

**Please cite the Published Version**

Puig, Idoia (2019) Teaching literature and language using a multiliteracies framework: exploring intercultural skills with Cervantes's *La española inglesa*. In: *Spanish Golden Age Texts in the Twenty-First Century: teaching the old through the new*. Spanish Golden Age Studies . Peter Lang, Bern, Switzerland. ISBN 9781788746359 (softcover); 9781788746366 (ebook); 9781788746373 (ebook); 9781788746380 (ebook)

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.3726/b14605>

**Publisher:** Peter Lang

**Version:** Accepted Version

**Downloaded from:** <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/623463/>

**Usage rights:** © In Copyright

**Additional Information:** This is an Accepted Manuscript that has been published in *Spanish Golden Age Texts in the Twenty-First Century: teaching the old through the new* edited by Idoia Puig and Karl McLaughlin in the series *Spanish Golden Age Studies*.

**Enquiries:**

If you have questions about this document, contact [openresearch@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:openresearch@mmu.ac.uk). Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines>)

# Teaching literature and language using a multiliteracies framework: exploring intercultural skills with Cervantes's *La española inglesa*

Idoya Puig

## ABSTRACT

There is concern that reading literary classics is becoming harder, especially for young people. For some years, literature has been excluded from the study of the foreign language and has lost ground in university studies. However, studies in pedagogical theory show the benefits of a multiliteracies approach, which combines different channels of communication and multimodal forms of linguistic expression.

When used creatively, this approach can be applied to the study of literary texts to foster traditional reading skills. This chapter looks specifically at *La española inglesa*, one of Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*, and presents examples showing how language and cultural context can be studied successfully through this short story by using a multiliteracies framework. In particular, the text can be harnessed to highlight intercultural elements relevant to present-day discussions.

## **Introduction: accessing literary classics in the twenty first century**

There is a growing concern that the advent of new media has reduced reading habits, particularly among young people. Reading seems less appealing and more challenging. However, studies confirm that rather than decreasing, reading habits are changing and moving from print to digital media:

La lectura digital se va consolidando con un carácter hegemónico en la población más joven. Por niveles de estudios son los estudiantes universitarios los que presentan mayores porcentajes de incremento.<sup>1</sup>

In the UK, a new GCSE and A-Level syllabus is being introduced in the study of languages to address the excessive focus on isolated and repetitive tasks and the abdication of more challenging skills such as deep reading. In the new A-Level exams, students will be required to read texts, including one book. In the words of Stephen Parker, chair of the panel for modern and ancient languages on the A-Level Content Advisory Board:

While changes to the A-level modern languages curriculum over the past 10 years aimed to make it more relevant, recycling topics about family life could be uninspiring. Students were no longer required to read a book in a foreign language (...) and the emphasis was often on rote learning rather than on engaging with a different society and culture.<sup>2</sup>

In higher education, language teaching has lost considerable ground in recent years.<sup>3</sup> A fall of 22.8 per cent in UK applications to European languages courses at university was observed in 2017 compared to the same point in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Julio Alonso-Arévalo, José-Antonio Cordón-García and Raquel Gómez-Díaz, 'Comparación de los hábitos y perfil del lector digital entre Estados Unidos y España', *Anales de Documentación* 17/1 (2014), <<http://dx.doi.org/10.6018/analesdoc.17.1.193111>>, accessed 7 June 2018.

<sup>2</sup> *Living Languages Report*, British Academy and *The Guardian* (2015), 4, <[http://static.guim.co.uk/ni/1428923743291/BritAcFINAL\\_living\\_language.pdf](http://static.guim.co.uk/ni/1428923743291/BritAcFINAL_living_language.pdf)>, accessed 5 June 2018.

<sup>3</sup> *Living Languages Report*, 8-10.

<sup>4</sup> Kershaw, Alison, 'Fall in number of students taking up foreign languages prompts Brexit concerns', *The Guardian* (5 August 2017), <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/fall-in-number->

This situation necessarily impacts on the reading of foreign literature, which is becoming more and more inaccessible. The introduction of high university fees and the widespread practice of measuring student satisfaction regularly through formal surveys put pressure on universities to only offer popular subjects and discontinue units that attract a smaller intake of students due to their perceived difficulty or less immediate appeal.

In the field of Hispanic Studies, particularly in the English-speaking world, the literary offer is being replaced by films, with older or longer works of literature being pushed to one side for fear of failing to attracting sufficient numbers and/or jeopardising student satisfaction. Comments below from a number of scholars consulted on whether Spanish literary classics such as Cervantes's *Don Quijote* were being taught at university level confirm the challenge posed by books of this nature. In some cases, undergraduates are asked to read *Don Quijote* but, very often, other shorter works by Cervantes are used, including one or two of the short stories from the *Novelas ejemplares*. In other cases, *Don Quijote* is accessed in translation only or is read partially at best (a few chapters or selected extracts), as the following responses illustrate:

I have found out that a great work, such as *Rinconete y Cortadillo* cannot be taught to American students at an undergraduate level in the USA. Even if their Spanish is good, they lack the expertise to flavor the world-play and linguistic nuances of this novel. (xx, email dated 26 April 2015)

I do not teach Cervantes because the grad students do not take any course in Golden Age. They receive the Ph.D. without ever having read/studied *Don Quijote*. This is like grad

---

of-students-taking-modern-foreign-languages-brex-it-british-council-prompts-concerns-a7877491.html>, accessed 9 September 2018.

students in English graduating without taking Shakespeare. (xx, email dated 21 February 2015)<sup>5</sup>

Recent years have seen the publication of two comprehensive studies on the state of the 'literary canon' taught in universities in the US and UK.<sup>6</sup> Both studies confirm the shift away from older classic works of literature, which are being replaced increasingly by films or by more recent texts by contemporary authors.

### **New approaches to teaching: multiliteracies and traditional skills**

In the light of this growing trend, it is relevant to take into account studies which explore alternative means of learning through new media. Literacy in the twenty-first century is 'the set of abilities and skills where aural, visual, and digital literacy overlap. These include the ability to understand the power of images and sounds, to recognize and use that power, to manipulate and transform digital media, to distribute them pervasively, and to easily adapt them to new forms'.<sup>7</sup> It is important to integrate these new skills with what one might consider the traditional skill of reading, which remains an essential skill for all:

---

<sup>5</sup> I have deleted individual names and university affiliation for data protection.

<sup>6</sup> Winston R. Groman, 'The Hispanic Literary Canon in U.S Universities', *Instituto Cervantes at FAS Harvard* (2016), <[http://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/026\\_en.pdf](http://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/026_en.pdf)>, accessed 4 June 2018 and Stuart Davis, 'The state of the discipline. Hispanic literature and film in UK Spanish degrees', *Journal of Romance Studies* 18/1 (2018), 25-44. This study is further developed in Davis's article included in this collection.

<sup>7</sup> 'A Global Imperative: The report of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy Summit', *New Media Consortium* (2005), 8, <[http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Global\\_Imperative.pdf](http://www.nmc.org/pdf/Global_Imperative.pdf)>, accessed 7 June 2018.

Textual literacy remains a central skill in the twenty-first century. Before students can engage with the new participatory culture, they must be able to read and write. Youth must expand their required competencies, not push aside old skills to make room for the new. (...) New media literacies include the traditional literacy evolved with print culture as well as the newer forms of literacy within mass and digital media.<sup>8</sup>

It is not a question of displacing skills but rather developing them through new media. Instead of reading less, we read in a different way. However, such reading runs the risk of being much more superficial, in some cases consisting of little more than jumping from link to link. It becomes harder for the brain to analyse data and perform deep reading. It is important therefore to harness new media to foster and consolidate deep reading skills and understand how internet-mediated communication works.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, new technologies offer a strong social element, which brings other advantages. New media facilitate interaction with a much wider audience and make it possible to create texts which can be shared in a global setting, thus aiding the development of intercultural skills:

The new media literacies should be seen as social skills, as ways of interacting within a larger community, and not simply as individualized skill to be used for personal expression. (...) Disparate collaboration may be the most radical element of new literacies: they enable

---

<sup>8</sup> Henry Jenkins, ed., *Confronting the challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, MacArthur Foundation (2006), 19, <<http://www.newmedialiteracies.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/NMLWhitePaper.pdf>>, accessed 7 June 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Francisco Yus, *Ciberpragmática. El uso del lenguaje en Internet* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2001).

collaboration and knowledge-sharing with large-scale communities that may never personally interact.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, the social and collaborative aspect of new technologies has great potential for development and, as a result, should be incorporated into new teaching practices. Students who are comfortable writing their own posts on a social network can utilise and integrate this skill in the more formal context of education. Henry Jenkins and his team define a number of new skills to be developed in educational settings, including play, multitasking, networking, and negotiation, among others. All these skills can be put into practice using different channels of communication, old and new, in a multiliteracies approach that fully integrates multiple forms of media into learning processes. The term multiliteracies was defined in 1994 by the New London Group. This approach highlights two key aspects of literacy: linguistic diversity and multimodal forms of linguistic expression:

The 'multi-' of enormous and significant differences in contexts and patterns of communication, and the 'multi-' of multimodality. In the case of the first of these 'multi-'s, the Multiliteracies notion sets out to address the variability of meaning making in different cultural, social or domain-specific contexts. [...] The other 'multi-' response to the question of the 'what' of Multiliteracies arises in part from the characteristics of the new information and communications media. Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal – in

---

<sup>10</sup> Jenkins, *Confronting the challenges of Participatory Culture*, 20-21.

which written-linguistic modes of meaning interface with oral, visual, audio, gestural, tactile, and spatial patterns of meaning.<sup>11</sup>

Applied to the study of literary classics, the multiliteracies approach bridges the gap between traditional reading skills and new approaches to learning rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive. It highlights ideas and values that can be found in both cultures or historical periods and, at the same time, allows differences to be defined and explained, leading ultimately to a better appreciation of both historical moments (the Spanish Golden Age and the present day, for example). The multiliteracies approach brings classic texts to life in the classroom rather than relegating them to the past as something outdated or inaccessible: 'The new media literacies could supplement and expand traditional print literacies in ways that enriched our culture and deepened our appreciation of classical stories'.<sup>12</sup> To achieve this, the new remix or interpretation needs to engage in a meaningful manner with the old. At the same time, embracing elements of participatory culture and multimodality can help foster traditional reading and writing skills in learners.

Viewed from this perspective, new trends appear less threatening and more easily adoptable: 'Changes in educational practices are more often evolutionary than revolutionary'.<sup>13</sup> We do not have to sacrifice the study of literary classics or avoid teaching texts that we value and recognise as classics in a particular language or country. A balance is required: 'It would be tragic if we allowed

---

<sup>11</sup> Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, 2015. 'The Things You Do to Know: An Introduction to the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies', in B. Cope and M. Kalantzis, eds, *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Learning By Design* (London: Palgrave), 1-36, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Clinton, Jenkins and McWilliams, 'New Literacies in an Age of Participatory culture', 5.

<sup>13</sup> Clinton, Jenkins and McWilliams, 'New Literacies in an Age of Participatory culture', 9.



new media literacy practices to totally displace traditional print literacy practices, but refusing to engage with new media out of a misplaced fear of change would be equally tragic'.<sup>14</sup>

There is an inherent value in literature which can be applied to language learning. The benefits of literature include the recognition of the value of authentic texts to reinforce language competency, foster student engagement and develop intercultural communication.<sup>15</sup>

Janet Swaffar and Katherine Arens apply this multiliteracies perspective to language learning in particular, focusing on the actual text and adopting a critical approach to explore 'the social and linguistics frameworks of texts and genres for spoken and written communication across time periods, across cultures, and in multicultural frameworks'.<sup>16</sup> Following this line also, Paesani, Willis and Dupuy have produced a specific framework to implement a multiliteracies approach to teaching the foreign language.<sup>17</sup>

The multiliteracies framework identifies four pedagogical acts: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice. Situated practice is the immersion in the language, including the knowledge and experience already possessed by students. It invariably entails some presentation of resources and provision of background information to facilitate understanding and

---

<sup>14</sup> Clinton, Jenkins and McWilliams, 'New Literacies in an Age of Participatory culture', 11.

<sup>15</sup> Amos Paran, 'The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching: an evidence-based survey', *Language Teaching* 41/4 (2008), 465-96, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480800520X>>, accessed 7 June 2018.

<sup>16</sup> *Remapping the Foreign Literature Curriculum: An Approach through Multiple Literacies* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2005), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Kate Paesani, Heather Willis Allen, and Beatrice Dupuy, *A Multiliteracies Framework for Collegiate Foreign Language Teaching* (Boston: Pearson, 2014).

engagement with the text, and these elements together are termed overt instruction. The students are encouraged to reflect and analyse in a critical manner the texts presented to them (critical framing). Finally, there is an act of transformed practice given that students apply their learning to other contexts, creating and developing new texts. These categories combine the simultaneous development of different skills and can incorporate diverse media and technologies. In this way, the four pedagogical acts serve as a bridge connecting (old) traditional literacy skills and (new) twenty-first century multiliteracies.<sup>18</sup>

Ana López Sánchez is among those to have adopted the multiliteracies framework for the study of Spanish poems.<sup>19</sup> The present paper further develops the application of the framework, presenting as a case study a classic short story from Spanish literature: Cervantes's *La española inglesa*. The aim is to show how it is possible to offer texts from earlier centuries to a twenty-first century audience. As will be demonstrated below, classic literary texts initially deemed too difficult or too remote for young people to relate to can be made more accessible and be explored using the multiliteracies framework described above.

### ***La española inglesa* and intercultural awareness**

Having outlined the multiliteracies approach and the four pedagogical acts of the framework, we can now turn to the study of a Spanish literary classic from the sixteenth century: *La española inglesa* by Miguel de Cervantes. It goes without saying that Cervantes is an obligatory point of reference in any discussion of Spanish literature. His literary masterpiece, *Don Quijote*, continues to be recognised as

---

<sup>18</sup> Paesani, Willis and Dupuy, *A Multiliteracies Framework*, 27-28.

<sup>19</sup> Ana López Sánchez, 'Hacia una pedagogía para la *multialfabetización*: El diseño de una unidad didáctica inspirada en las propuestas del New London group', *Hispania* 97/2 (2014), 281-97.

an essential element of Spanish culture, while Cervantes himself is widely considered the greatest writer in Spanish literature and deserving of study. As with other Golden Age authors, it is vital to seek out new ways of bringing his texts to twenty-first century readers and younger generations through new methods and approaches.

*Don Quijote* has been recreated in a variety of media, with numerous films, comics strips, plays, ballets, paintings, and now iPad resources featuring Don Quijote as a protagonist. However, as a book it is difficult to access due to its length and complexity. Although much quoted, it is widely acknowledged that not many people have actually read it. The celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the deaths of Shakespeare and Cervantes led to the organisation of a large number of events that clearly demonstrated the creative use of new formats to make this literary classic known. An excellent effort was undertaken to gather information on events during 2016 in a systematic manner, facilitated by new technologies. By way of example, a specific website was created to provide details of events held, to link up different institutions and provide a good search engine to locate events with ease. The Spanish government's official commemoration programme classified the activities under headings such as exhibitions, performing arts, music, cinema, literature, education and promotion, digital contents, research and academic activities, cultural tourism and legacy.<sup>20</sup> This is a useful example of the adoption of a multiliteracies approach in educational and cultural settings.

The aforementioned initiatives parallel the resources developed by the British Council specifically for the study of English through Shakespeare's plays: on-line courses which harness technologies for literacy purposes using different texts and media, including videos, exercises, quizzes, opportunities to take part in on-line chats and create texts, etc. In addition, an extensive programme of events has been put in place to link up with schools throughout the country. These and other examples

---

<sup>20</sup> *IV Centenario de la muerte de Cervantes*, (2017), <<http://400cervantes.es>>, accessed 7 June 2018.

demonstrate how the use of a multiliteracies approach can enhance the study and enjoyment of literary classics.<sup>21</sup>

While a range of new pedagogical approaches have been suggested for the study of *Don Quijote*,<sup>22</sup> other texts by Cervantes or by other Golden Age authors have not been explored to the same degree and require greater attention if they are to remain accessible to the modern reader. One such case is *La española inglesa*, one of the short stories of Cervantes's collection *Novelas ejemplares* (1612), which can also be exploited using the multiliteracies framework.<sup>23</sup> For those unaccustomed to reading older literary texts, it can prove more realistic and satisfying to commence with a shorter and easier work. Equally, a shorter story can still be effective in introducing the reader to the main style and literary characteristics associated with the author.

The *Novelas ejemplares* comprise twelve stories with very different themes and styles. Cervantes claims in the prologue to the collection that he was the first to write *novellas in the Spanish language*. He is credited in particular with originality of style:

The essence of Cervantes's claim to originality, however, lies in the way in which he took the form and gave it a life of its own, liberating it from dependence on a larger structure. In this, his antecedents are Italian rather than Spanish: the 'Decameron' (c. 1348) of Giovanni

---

<sup>21</sup> Shakespeare, British Council (2017), <<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/listen-and-watch>>, accessed 7 June 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Edward H. Friedman, 'Quixotic Pedagogy; Or, Putting the Teacher to the Test', *Hispania*, 88/1 (2005), 20-31; Lisa Vollendorf and James A. Parr, eds, *Approaches to Teaching Cervantes's Don Quixote* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2015); Margaret Boyle, 'Teaching *Don Quixote* in the Digital Age: Page and Screen, Visual and Tactile', *Hispania*, 99/4 (2016), 600-14.

<sup>23</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares*, Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce, ed. (Madrid: Castalia, 1987)

Boccaccio [...]. Such collections were popular throughout Europe and provided playwrights in several countries, Shakespeare among them, with handy ideas for plots.<sup>24</sup>

Even though written in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the *Novelas ejemplares* address timeless and universal themes such as love, friendship and freedom. It is, therefore, possible to use the work to establish links with present day issues and identify elements common to different cultures and contexts. Intercultural competence is the capacity to communicate effectively in intercultural situations and to establish appropriate relationships within diverse cultural contexts:

Developing intercultural competence does not mean doing away with the information gap or related activities, but developing them so that (1) culture becomes a regular focus of the information exchanged, and (2) learners have the opportunity to reflect upon how the information is exchanged, and the cultural factors impinging upon the exchange.<sup>25</sup>

The use of literary texts in the language class allows students to experience different cultures in context, thus encouraging familiarity with traditions and values and, in turn, fostering intercultural awareness: 'Language learning helps learners to avoid stereotyping individuals, to develop curiosity and openness to otherness and to discover other cultures'.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Barry W. Ife, ed., *Exemplary Novels* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1992), ix.

<sup>25</sup> John Corbett, *An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching*. (Multilingual Matters, 2003), 32.

<sup>26</sup> Council of Europe, *Council of Europe white paper on intercultural dialogue* (2008), 29,

<[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper\\_final\\_revised\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf)>, accessed 7 June 2018.

A number of intercultural elements are explored in *La española inglesa* and it is an appropriate text to study in this regard. Themes such as abduction, religious tolerance, the value of the dignity of the individual regardless of their beauty or external traits, the freedom to choose one's marriage partner and the scope of parental authority in such matters, all make an appearance in the story and offer suitable pretexts for critical analysis.

*La española inglesa* presents the story of a girl, Isabela, who is abducted from her parents by an English nobleman during a battle in Cadiz and is taken to England. She is adopted and looked after by her new family and, although she is a captive, the son of the family, Ricardo, falls in love with her and her incredible beauty and his parents agree to their marriage. The Queen of England learns of her existence and refuses to sanction the marriage until Ricardo proves he is worthy of her and embarks on a mission to defend the interests of the crown. He has to fight Turkish pirates and decides to show clemency to the pirate leader. The same Turk will, in turn, save Ricardo later from execution. The story is full of action and unexpected twists: Ricardo finds Isabela's parents who are then reunited with their daughter; Isabela is poisoned by the mother of a rival suitor and loses all her beauty; Ricardo's parents want him to marry somebody else as a result, etc... Eventually the efforts and perseverance of the two lovers are rewarded and the marriage takes place. *La española inglesa* offers an abundance of adventure and some degree of suspense, features which make it appealing and entertaining. The blend of settings and cultures also make it an appropriate story to explore intercultural themes.

### ***La española inglesa*: multiliteracies framework applied to a literary classic**

Having considered the value and appropriateness of *La española inglesa* as a text for study in the present context, we can now present some examples illustrating the application of the multiliteracies approach to the study of this short story. Given the extensive range of new media, it

is necessary to focus on one specific manifestation. Film is a familiar medium and is particularly appropriate because of its popularity, accessibility and appeal to the younger generation:

Film in the target language is an efficient and effective link to the target culture(s) in that it is highly visual; it is authentic in that it is made for the target culture audience: it is readily available; it is attractive to students accustomed to a multimedia environment.<sup>27</sup>

The discussion concerning the relationship between film and literature lies beyond the scope of the paper. However, it is clear that critics increasingly perceive the advantages of the dialogue between literature and film adaptations of classic or older literary texts: 'studying adaptations of literature offers students a better, more effective way to study literature'.<sup>28</sup> Duncan Wheeler is among those who recognise the usefulness of films and visual materials and states that there is a responsibility to make good use of them so they can be effective instruments to make works of literature known and promote classic texts.<sup>29</sup>

In this case, a film version of *La española inglesa* (2015) produced by Spanish Television (RTVE) is a further tool that may be harnessed for the study of the short story. This film recreates the sixteenth century setting in a visual way and brings the action to the screen, taking the story closer to the twenty-first century reader.

---

<sup>27</sup> Jessica Sturm, 'Using film in the L2 Classroom: A Graduate Course in Film Pedagogy', *Foreign Language Annals* 45/2 (2012) 246-59, 246.

<sup>28</sup> Dennis Cutchins, Laurence Raw, and James M. Welsh, *The Pedagogy of Adaptation* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010), viii.

<sup>29</sup> Duncan Wheeler, 'Las adaptaciones cinematográficas como (posible) herramienta pedagógica', *Anuario Lope de Vega* 24 (2018), 260-88, DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/anuariolopedevega.257>>

If we apply the multiliteracies framework described above to *La española inglesa*, the four pedagogical acts of situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice will help address sections of the text alongside the film. Certain chapters will be read in different stages with the aim of ultimately reading the whole work of literature, while also engaging with multimodal elements and different literacies.

A pilot project to apply the multiliteracies approach to *La española inglesa* is outlined briefly in the following section. Sessions were delivered for first-year undergraduate students and Erasmus students at Manchester Metropolitan University at the beginning of the academic year 2017-18. The students had an advanced level of language. The aim of the sessions was to trial the level of engagement with and response to the literary work through initial contact with the film. None of the students was familiar with the work and they had very little or no knowledge of sixteenth-century Spain.

The sessions included some element of overt instruction as the teacher provided information on the historical and literary context, as well as clarifying certain language issues. Situated practice occurred given that students watched the film clip, listened to Spanish and completed a series of comprehension exercises. Critical framing and transformed practice were present in the form of detailed discussion of intercultural issues, subsequently leading to the production of written and oral work.

The very title of the text proved a good starting point to engage critically with cultural references. Students identified aspects which defined Spanish and English cultures and initiated discussion on language, character traits and traditions. As the title suggests, in *La española inglesa* there are a number of cultural opposites which can be explored both from the perspective of the historical moment of the time of writing and the present day. Other opposing terms in the story include



Catholic and Protestant, Christian and Muslim, captive and free, rich and poor, lower and upper class: 'It is a story of dissimulation and unpacks the condition and practice of hybrid identity in the early modern period'.<sup>30</sup> For all these reasons, it can be considered an appropriate text to explore in for the language classroom.

A series of exercises served to introduce students to the historical context and help them identify ethical issues appearing in the story, including rivalry between countries in the sixteenth century, issues of religion, relationships between parents and children in terms of choice of partner and the understanding of marriage, and even concepts of friendship in past times. The participation of Erasmus students in the classes broadened the range of cultural points of view offered. From the outset, students were able to make connections between Cervantes's times and aspects of the present.

Following introductory considerations, students watched a clip from the film and explored the scene using multimodal designs (linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and gestural). The clip provided an opportunity for situated practice as they had to understand the original Spanish track supported by the Spanish sub-titles. The palace scene, when the Queen meets Isabela and her family, was particularly useful: each of the designs was identified in the scene and helped to define the characters and the relationships between them. The verb tenses and forms of address used helped to recognise attitudes of power and submission. The Queen, for example, speaks using imperatives and determines what is to happen to the two main characters in the immediate future.

---

<sup>30</sup> Emily Colbert Cairns, 'Crypto-Catholicism in a Protestant Land: *La española inglesa*', *Cervantes* 36/2 (2016), 127-44, 127.

The colours of the costumes worn by the characters reinforced their position and challenged these relationships: Isabela was portrayed as being submissive, yet appeared in red, suggesting her inner strength and value as she stood before the rich and powerful Queen, dressed in contrasting white. The action was supported by gestures such as pointing, looks and bowing, which determined the position of each character in the social hierarchy. The grandiose setting of the palace and the solemn music contributed to provide a quasi-religious character to the Queen and the ceremony watched by the students.

The scene is engaging and full of emotion and it prompted student discussion of the specific issues arising, including the clash of cultures and, in particular, the free choice of marriage partner and the interests of other parties such as the Queen, parents and society in general. The transition to present-day situations was smooth as students were able to relate the content to analogous situations which still arise today.

This initial stage of film analysis helped capture the interest of students and familiarise them with the story. At this point it was appropriate to introduce into the session the original Cervantes text, which would otherwise have held little initial appeal for students. The text of the same scene seen in the film clip was presented in class. Evidently, the visual elements of the film were lacking in the text but students were nonetheless able to appreciate the power of the highly expressive and effective written metaphors and images describing the beauty of Isabela and the solemnity of the setting. Participating students realised that the lack of visual elements was compensated by vivid images and metaphors, which were equally or more effective than what they had viewed in the film clip: 'The descriptions in the novel are very interesting and create great images' (student comment). In this way, the link between the text and the film was made and the use of different media was clear.

Additional exercises allowed the four key language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking to be practised using digital tools, namely, a Quizlet (to build up vocabulary and understand the text) and a Webquest (with links enabling students to obtain further information on the context of the scene viewed in the film or in the text read). Most of the students were already familiar with the Quizlet and Webquest tools.

Situated practice and critical framing actions were implemented throughout the sessions. Intercultural issues were examined and students gave examples of integration and respect for different cultures in society. The theme of friendship was also discussed, as Ricardo's close friendship with his servant overcame class barriers of the day. In addition, a Turkish pirate saves Ricardo and his servant, just as the former had saved him at the beginning of the story, thus revealing a sense of loyalty that transcended the religious barriers and prevailing divisions between countries in the sixteenth century. Students read sections of the original work and analysed in depth these intercultural issues and their representation in the text, identifying multimodal elements and discovering how they changed over time.

In order to demonstrate that students could apply their learning to other contexts, they were encouraged, as an act of transformed practice, to identify in news items and magazines further representations of the story and references to the themes discussed. Finally, they were asked to write their own conclusions using multiliteracies or other modes of communication, such as a book trailer, film review, a film clip to be uploaded to YouTube, etc.

Combining the four different pedagogical acts from the multiliteracies approach, additional exercises were created to facilitate the reading of the short story in full. Students worked with the plot, structure, characterisation, themes and language (including imagery and register) of the story. Quotes were selected to check understanding and generate discussion. Meanwhile, other exercises

developed vocabulary and grammar structures and all contributed to helping the students engage with the story and familiarise themselves further with the Golden Age text.

## **Conclusion**

As this paper has highlighted, numerous studies explore the potential of new technologies and define new ways of learning. A multiliteracies approach can be used to develop language and literary skills and incorporate new practices for learners, particularly young people. Instead of being fearful of new multiliteracies skills, it is important to understand them and embrace them as instruments which can help develop and promote more traditional skills of reading and writing which, it is worth emphasising, are here to stay. It is important also to identify and harness existing resources to discover literary texts.

As illustrated in the preceding pages, there are multiple benefits to the application of this specific multiliteracies framework to activities deemed challenging in the current context, among them the study of literary classics:

It facilitates development of grammatical and lexical knowledge as resources for meaning making put into practice through contextualized language use within the context of FL texts. Because this pedagogy places texts at the center of the curriculum from the very start of language study, even introductory learners can engage in the kinds of critical framing and transformed practice activities to which they are exposed at this level.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Paesani, Willis and Dupuy, *A Multiliteracies Framework*, 43

In the words of Donnell, through innovative pedagogies ‘early modern literary works have a crucial role to play in the teaching of language, of culture, and of genres as acts of communication’.<sup>32</sup>

Further examples can be devised by teachers and academics and shared to enable us to undertake the study of many classic works of literature with renewed creativity and flexibility. It is hoped that the case presented here has demonstrated how a literary classic written centuries ago remains relevant to present-day issues, generates constructive ethical and intercultural debate, and fosters the creation of transmedia texts.

The exercises described represent an attempt to marry theory and practice in order to show that canonical works can be made more engaging for students by applying skills belonging to the new participatory culture of the twenty-first century and the multiliteracies framework. The combination of the four pedagogical acts described in the framework proves an effective tool to approach not just this particular classic text but many others also. As shown here, in the case of *La española inglesa*, the application of new angles and different media helps make this short story from the sixteenth century more accessible to our times and context, while at the same time aiding the development of intercultural skills.

---

<sup>32</sup> Sidney Donnell, ‘*Don Quixote* in the Balance: Early Modern Studies and the Undergraduate Curriculum’, in Lisa Vollendorf and James A. Parr, eds, *Approaches to Teaching Cervantes’s Don Quixote* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2015), 197-205, 204.