the teachers also mention postmodern tendencies such as individualism and the exaltation of the ephemeral, which make it difficult to read a coherent and transcendental project such as classical literature, in which the common human being is to be found. Moreover, its enjoyment requires time for reflection and dedication, unlike other cultural alternatives that satisfy the short-term impulses of audiences without too many intellectual demands.

But what is *a priori* an obstacle can also be an opportunity. The teachers believe that the horizontality of information available to everyone thanks to the new technologies can promote the dissemination of their works through the concept of reformulation: if reading the classic in its original version is anachronistic in the current context, due to the circumstances mentioned above, its reworking through new artistic manifestations, which disseminate the classic stories from new parameters and languages, is not. Hence the abundance of references by teachers to contemporary products such as comics, cinema, video games, social networks and series.
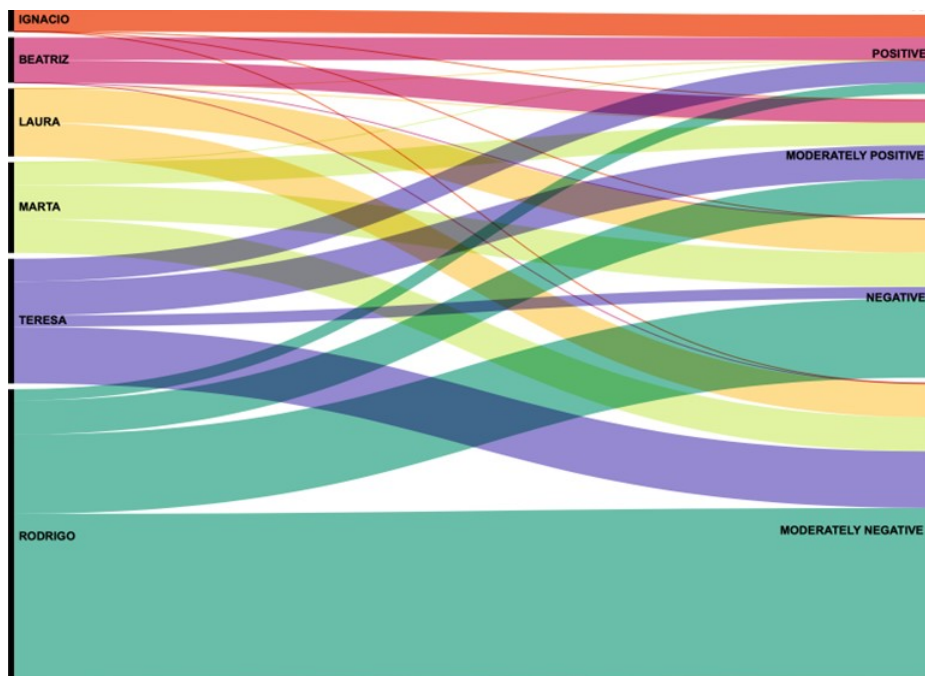
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

From a qualitative perspective, the present study has provided insightful data on teachers' beliefs about the teaching of literature, attempting to fill the bibliographical gap identified by some authors (Goodwyn, 2012) through the figure of the mediator (Munita, 2021). Experts (Pardo-Caicedo & Munita, 2021) have concluded that the transposition of the literature of classical authors is marked by the mediator's self-belief and hetero-belief. According to other studies (López-Rodríguez & Núñez-Delgado, 2023; Stickler, 2021), schooling is one of the most determining factors in the configuration of the former: during this period, teachers began to cultivate a love of the classics, thanks to teachers who inspired some of the informants. The university stage, on the other hand, changed their CRS only slightly, as it did not provide them with sufficient pedagogical knowledge (López-Rodríguez & Núñez-Delgado, 2023). It shows that, as in Woods and Çakir (2011), the object of their dissertation research has indeed influenced their subsequent practice. However, the internal factor that most conditions the practice and conception of the literary object is teachers' experience: over the years, teachers accumulate knowledge of what works and what does not in a constantly evolving process (Tardiff, 2004). Through these processes, teachers have constructed their vision of literary fact, which has left a deep mark on their identity.

However, due to the subjugation of their self-beliefs in the service of heterocreeds, there are tensions (Phipps and Borg, 2009) between what teachers would like classics education to be and what they think they should be doing; a phenomenon already noted in other studies where literature teachers report a lack of autonomy (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015; Goodwyn, 2012). In these confrontations, we observe the interplay of central and peripheral beliefs (Borg in Birello, 2012), as their sense of responsibility overlaps with their own conception of the literary act. It should be emphasised that there are differences between participants in terms of the influence of heteroconfidence on their CRS. At the extreme end of the spectrum, it is Rodrigo who suffers the most from its effects, claiming that he is forced to do things he does not believe in. At the other end of the spectrum is Ignacio. There seems to be a relationship between the degree of subordination and the mood of the participants, as shown in the graph in figure 6: Rodrigo is the participant who reports the most negative feelings during his teaching practice, while Ignacio reports only positive feelings. Symptoms of vulnerability are found in the case of Rodrigo and, to a lesser extent,

Marta and Laura (Kelchtermans, 2009). This demonstrates the negative correlation between state of mind and tension.

Figure 6

Diagram of the "State of Mind" category.

Source: Prepared by the authors

The pressure on teachers to follow the content prescribed by the curriculum becomes more radical in the higher grades, where they have to focus on the reading prescribed by the state exams (Watkins & Ostensen, 2015). One of the contextual elements that conditions their practice the most is the student body, whose conceptualisation is articulated around the concept of generational difference: the student represents the other. In postmodernism, young people have no time for reflection or references, which makes it difficult to admire authors who were praised precisely for being leaders in their field. Unlike the informants who read any classical work, today's students need a strong accompaniment during the teaching of the works, which they do not approach beforehand influenced by a series of prejudices (Cañamares-Torrijos, 2019). In terms of their aptitudes, students show a lack of interest (Montes-Rodríguez et al., 2021), immaturity (Sotomayor-Sáez, 2013) and linguistic difficulties (Wood, 2017), which requires them to make great efforts in "diachronic hermeneutics" (Pannikar, 1988). Consequently, they cannot experience the work in all its dimensions. They also fail to grasp implicit and comic meanings, forcing mediators to settle for promoting efferent reading (Rosenblatt, 1968), even though this approach clashes with their beliefs.

In order to promote a better understanding of the text, teachers stress the importance of reading in class and the use of adaptations (Navarro-Durán, 2013, Sotomayor-Sáez, 2013), since although they modify the original version, they facilitate the recognition of many essential reasons. As for compulsory reading, they defend the permanence of the traditional canon and the criterion of quality (Watkins and Ostenson, 2015) because, thanks to its imposition, students have come across works that ended up fascinating them (Dueñas et al., 2014; Munita, 2014). Consequently, contrary to other research (López-Rodríguez, 2023), the expert informants consider the school canon, which is mainly composed of classical works, to be relevant from a didactic point of view.

Teachers have a view of the classics that is very close to literary pedagogy: they advocate that students interpret the works from their horizon of expectations (Jauss, 1976), so that they experience the

reading experience as a personal and meaningful event (Rosenblatt, 1968). In this way, it can be seen that the teachers' beliefs correspond to the new curricular changes of the LOMLOE, as a transition from a historicist approach to a more receptive one. However, in their classes they use some resources that are closer to traditional teaching, such as reading checks or the textbook, because they admit that this is the only way to get students to understand and read the works.

The informants agree that its implementation should not be understood as a mere collection of data, since its impact goes beyond the individual margins to a broader concept that relates directly to the human essence. Faced with the heterogeneity of today's culture, in which fragmentation and individualism prevent the gestation of any collective project, teachers defend the classics as homogenising elements; they speak more of influences and chains than of individualities. Resigned to the impossibility of promoting reading in its original form, they propose its multimodal reformulation and a new approach supported by all those involved in education. In this sense, it is emphasised that the teaching of classics, despite its philological origins, is a subject closely linked to the social sphere.

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Lucía Hernández-Heras: Project management; Formal analysis; Data curation; Writing - original draft; Writing - review and editing; Research; Methodology; Software; Visualisation.

Rosa Tabernero-Sala: Project management; Conceptual design; Writing - review and editing; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation.

Diana Muela-Bermejo: Formal analysis; Conceptualisation; Writing - review and editing; Software; Supervision; Validation.

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