Master’s Dissertation

Understanding the use of Graphic Narratives through multiliteracies approach: A study of the use of *Persepolis* as a multimodal instrument in EFL/ESL/EL classroom

Student: Lange Guerra, Miriam

Tutor: Dr. Eugenio M. Olivares Merino
Dpt.: English Philology

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Abstract

This paper analyses the graphic narrative Persepolis (2008) and its potential use as a resource in the multiliteracies approach to pedagogy. Specifically, it focuses on the how Persepolis (2008) navigates the issues of gender and the ‘immigration otherness’ process. I argue that its treatment of these issues, as well as the ‘multimodal’ hybrid compositions that it is composed of, makes it a perfect tool for ensuring students’ engagement in reading, as well as their development of critical thinking and their empowerment in their acquisition of a language. In this way, and in the potential it provides for the recognition and inclusion of the cultural diversity of both students and educators, it fulfils the key requirements of the ‘multiliteracies approach’ to language acquisition. Moreover, to comprehend gender roles towards transcendence, in Persepolis (2008) and how gender related issues can be worked through the intersectionality concept, I compare the hybrid work of Borderlands/La Frontera (1987) with Persepolis (2008), to support this theory.

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza la novela gráfica Persepolis (2008) y su potencial uso como recurso en el enfoque de la pedagogía “multiliteracy”. Específicamente, se centra en cómo Persopolis (2008) trata los problemas de género y el proceso de “immigration otherness”. Mi argumento es que tanto el tratamiento de estos temas como la composición híbrida “multimodal” de la pieza, hacen de la misma una herramienta perfecta para garantizar tanto el compromiso de los estudiantes con la lectura, como el desarrollo de su pensamiento crítico y su empoderamiento con la adquisición de un lenguaje. De esta manera, y con el potencial que brinda para el reconocimiento y la inclusión de la diversidad cultural tanto de estudiantes como de educadores, cumple con los requisitos clave del enfoque de ‘multialfabetización’ para la adquisición del lenguaje. Además, como material de soporte de esta teoría, para comprender los roles de género y su trascendencia en Persepolis (2008) y apreciar cómo la problemática de género puede trabajarse a través del concepto de interseccionalidad, he incluido una comparación entre el trabajo híbrido de Borderlands / La Frontera (1987) y la misma Persepolis (2008).
1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION OF THE CONCEPTS

I begin with a brief literature review, in which I will introduce the concepts used in my thesis, based, inter alia, on studies by A. Freedman (2011), H. Chute (2008), W. Eisner (1985), S. McCloud (1993), A. Holston (2010), as well as the website Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF). W. Eisner and S. McCloud are considered to be pioneers of comics criticism, their work having been used in several studies to understand comics as a medium of artistic communication. This overview helps us to understand why the status of comics has evolved from that of an underground pop cultural medium to one of communication and art. Next, I present the rationale of my study, before analyzing Persepolis (2008) through the lenses of immigration otherness, “mestiza consciousness” and transcending gender, the latter investigated through intersectionality. In Section Four, I discuss the potential for the use of the graphic narrative Persepolis (2008) as a teaching tool for English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Language (EL), following the multiliteracies approach to pedagogy (New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2000, 2009). Moreover, Persepolis (2008) provides an opportunity to teach the English language whilst engaging in other relevant and dynamic issues such as gender, transcending binary categories and the feeling of otherness often felt by immigrants. Finally, I conclude my findings based on practical studies of use of comics in the classroom, and give suggestions for future lines of research.

1.1 Graphic Novel, Comics, and Graphic Narratives: History and Criticism

Graphic novels, comics, graphic narratives: all of these terms originated from comic strips, first becoming popular in the 19th century. Comic books are rooted in the publication of newspapers. Thus printed, they were commonly called `comic strips´ or `funnies´, comprising of both humorous and thoughtful cartoons (Freedman 2011: 35). R. Harvey (1996) argues in favour of the term cartoon for a book length or magazine format, due to the fact of its serialized hybrid nature: “caricature, panels, speech balloons, etc. Robert Harvey advocates ‘cartoon’ as a more precise and exclusive term, but he admits that comics has the virtue of common use” (Freedman 2011: 30), where text and drawing are one and neither has meaning.
alone (Harvey 1996: 38). In order to understand the heated discussions amongst scholars regarding ‘comics’ terminology, it is necessary to give a brief history of comics.

This medium began as a form of popular culture and was ignored by critics due to the fact that they were a form of mass-media communication (CLBDF 2017). Thus, they were banished and despised prior to becoming the huge industry that they are today: acclaimed by critics, studied by scholars and educational institutions and the subjects of movies based on comics such as: *Batman* (1939), *X-Men* (1963), *Captain America* (1941), *The Avengers* (1963) and *Iron Man* (1963).

This rise to the top has come after a controversial and convoluted history. Comics have been influenced by and dealt with political issues for a long time. Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill met for the Tehran Conference (1943) after the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran. This strategic reunion is especially important to the history of Iran since it consequently led to the Islamic revolution, which is narrated by the protagonist Marji in *Persepolis*. The 1940s are marked by the Second World War. It is relevant in this sense, to point out that the well-known comic character Superman appeared in the comics *Action Comics number 1* for the first time in 1938 and the creation of the comic character Captain America was launched by *Marvel Comics* in 1941, at the time called *Tymely Comics* (Holston 2010). “Comic books as we know them today, though, are generally thought to have found their origin with *Funnies on Parade* in 1933 and *Action Comics #1* (the first appearance of Superman) in 1938” (Kelly 2014).

During the Cold War, censorship and surveillance was at its peak. It was during the 1940s that *Citizen Kane*, a film directed by Orson Wells was released. These historical events are connected with comics since the appearance of some characters, such as Superman and Captain America, reinforced the discourse of the United States of America as heroes from the democratic world (Scott 2011: 107). Their clothing has the same colour as the flag of United States of America. Both of these characters are Caucasian men, and at that time, comics did not present any Afro-American super heroes. The first Afro-American super-hero was Black Panther who appeared in 1966 and was created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the founders of Marvel Comics (CBLDF 2017). In the United States America in the 1940s, it was claimed that comics corrupted their juvenile readership and thus were censored and even public burnt.

“Although comics were associated primarily with juvenile readers, a full 25% of the printed materials going to military PXs in World War II were comics” (CBLDF 2017). Comic book burnings took place (see figure 1) even as GIs were returning home from the war in Germany, where public burnings of books had taken place during the 1930s. The argument given was
that comics prevented readers from consuming high literature and appreciating art in general. In 1948, the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers (ACMP)\(^1\) attempted to ban all comics, panels and balloons which used inappropriate language or included depictions of criminals, divorce, religion or racial groups (CBLDF 2017). Subsequently, the Comics Code Authority was created, which heavily censored comics (Holston 2010: 10).

![Figure 1. burnt of comics in United States of America. 10 Sep 2017, http://cbldf.org/resources/history-of-comics-censorship/history-of-comics-censorship-part-1/](http://cbldf.org/resources/history-of-comics-censorship/history-of-comics-censorship-part-1/)

In order to understand why comics were a target for such censorship, it is necessary to recognize the historical background described earlier, and the fact that comics were shaped by the political discourse at the time. In the context of World War II and the Cold War, comic censorship intensified (Scott: 2011). However, comics were a kind of popular culture, and found a way to continue circulating, as a kind of underground culture. An example of this is the MAD magazine, founded by the editor H. Kurtzman and the publisher W. M. Gaines in 1952. The MAD magazine began with a comic format which it later changed into a magazine format in order to evade the censoring authorities. It had comic strips and defied the authority of the time by using satire to critique American popular culture (CBLDF 2017). MAD was widespread and considered to be a success.

After these decades of surveillance, banishment and public burnings, comics as a medium rose from underground into a sparkling industry, which had its golden age in the 1980s and 1990s with DC, Marvel, Vertigo, Pantheon comics etc. Heroes such as Superman,

\(^1\) In 1954, a child psychologist named F. Wertham published an anti-comics manifesto titled Seduction of the Innocent which tried to prove a causal relationship between the reading of comics and juvenile delinquency. See Olivares Merino (2013), especially in chapter four, for an insightful investigation about F. Wertham.
Spiderman, Captain America, Sandman, and X-Men were incredibly successful. Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A survivor tale* (1986) even won the Pulitzer Prize, the first time that this was awarded to a comic. This rise in popularity prompted academic research into the terminology surrounding the category of *comics*, and the field of comics criticism reapproached (Freedman 2013: 29). The two terms that I will focus on in here, are the “graphic novel” and the “graphic narrative”.

“Graphic novel” is a term first used by R. Kyle (1964) to describe comics with book length format. This was later popularized by W. Eisner in *A contract with a God and other tenement stories* (1978). Chute (2008) states that “Many think Will Eisner invented the term because he used it in a more commercial context, to sell a Contract with a God (1978) to publishers. […] A contract with god was the first book marketed as a ‘graphic novel’.” (2008: 3)

In the Preface of *A contract with a God and other tenement stories* (1978), Eisner analyses his work as a cartoonist and “discuss[es] comics as an art form” (Preface 1978). He states that:

> With hindsight, I realize I was really only working around one core concept – that the medium, the arrangement of words and pictures in a sequence - was an art form in itself. Unique, with a structure and gestalt all its own, this medium could deal with meaningful themes. Certainly there was more for the cartoonist working in this technique to deal with than superheroes who were preventing the destruction of Earth by supervillains” (Eisner 1978: Preface).

Later, the concept “graphic narrative” was created and its use discussed by scholars such as H.Chute, J. Heer and K.Worcester. H. Chute advocates the use of the term graphic narrative because it retains the understanding of a significant length of work whilst also providing recognition and opportunity for non-fiction elements such as the biography of its authors, investigations of their lives and traumas: “In graphic narrative, the substantial length implied by novel remains intact, but the term shifts to accommodate modes and other than fiction. A graphic narrative is a book-length work in the medium of comics” (Chute 2008: 453).

I have chosen to use the term ‘comics’ in this dissertation due to the political and historical background of this medium, as discussed above. It should be noted that the word ‘comic’ refers to a broader concept than purely that of comic books. As S. McCloud states: “comics is the world itself, not a specific object as ‘comic book’ or ‘comic strip’” (1993: 4). The use of the word ‘comic’ to describe all kinds of materials published of the medium and ensures the recognition of the breadth of its content, and so implicitly rejects any attempt to
make distinctions between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art (Freedman 2013: 29). In line with the reasons articulated by H. Chute (above), I refer to the sub-category of comics ‘graphic narrative’ due to both the book-length and autobiographic nature of *Persepolis* (2008).

Some have argued for the use of the graphic narrative for pedagogical purposes, due to its hybrid composition, multimodal format and elaborate narratives, all of which fit into the multiliteracies approach to pedagogy. G. Yang (2014), cartoonist and teacher, brilliantly illustrates the potential that the graphic narrative has for use in the classroom (see figure 2):

**Figure 2.** Graphic Novels in the Classroom: an essay in panels 2014 by G. Yang © 2014 Digital Campus/Heinemann.
Despite their rise from obscurity, and the fact that comics as medium are no longer censored at a national level, *Persepolis* (2008) was banned from Chicago schools in 2013. The reason given for such censorship was the potential for parts of the graphic narrative to be misinterpreted in harmful ways, particularly the panels illustrating torture (McNicol 2015; Williams 2015). Parents and school authorities decided that the risk of mixed messages being construed from the comic was too dangerous thus the ‘graphic narrative’ was removed from the library for grades k-12 (McNicol 2015: 32). Subsequently, multiple newspaper articles spoke out against this banishment of *Persepolis* (2008) making the argument that this represented a form of Islamophobia and censorship (Williams 2015). M. Williams (2015), collaborator of CBLDF and S. McNicol (2015), Researcher Associate at the Education and Social Research Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University in the UK, have endorsed the use of comics in schools arguing the fact that the comics needs “the role of the reader as an active participant who works with the author to construct the text” (McNicol 2015: 39). According to S. McCloud comics is “a medium where the audience is a willing and conscious collaborator and closure is the agent of change, time and motion” (1993: 65).

The attempt to censor *Persepolis* (2008) has only served to increase the interest in the field of comics criticism and opened dialogues around the subject and its potential pedagogical use as a multimodal tool in the process of language acquisition, as the following chapters will demonstrate.

### 1.2 Introduction of the Multiliteracies Framework as an Approach to Pedagogy

“Multiliteracies” is a dynamic pedagogical approach based on the recognition that language acquisition in today’s world requires a nuanced and encompassing approach that fully reflects the pluralities and complexities of modern day communication (Cope & Kalantzis 2000). Both educators and learners use language in a dynamic way, proposing and changing strategies of acquiring an idiom in order to achieve their objective. Therefore, it is neither a static form of teaching and learning, nor is the objective to acquire a standard set of rules (Cope & Kalantzis 2000). On the contrary, the process of acquiring spoken, written and comprehension skills traverses the subjectivity of the learners and educators, as Danzak clarifies:

The term multiliteracies (New London Group 1996) refers to a shift in the conception of literacy and literacy pedagogy from that of a page-bound practice restricted to an official/standard (i.e., monolingual and monocultural) language to a critical and dynamic understanding of literacy as
a multiplicity of discourses. This broad conceptualization of literacy highlights diversity, both of texts and of the individuals who create and interact with them. (2011: 3)


The educator Paulo Freire influenced this approach by advocating for Pedagogy of Freedom (1998), where language is understood as a mean to empower the individual. Despite this approach being conceived prior to the technological demands that exist today, it remains a key text in the field of literacy education. Thus, the pedagogy and theory articulated by P. Freire remains as relevant today as it ever was, and provides support for my argument that language empowers an individual and produces social changes. Likewise, “Pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures” (1996), Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures (2000), and “Multiliteracies”: New Literacies, New Learning” (2009) supports my study that graphic narratives, particularly Persepolis, represent a multimodal instrument that can be used in the classroom to further language acquisition. In light of this, several concepts developed by P. Freire will form a key part of my thesis, including “meaning-makers”, “market-driven”, and “pedagogy of freedom”.

By understanding pedagogy in this way, language is not a seen as set of rules reproducing a set, standard language, and with it the mainstream discourse that exists in society. Instead, learner and educator are either active producers or `meaning-markers` of the language. They become critical thinkers, using their subjectivities in this process of learning and teaching. As a result, different kinds of vocabulary in the same language are created, depending on the social, cultural and economic context. Consequently, language is a cross-cultural movement that produces linguistic diversity and cultural multiplicities. As clarified in the introduction of Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures: “This issue - how the language meets with cultural and linguistic diversity – was one of the main concerns” (Cope & Kalantzis 2000: 3).
The New London Group advocate that ‘the languages needed to making meaning are radically changing in three realms of our existence: our working lives, our public lives (citizenship), and our personal lives (lifeworld’s)’ (Cope & Kalantzis 2000: 10). They stressed, however, that such instances are not separate from each other (Cope & Kalantzis 2000:10). Each is part of the constitution of an individual, the area where identity is built and signified. However, for practical purposes, I will explain each instance one by one.

Firstly, I will examine working life. The post-Fordism\(^2\) period of mass production created a work environment of repetition and standardization and, consequently, language was a reproduction of this (New London Group 1996: 66-67). Language was taught (still is) as a pattern, requiring repetition of its patterns and rules and devoid of ‘meaning-makers.’ However, nowadays, demands on workers’ skills have changed towards multitasking, teamwork and multilingualism (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 169 - 170). In a world where borders are crossed easily by plane, and within the context of the post Internet revolution, a new form of teaching and acquiring languages is being developed. Multiliteracies are necessary to improve our work-life:

The everyday life experience of work has also changed in new economy organizations. Replacing the hierarchical command structures of the old workplace are the horizontal relations of teamwork. Replacing the logic of the division of labour and deskilling is the logic of “multiskilling” or creating the rounded and flexible worker whose skills repertoire is ever-broadening. (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 169)

The rapid advancement of technology, leading to the creation of ever more complex gadgets, and the dominance of the Internet requires a new approach to literacy to enable workers to fulfill the requirements of their jobs. These developments have also increased access to information, and contributed to the spread of ‘market-driven’ discourses. Such discourses have led to exploitation resulting in vast social and economic differences that have, in effect, isolated or excluded individuals and/or groups (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 170). Therefore, to teach and become literate means to become a critical thinker, to be empowered by language, which is dynamic and constantly being recreated by ‘meaning-makers’. Education and technologies work alongside each other to empower individuals during their process of literacy acquisition, as is argued by Cope & Kalantzis:

It should also have the most ordinarily conservative of reasons for existence: that it will help students get a decent job, particularly if the dice of opportunity seem to be loaded against them.

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\(^2\) Transition from large-scale mass-production during Fordism towards the usage of small flexible manufacturing units. For further information, see: B. Jessop in Comparative Welfare Systems (1996), especially chapter 9, p.165-184.
Literacy needs much more than the traditional basics of reading and writing the national language: in the new economy workplace, it is a set of supple, variable, communication strategies, ever-diverging according to the cultures and social languages of technologies, functional groups, types of organization and niche clienteles. (2009: 170)

“Public lives” (citizenship) as named in the book Multiliteracies: Literacy and the Design of Social Futures (2000), refers to institutions, such as schools, as a space where teachers and learners are constantly dealing with different kinds of negotiations. These negotiations range from the choice of the curriculum to dealing with the different backgrounds and subjectivities of each educator and student. Schools are an institution where this process occurs constantly. Students experience “cross-cultural discourses; the code switching often to be found within a text among different languages, dialects, or registers; different visual or iconic meanings.” (Cope & Kalantzis 2000: 14)

Schools are responsible for the literacy of the citizenship, and they have always been at the centre of a democracy, along with two other pillars: public health insurance and jobs for all (Cope & Kalantzis 2000: 18). Schools have the responsibility of creating a capable workforce, able to comply with the demands of the modern work environment. In this way the “market driven” discourse of neoliberal society has pervaded that of the educational system. Workers are first students, trained to be fast-learners, multi-taskers, capable of dealing with new technologies and both their real and virtual lives (Cope & Kalantzis 2000: 43). Proficiency in different languages and the ability to adapt to various situations and the many demands of a globalized world has continued to increase in importance. For those who do not, or cannot, adapt to the fast pace of this neoliberal school curriculum the solution advocated is that of therapy or pills supplied by the pharmaceutical industry. In these instances, where learners and educators come from different backgrounds, countries, cultures and languages, a pedagogy that reflects this may represent an alternative solution to medication or exclusion for those who are struggling. One way of doing so is to bring the technologies that form a part of our daily lives, such as smartphones and the Internet, into the classroom. Another way is the active participation of the learners during the creative process of acquiring languages. The role of the teacher could be shifted to that of a guide, with the learners actively negotiating their subjective between themselves. In this way, “cultural and linguist diversity is a classroom resource such as powerfully as it is social resource in the formation of new civic spaces and new notions of citizenship” (Cope & Kalantzis 2000: 15) and can be used as an instrument of empowerment for the learner.
Personal lives mean the differences of gender, background, country, and languages: everything that builds an identity. Nowadays, social media has resulted in the blurring of the line between private and public aspects of life. The does not mean that the notion of privacy no longer exists, but rather that it is in constant negotiation with public and professional life. This is part of the multiples layers of everyone’s identities, as articulated by Cope & Kalantzis saying “The moment one allows any more scope for agency, one finds oneself facing layers upon layers of difference—in workplaces, markets, and self-governing communities, amongst, between and within personalities” (2009: 173).

Correspondingly, any teaching approach should build a linkage between the subjects discussed in class, current debates on social issues and the student’s own knowledge, culture and learning ability (Gokhale 1995: 22-23; Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 185). Challenging tasks may encourage the students to leave their comfort zone. Similarly, activities and class discussions provide an opportunity to relate the students’ personal lives to current affairs in order to empower them to become “critical thinkers” (Gokhale 1995: 22-23). What is more, “collaborative learning” is essential to foster “reflective thinking” (Gokhale 1995: 22-23; Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 189) and improve the students’ communicative and intercultural abilities.

This is why a proposal of work with the graphic narrative Persepolis (2008) is presented here. Persepolis (2008) represents a multimodal, hybrid resource to use when acquiring language, and which considers relevant and dynamic issues such as gender, transcending gendered binaries towards “mestiza consciousness” (see section 1.4), and immigration otherness (see section 1.3). I will expand on these points in subsequent chapters.

The objective is to create a sense of meaning which traverses the student’s own lives and thus achieve a dynamic language acquisition which is deeply connected with their subjectivity (Cope & Kalantzis 2000).

This is an alternative to the mainstream approach where the acquisition of language is static, learned by heart, and distant from the subjective of oneself. Under this approach, learners experience EFL/ESL/EL distantly, lose interest in the issue and are unable to attain the critical awareness necessary to acquire a language.

1.3 Immigration Otherness

This section is based mainly on the studies of S.Honary (2013), J. Darda (2013) and M. Muslim (2011), all of whom have worked specifically with Persepolis, “immigration
otherness”, and “identity”. These studies have inspired me to choose the ‘othering process’ as one of the main themes of this thesis. I have chosen to work with the concept of immigration otherness due to its significance in previous studies, specifically in cases of Diaspora\(^3\), and in the graphic narrative of *Persepolis*. This concept illuminates how identities are built and re-built due to the fragmentation and disassociation of the self when a group of people (Diaspora) or individuals move to a host culture (Honary 2013). The move can lead to the individual feeling unterritorialized, both psychologically and physically. The extent to which this occurs depends upon how the host culture views the guest culture and on how the migrant processes this perception, as well as their ability to find strategies to adapt to these new circumstances (Honary 2013: 54). However, the most important issue is how immigrants and their guest culture manage to re-build their identity based on both cultures. *Persepolis* (2008) provides an opportunity to analyze and interpret this process of othering (Muslim 2011).

Introducing the concept of the immigration otherness process implies to introduce the concept of ‘other’ based on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. This focuses on the relationship between the “you” and the “I”, where the “other” is the ultimate signifier, as expressed by Lacan in *The Seminar. Book III. The Psychoses* (1955-56). As the Columbia Dictionary (s.v other xiii, 216) states: “for Lacan, the discovery of the Other parallels the acquisition of the abilities to speak and to distinguish between the you and the I, which are tantamount to the acquisition of social identity”. Consciousness does not exist without the construction of the other and its signifier. These are strictly connected and one exists because of and/or for the other. Therefore, the constitution of a self-image and the acknowledgement of the existence of a nation, group, religion, etc, depend on the other. For example, for a group that identifies itself as being part of a specific religion: the religion is the sign and the group is the signifier. It is a common knowledge that the beliefs and values of two groups which belong to different religious orientations and intensely identify themselves with these respective religions might use the process of othering, which could lead to violence and intolerance.

1.4 Intersectionality, Gender, “Mestiza Consciousness” and Transcending Gender

The term ‘gender role’ describes appropriated behaviours, norms and relationships which refer to socially constructed characteristics of women and men according to the World Health Organization (WHO 2017). Deviant behaviour from established gender norms and individuals who do not fit into binary sex categories often face discriminatory practices (WHO 2017).

\(^3\) The dispersion of people from their original motherland
Contemporary feminist scholarship increasingly highlights the entanglement of ‘race’, class, gender, ethnicity and nation (inter alia) and thus stresses the relevance of analyzing these social stratifications as intersectional discrimination instead of separately operating entities (Collins 2015; Choo & Ferree 2010). Crenshaw (1989), for example, criticizes the single-axis analysis in racial discrimination studies and pleads for multidimensionality. Despite ongoing academic discussions about a common definition, the concept “intersectionality” emphasizes “the importance of including the perspectives of multiply-marginalized people […] [and] an analytic shift from addition of multiple independent strands of inequality toward a multiplication […] of their main effects into interactions.” (Choo & Ferree 2010: 131).

The concept of “mestiza consciousness” was coined by Gloria Anzaldúa in Borderlands (1987; see section 3.1) and describes the awareness to interpret an identity which is defined by multiple “racial”, gender, sexual orientation, national, linguistic, cultural and biological backgrounds as a strength, rather than a restriction. Anzaldúa calls this political and social awareness the “new mestiza consciousness”.

In order to demonstrate gender construction and the transcendence of gender in Persepolis, I compare Borderlands (1987) by Gloria Anzaldúa with Persepolis (2008) by Marjane Satrapi. Both artistic, hybrid works discuss gender roles and succeed in transcending them, moving beyond the binaries of masculinity and femininity and thus the necessity of the other. Working with the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) offers a perspective to analyze all categories (nationality, gender, language, religion, race, etc.) of difference in a fluid way and to relate all of them instead of thinking of them as separate, fixed blocks (Crenshaw 1989). This concept therefore offers a way for the subjective of each category to move beyond the separated, categorized discourse, transcending them and so building a stronger and fluid identity, a “mestiza consciousness” (Costa & Ávila 2005: 696).

This demonstration is extremely important to understand why in chapter four of this dissertation “Persepolis as a tool of Multiliteracies approach” I argue that this graphic narrative can be used in classroom of EFL/ELL/ESL (but also other subjects, such as History, Literature, among others) to work transversally with subjects of gender and intersectionality.

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4 A woman of mixed “race” with an indigenous and Spanish background
1.5 The Use of Graphic Narratives in Classroom

There are practical studies on the use of graphic narratives in the classroom. In this chapter, I will review the literature most relevant to my own study. According to existing studies with quantitative results, the use of comics and their subcategories could be reinforced according to the “Multiliteracies Approach in Pedagogy” (New London Group 1996).

The first study, supported by Lincon School, was “A teacher research project: Multiliteracy Graphic Novels in the Classroom” (2013). This practical study was conducted by a teacher in Lincon School (United States of America) on the following sample of students: “All girls, 10th grade English: 28 students, ELL, learning differences, physical differences, and varied skills levels within the class, 25% students of color in the upper school and 2.5% international” (Yoon 2013: 5).

The goal of the teacher was to answer the following question “how can graphic novels be used in classroom to promote engagement and multiliteracy?” (Yoon 2013: 3). The teacher used the graphic novel Persepolis (2008), over a multi-stage process, and concluded that Persepolis helped to engage students when utilized as a multiliteracy instrument (Yoon 2013). The qualitative study proposed three stages to reach this result: “narrative writing (diagnostic), annotations, film clips, personal essay (final project), self -assessment survey” (Yoon 2013: 10). The findings were as follows: “students improved their annotation skills” by “try[ing] something new” (Yoon 2013: 19), students develop the skill to identify the story with their own personal lives; therefore, “students writing benefited from visualization” (Yoon 2013: 25), according to the self-assessment survey, students were more engaged by reading Persepolis, “contributing to a lively classroom” (Yoon 2013: 31). The final recommendation is to introduce graphic novels in classroom, towards to a “multiliterate student of the future” (Yoon 2013: 33). Although a time frame was not described, the teacher and learners reached their objectives.

The researcher S. Sabeti (2013) stresses in her article “A different kind of reading: the emergent literacy practices of a school-based graphic novel club” the possibility to approach pedagogy in a different way. Her findings were based on a reading group focused on graphic novel reading, based in a secondary school in Scotland “the framework of the the new literacy studies and its focus on ‘practices’ and ‘events’ but, more specifically, it uses the framework developed by researchers working on the Literacies for Learning in Further Education Project conducted recently in the United Kingdom” (Sabeti 2012: Abstract).
This study found that this particular literary approach is undervalued by the official curriculum, despite findings regarding identity and process. However, the fact that the group was formed as an extracurricular class meant that the students read comics as a pleasure. Therefore, the question arises of how the application of compulsory literary texts chosen by the school curriculum alters the relationship between students, teachers and literary texts:

The culture around the reading of certain texts, in other words, has implications for the practices which arise from it. It was precisely this positioning—both in and out of ‘school’—which produced some of the most productive aspects of the practice that evolved. Practice co-emerges with context, and this then posits various problems when it comes to moving or ‘harnessing’ various aspects of a practice across contexts because the context inevitably changes the practice. (Sabeti 2012: 850)

Likewise, R. L. Danzak (2011) has conducted a practical study using the “multiliteracies approach” (New London Group 2000) on graphic narratives, explained in his article “Defining Identities through Multiliteracies: EL Teens Narrate Their Immigration Experiences as Graphic Stories”. Here, he explains beautifully how graphic journals written by teenage English learners about their immigration trajectory helped them to build bridges and acquire English as foreign language (Danzak 2011). He argues that for English learners (ELs) the visual support provided by comics helps to build the meaning of the text whilst they are reading. This notion was already acknowledged by G. Wright (1979) and S. Cary (2004), who defended the introduction of comics into writing activities to acquire EFL (Danzak 2011). Danzak also argued “graphic novels provide comprehensible input and lower the affective filter for second language readers” (ibd: 189). Moreover, Danzak highlights that “there have been very few research studies exploring the outcomes of using comics/graphic novels in the EL classroom.” (ibd: 3). To use multiple ways and different media to teach EFL, for example, empowers the ELs to develop literacy skills and confidence, and to express their identities. In a monolingual, English-speaking classroom, ELs learners probably feel silenced (Danzak 2011), and therefore find themselves in “in-between places” (Honary 2013), where the process of ostracism occurs. This way, barriers are built and the non-identification process with the host culture happens, since the ELs cannot adequately express their own identity. Hence, Danzak argues for the introduction of multimodal approach of pedagogy, through “multiliteracies” to students of EL’s, bringing closer the subject of immigration and identity:

It is important to recognize the importance of a self-narrative, multiliteracies project such as Graphic Journeys as a mean to construct a safe and welcoming space for teen ELs to share their stories. In this supportive space, ELs must be given the resources (such as relevant writing
instruction and guided practice), the tools (supplies, access to computers and soft-ware) and the
time (several weeks for a multilayered project) to create original, culturally relevant, and
personally meaningful literacy products (Danzak 2011: 195).

G. Yang (2014) wrote a comic essay to exhibit his argument that teachers and schools
should use more of this hybrid text to improve the literacy skills of their students.

B. Morgan & S. Vandrick (2009) discuss in their article “Imagining a Peace Curriculum:
What Second-Language Education Brings to the Table” how the teaching of English as a
Second language or Foreign language could be enriched if multiculturalism is taken into
account. In their qualitative study, they worked with two classrooms:

Here we focus on critical pedagogies and curricula in two classroom settings. In the first, a class
including Muslim students employs a critical media literacy perspective to investigate post-
September 11th biases against Muslims. In the second, students read literature related to war and
peace, examine its language, and make connections with their own stories and identities.

Their conclusion is the same as those of the authors quoted previously, such as Marjane
Satrapi in *Persepolis*, once the students are encouraged to create their own narrative and tell
their story:

The stories here draw attention to the ways in which the personal can become political—of how
spoken and shared intimacies can rub against the grain of government and mass-media
representations. The Iranian novelist Marjane Satrapi offers a provocative and insightful
perspective on this issue. (Morgan & Vandrick 513).

Once students are empowered to write their own narrative and read the stories of their
classmates, they are able to connect deeper with the language than when they are learning by
standard rules. Moreover, language acquisition goes beyond learning for functionality. The
students are engaged critically and are able to create a meaning or “meaning-makers” (New
London Group 2000). Therefore, the students gather tools to become empowered through
language. The risk of falling into an “in-between place” (Honary 2013) decreases, and the
binary othering process has a place to be deconstructed. Moreover, this approach leads to
increased creativity that can transcend the mainstream discourse of gender and immigration.

Discussions of the readings and the students’ own writings in response to the readings confirm
the profound learning that takes place when students develop a critical awareness of how
language is used in various genres. Only with this kind of consciousness can they look beyond
official representations, understand attempts to manipulate through language, and develop their
own understandings (Morgan & Vandrick 2009: 528).
L. Ravelo (2013), in her article “The Use of Comic Strips as a means of Teaching History in the EFL class: Proposal of Activities Based on Two Historical Comic Strips Adhering to the Principles of CLIL”, defends the use of comics strips to teach history in the EFL course for the same reasons mentioned above and thus supports my argument.

Hence, there are practical studies using graphic novels with positive results in EFL, ESL and EL classrooms, although it is also used in Literary, Language and History classes. Teachers are already introducing “multimodal” (New London Group 2000) material to engage students in their classes. Hence, they present a unique format which depends on an active reader to capture its full comprehension. Graphic narratives such as Persepolis present an opportunity to work with problematic issues such as “gender”, “transcendence”, “immigration otherness”, “mestiza consciousness” and current affairs while the student acquires critical literary processes.

1.6 Rationale of the study and research questions

There are few studies on the use of comics as a teaching resource in the classroom, and even fewer that focus specifically on Persepolis (2008). As S. McNicol explains in her article “Freedom to teach: implications of the removal of Persepolis from Chicago schools” (2015) Persepolis was banned from Chicago schools on 13th of March of 2013, due to the potential for open interpretation and the “mixed messages” (McNicol 2015: 32) it contained. In the article she defends comics as a teaching resource, arguing that they require an active reader to interpret the narrative, thus providing challenging reading. The results of these studies show that more should be conducted in order to properly assess the potential for comics to enhance learning. Given this, the three research questions that motivate my thesis are the following:

- How are the concepts of “immigration otherness”, “intersectionality”, “gender”, “mestiza consciousness” and “transcendence” treated in the graphic narrative Persepolis and the hybrid essay Borderlands?
- In how far is the graphic narrative Persepolis an appropriate tool of the “multiliteracies approach” to increase the acquisition of EFL/ESL/EL and to support reading engagement, critical thinking and language awareness in classroom?
- To what extent can the focus on “immigration otherness” and “gender” within the “multiliteracies approach” increase the language critical awareness of students?
2. **PERSEPOLIS, GENDER AND IMMIGRATION OTHERNESS**

*Persepolis* (2008) narrates the story of Marjane, an Iranian girl who leaves her home country to live in Vienna before returning to Iran four years later. This graphic narrative is particularly interesting with respect to the experiences of othering lived by the protagonist (Honary 2013). The reader views the experiences of the younger Marjane (Marji) through the narration of the older Marjane, who communicates her story in flashbacks. By choosing to compose her memoir in the form of a graphic narrative, Satrapi invites the reader to actively engage in her world and, through this, to understand her othering process. In this way, the author guides the reader to see beyond fixed stereotypes about the “Western” and “Eastern” worlds, and challenges the fixed idea of “us” and “them” (Honary 2013: 54).

In the case of “immigration otherness”, the process of othering is the same. C.Chun argues in her article “that foreground racism and immigrant otherness resonates with ELL students” (2009:144). Therefore, to use this particular graphic novel in classroom would help to deal with the process of othering (see section three). *Persepolis* depicts, through the eyes of the protagonist Marji, this very process. In fact, the development of the process of othering is the pivotal subject in this graphic narrative (Darda 2013). This narrative is composed of two books. The first one, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, depicts the author’s experiences from 1980 until 1984, during the Islamic Revolution in Iran when, due to the turbulent and violent political landscape in Iran, she leaves her home country for Europe. The second book: *The Story of a Return*, narrates her experiences in Austria where she lived from the age of fourteen years old until her return to Iran when she was eighteen and where she studies, gets married (1991), divorces (1994) and finally moves to France (1994), where the author lives today. The *othering* process reaches its peak in Europe, where she wrestles with her own perception of herself as an immigrant woman, as well as how she thinks that others see her (Honary 2013). This process continues even once she returns to Iran. After four years experiencing life as a woman and immigrant in the Western world, she finds that she is as much as foreigner in her home country as in Vienna. In the course of leaving Iran during the Islamic Revolution and moving to Austria, she encounters the way in which the Western world sees the Middle East, precisely Iran, in a gendered way. It could be assumed that Marji does belong to neither Europe nor Iran: she is in-between places (Honary 2013: 54). As the
narrator states: “I was a Westerner in Iran, an Iranian in the West. I had no identity. I didn’t even know anymore why I was living” (Satrapi 2008: 274)

Throughout the graphic narrative we see how Marji is attempting to construct her own identity (Muslim 211). This process is affected by her experience of othering which she finally manages to transcend. She uses her transcultural experience and the plurality of cultures she encounters as tools to transcend both host and mother culture by using different angles from both worlds to build her subjective, who led her to write this graphic narrative (Honary 2013: 53).

“Immigration otherness” can be a tremendous source of pain and impotence of those experiencing it. However, as with many challenges in life, Marji shows the how such suffering can inspire creativity, such as the production of a graphic narrative. A common occurrence in Diasporas, the feeling of not belonging and occupying the place in-between has been reported by the many studies conducted by institutions such as (Honary 2013: 53), such as The International Institute for Diasporic and Transcultural Studies, Golong Gilig Institute of Javanese Diaspora Studies, Indonesia, among others. The process of othering often leads to culturally rigid ideas which serve as a barrier to identification with parts of a guest culture. Hence, the migrants/immigrants are condemned to a feeling of displacement and lack of identity. The construction of ghettos is common, since the host culture does not help the guest culture to be part of their society, for example by creating a new one with exchanges of ways of living (Muslim 2011). Instead, the host culture marginalizes the guest culture resulting in both reinforcing the idea of “us” and “them” (Honary 2013: 53).

In the case of Persepolis, the transcultural venture of the protagonist and the resulting culturally diverse experiences gave birth to a narrative (Chute 2008: 459). Despite the trials of the displacement process, the graphic narrative concludes that the relation with the other could be one of interaction instead of opposition, of collaboration instead of marginalization. The “in-between” (2013) identities, in addition to her safety net of friends and family are an example of the way in which this process of othering can be redirected into creative forms for a higher cognitive purpose. This is precisely why studying graphic narratives is a useful tool for educators. In fact, many educational institutions and scholars are re-modelling the way they educate their students due to the increasing cultural pluralism in the classroom. Having the globally numerous ongoing armed conflicts (i.e. Syria) and resulting forced migration flows in mind, cultural pluralism issue is particularly relevant in modern days.

The reader follows the protagonist, Marji, through her education and sees how her political opinions change and are influenced those around her (Honary 2013). Such changes
of opinion and acquirement of knowledge result from explanations of certain topics such as *The Veil* (also title of the first chapter), whose use is justified by her teacher due to its religious value (representing the oppressive government). This perspective is then countered by her parents and grandmother, who point out the political retrocession of using the veil. This process is a clear and critical example of how easily people can be influenced if they have not been taught how to think critically. This is exemplified in the following illustration (see figure 3).

![Comic Image]

The story begins in 1980, when the protagonist, Marji, is 10 years old and living in Teheran. One year before, in 1979, the Islamic revolution had broken out. The author uses the literary device of flashbacks to tell of the time that the protagonist lived in her home country, Iran. This period lasts for four years, from 1980 to 1984; from she is ten to fourteen years old. Every time she remembers something important or comical from before the age of 10, she uses this flashback device (Honary 2013). This period was a very turbulent time in Iran which was fighting a war with Iraq and undergoing a revolution. Religious fundamentalists had taken over the government and set in motion the Islamic religious regime by closing universities, persecuting dissenters; they had also decreed the mandatory use of the veil (Satrapi 2008: Introduction). In fact, the first chapter of the graphic narrative is called The Veil, and details its entry into the law. The reader follows the social, economic and religious changes that the republic of Islam brings when it ends the reign of the last Shah. Marji was brought up by a family of scholars, educated in a Western style, and was against the imposition of religion (Darda 2013: 47). Therefore, she was taught to be a critical thinker and to engage critically in her life, first through language and later through art. Her family had fought against the last Shah reign, the huge economic difference between classes and the strict rules of their society. Marji is a girl with a powerful imagination, exemplified by her dream of God who, in her perception, is very similar to Karl Marx (Honary 2013). The illustration below (see figure 4) shows the outcome of her dream, and is an example of her powerful imagination and the influence of her Western education.

During her childhood in Teheran, Marji was empowered by her family. However, when the Islamic republic started to make its move towards power, her family decided that the best thing to do would be to send Marji to Austria (Honary 2013: 51). A series of events led her family to this decision. The protagonist, who was once originally seen as a creative and critical thinker (Cope & Kalantzis 2000), is now repressed by the religious government. At school, fourteen year old Marji was expelled for continuing to wear bracelets after warnings not to by the principal. She defended herself when the principal tried to remove the bracelet physically and was accused of having assaulted her. Her parents had some contacts with bureaucrats and found another school. However, here she gets into trouble again by challenging a teacher in front of the whole class. This teacher stated that under the Islamic regime prisoners were inexistent, to which Marji replied that during the post-Islamic revolution, the movement holds more prisoners than under the Shah (Satrapi 2008). Consequently, her parents are called by the director who warns them that her way of thinking is not going to be tolerated (see figure 5).
This is the start of Marji becoming a foreigner in her own country, as her safety net of friends is reduced, killed and persecuted, and her ability to speak freely is constrained. She is too young to process what is occurring but her parents recognize the political and religious changes sweeping the country and decide that, for Marji’s safety, she must leave and finish her education in the Western World, specifically in Vienna, Austria.

It is in the second book, *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*, that Marji feels the sense of immigration otherness most acutely (Honary 2013). Here Marji, for the first time, experiences the West’s perception of her home country (Darda 2013). It is also the first time that she is without any safety net, any friends or relatives, and begins to experience feelings of guilt at leaving her family behind in a fundamentalist dictatorship. This guilt intensifies over time. Furthermore, despite having been brought up in a Western way, it is here that she sees at first-hand how the Western world (represented by Austria) actually behaves (Muslim 2011). In this graphic narrative, she relates what happened to her in Austria, from becoming homeless, falling in love, trying to adapt to a group of friends, and, finally, attempting suicide (Honary 2013: 55).

It is important to stress here the importance of languages in the attainment of freedom and status, and the way in which the lack of understanding of a language can act as a barrier. Marji is fluent in French and Persian but is unable to speak German, the official language of Austria. She tries to talk with her room-mate or to buy groceries, but is unable to understand or speak any German at all. In the next panel, however, she is able to cross this border with her room-mate by using drawings and offering food. It is the first time that she manages to establish an emotional connection without using any language, and does not last long. Her lack of fluency in German meant that she was excluded from many things, such as watching television or forming a friendship with her roommate (Satrapi 2008: 100).

Whilst living in a French-speaking boarding school run by nuns, she is overwhelmed by the fact that she can eat and watch television at the same time (Satrapi 2008: 208), something that was forbidden in her parents’ house. She brings the whole pot of spaghetti to eat in front of the television, to which the nun says: “It’s true what they say about Iranians. They have no education.” Marji responds: “It’s true what they say about you, too. You were all prostitutes before becoming nuns!” (Satrapi 2008: 108). This retort leads to her expulsion from the convent. The narrator ends this sequence of panels by saying: “In every religion, you find the same extremists” (Satrapi 2008: 109). The intention of this is to raise awareness that pre-conceptualized ideas about any religion can impede the exchange of ideas and understanding between two or more different religious group (Honary 2013: 51).
Although she is enrolled in a French speaking school, a Liceu, she spent three years not speaking any French due to the fundamentalists having forbidden secular schools and the study of foreign languages in Iran. In Iran she was empowered by language, yet in Austria the opposite is true.

She tries to fit in somehow at the Liceu, even though daily life is in German. To avoid any racism she hides her origins, thus disassociating herself linguistically, emotionally and psychologically from her home country (Honary 2013: 52). However as time passes, she grows and physical changes to her body occur that make it impossible to deny where she comes from. Once more, she is subject to racism and pre-conceived ideas about the Middle East.

This reaches a point where she totally denies where she comes from, telling a man in a bar that she is in fact French. As the narrator explains: “It was easier to lie than assume that burden” (Satrapi 2008: 197). Here, she remembers her grandmother saying: “Always keep your dignity and be true to yourself.” (Satrapi 2008: 150). The fact that she tries to deny or hide her origin to adapt to a new reality shapes her identity. She does not recognize herself as an adolescent, as an Iranian, as an immigrant. She loses her identity and does not know anymore where or how she fits into a society that despises people from Middle East (Honary 2013). She starts to see herself exactly the way they see her. The otherness process is so intense that the Marji of ten years old is hidden from her subjectivity (Muslim 2011). The burden of guilt she carries is so powerful that she sinks into an unknown state and isolates herself, which explains why she even avoids talking to her parents in Teheran on the phone.

*Persepolis* deeply depicts the experiences of this Iranian woman, Marji, as she grows old. The feeling of not belonging reaches the point where she denies her own identity in order to try to fit in, just to find out that when she comes back to Iran, she no longer fits in there, either (Muslim 2011). The cruelty of what happens inside and around her almost leads to her taking her own life. The reader follows her, with relief, when she return back home, to her family. However, too much has happened in the interim. She goes to a psychiatrist and starts to take pills. She a significant part of her time in Teheran sedated, instead of mentally processing her return, and embarks on another othering process (Honary 2013). Her family fails to recognize her at the airport. She also does not recognize her country, and it takes her a long time to be familiar again with her parents and friends (Honary 2013).

During a rendezvous with friends from her childhood (Satrapi 2008: 272), Marji is surprised by the fact that they are all using make-up, and ironically, compares them to
American pop-stars, preparing to get married no matter the cost. Her friends, likewise, ask her why she looks like a nun. They are frustrated by how Marji, a woman who has lived in Europe, does not use make-up (Satrapi 2008: 272). During the encounter, they ask Marji if she is still a virgin, to which she answers “no, I am already 19.” The queries continue and Marji replies “depends with whom”. Her friends conclude from this that she has slept with more than one man, and say “what’s the difference between you and a whore”. The narrator concludes this panel by stating that although from outside they are very modern, on the inside these girls are really still traditionalists (Satrapi 2008: 272).

In this panel, the reader sees a confrontation between two different sets of perspectives and expectations. Her friends expected a Marji to be more “Westernized”, while she expected anything but American pop-stars doing to their make-up (Satrapi 2008: 272). At the same time, Marji expected to be understood, since her friends’ use of make-up made them appear to be modern and forward thinking. However, instead, they compare her to a whore. Therefore, this panel shows how yet again she is finds herself in an “in-between” place, belonging nowhere (Honary 2013).

The first time that she feels good about herself when she is in art school. Here she questions the dress code for women, arguing that is very difficult to draw whilst wearing a large veil and wide clothes, and that it is unfair that only women should be required to hide their shapes. Instead of being expelled, as happened in Vienna, the director asked her to design better clothing that allows women freedom while drawing, sculpturing, and so on. This panel functions as a climax, Marji is the only one who stands, while the other students sit down looking to her while she is facing the reader (see figure 6).

The fourth wall is broken in this panel with the reader having the sensation that she is staring at her/him. This conveys two messages. Firstly, it is the first time in a long time that Marji feels good about herself (Satrapi 2008: 300). She is starting to use the tools gathered during her life, especially those gained during the time she spent in the in-between place, to allow express herself and is rewarded because of this. Second, by facing the reader, she challenges the rigid idea that women in Iran are not allowed to speak, leading the reader to re-think pre-conceptualized ideas about Iran (Darda 2013).

It is engaging how Marji builds her identity both due to the others and apart from them. Although her interaction with these other girls is oppositional, instead of understanding, (Honary 2013) she is building a stronger sense of herself, becoming empowered but not in a place of power (Honary 2013).

Moreover, not all of her interactions are oppositional (Honary 2013). Her grandmother is a helpful, nurturing figure, a reminder of where she comes from and what she can be. When Marji is worried about whether to get a divorce, fearing condemnation by the rest of Iranian society, her grandmother gives her counsel. She reveals that she was one of the first women in Iran to get a divorce, and advises Marji not to care about what others will think. Similarly, her parents supported her and she felt empowered enough to ask for the divorce.

The book finishes with Marji leaving Iran, her mother requesting that she “never come back” (Satrapi 2008: 343). It is a very emotional sequence of panels. Marji here is already empowered, she has built her identity, which she knows is not fixed but fluid, able to deconstruct ideas and discourse whenever it is necessary (Honary 2013). This ability allows her to live anywhere she wants, now that she is aware of her roots and what to expect of the others anywhere in the world (Honary 2013). This perspective challenges the reader by raising the problem that, for as long as the binary between “us” and “them” exists, the “in between” (Honary 2013: 54) place will remain, and that most of the time, this does not end well.

To use Persepolis is to create a dialogue that has the potential to resonate with students, especially in Europe, where currently people are seeking refuge. Persepolis is intended to demystify the Western viewpoints about the Middle East. The author attests to have written Persepolis in order to highlight and question the racist and limited view that the Western world holds towards Iran (Phil Conference 2016).
2.1 *Borderlands* and *Persepolis*: a Dialogue towards Transcending Gender

In the semi-autobiographical, multi-lingual and mixed-genre book *Borderlands*, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) narrates the growing up from the point of view of a Mestiza on the Mexican-Texas border, during the 1950s (Sánchez Calle 2016). The author re-narrates the Anglo-centric dominated history of the Mexican-American cross-border region, described as a “non-place” whose inhabitants are neither Mexicans nor Americans, out of a feminist perspective. The reader follows Anzaldúa’s personal and stony transformation to a *chicana* who defines herself through multiple social stratifications, an experience that results in the “mestiza consciousness” (see section 1.4) that gives her a new perspective on herself and the borderland (Sánchez Calle 2016). Here, the author questions the historical construction of oppressive cultures and traditions of which she has been part of in order to provoke conscious ruptures.

The concept of gender as a construction of masculinity and femininity, a binary in which each is subordinated to the other (Sánchez Calle 2016), is an issue that is treated in both *Persepolis* and *Borderlands*. Gloria Anzaldúa claims to transcend this necessity for the existence of the *other*. Subsequently, she seeks to create a new consciousness devoid of pre-defined gender roles (Premise Reading of Gloria Anzaldúa’s: 2008). *Persepolis* too has this purpose, although it is subtler than in *Borderlands*. Men do not need women to build the idea of masculinity, neither do women need to be subordinated to the idea of masculinity to develop their role as women. The idea of transcending these constructions is not to learn how to become a woman or man, but instead to break free of these labels and enable fluidity (Costa & Ávila 2005: 696).

Based on the intersectionality concept, the *chicana* in *Borderlands* (1987) represents more than just a Mexican who was born in the US, the poor working class, or black segregated communities in Texas suffering from the racism of others (Costa & Ávila 2005: 699). Nor is the *chicana* reduced to the role of a woman, lesbian, gay and trans and linguistic orphan (Anzaldúa 1987: 58). The same also applies in *Persepolis* (2008), where the role of the protagonist goes beyond that of just an Iranian woman who migrated to Europe as a refugee. In both narratives none of these categories of difference described above are considered to be independent blocks, but instead are related (Costa & Ávila 2005: 696). Treating them as such creates agency for a new consciousness, a new language, a new history,

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5 How a female of Mexican descent is called in the USA
where one has great tools to deal with the burden of being someone who lived “in between” (Honary 2013: 54) places.

The nomadic nature of the chicana and Marji, migrating between places of difference, is harnessed by both women to shape their own interpretations of themselves (Honary 2013).

As a Mestiza I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman’s sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective tured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. Soy un amasamiento, I am an act of kneading, of uniting, and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings. (Anzaldúa 1987: 182)

In this paragraph we see how freedom is attained, and how all places have the potential to be positions of both power and subjugation. It is important to recognize that even for a person flowing between the power mechanisms which agencies her differences, freedom is still possible (Anzaldúa 1987). This is exemplified in Borderlands. The power of intersectionality and the potential it has to produce change and act as a strategy of resistance should not be underestimated. In her narrative, Anzaldúa highlights the potential to create new meanings and strategies in life (Premise reading of Gloria Anzaldúa’s: 2008). This is similar to what happens in Persepolis. It is established that feminist movement did not arrive the Iran. Therefore, exercises of freedom may be seen as small compared to the manifestations of Borderlands (Premise reading of Gloria Anzaldúa’s: 2008). However, given that these took place under a fundamentalist regime, the intensity and meaning is still the same (Honary 2013), (see figure 7).
In the panel above (see figure 8), the reader follows how the dreams of Marji of being an empowered woman are crushed when a new, repressive government takes the power. Furthermore, it becomes clear that her family brought her up to have a critical gendered way of thinking. She was encouraged to think for herself, despite living under a repressive political regime (Honary 2013).
Both authors published hybrid works. Anzaldúa’s works operates as a series of essays and poems, the title itself alluding to hybridity (Sánchez Calle 2016), whilst *Persépolis* is a graphic narrative that is considered to be a hybrid composition. The complex writing of Anzaldúa reveals how often the act of writing itself can help individuals to better understand themselves and enable them to express complex identities (Sánchez Calle 2016). Comparably, Satrapi chose comics as a means assist her in the complex process of finding her identity (Chute 2008: 459). Both hybrid pieces of writing embrace all contradictions and ambiguities, enabling inclusion and transcending the binary mainstream discourses about gender, nationality, and skin colour (Costa & Ávila 2005: 699-700). Anzaldúa goes beyond the genre of essays, being a hybrid and dynamic narrative that does not fit into the boxes of binaries and disciplinary divides (Costa & Ávila 2005). The author pushes the boundaries towards the limits of traditional essays (Costa & Ávila 2005). Meanwhile, Satrapi chose comics that have traditionally been considered a form of popular-culture, and therefore a lower-level of artistic representation, to convey her memoir. She challenges the notion of a lower-level artistic medium the same way she challenges fixed ideas about gender, and the “West/East” bias (Honary 2013: 52). Her childish style of drawing is purposeful so as to not distract the reader from her words (Darda 2013: 46-47). The speech balloons are as important as the drawings itself, and she writes in a direct way. The readers are able to experience what is to live in the borders, even if just linguistically.

Both authors refuse to be categorized and actively resist the trend of fixing, organizing, fragmenting and classifying the individual (Crenshaw 1989). Anzaldúa advocates migratory feminism, hybrid writing and the creation of flexible strategies based on the historical context and agency of each immigrant in her text (Costa & Ávila 2005) Marji enacts similar processes in her memoir. In *Borderlands* (1987), Anzaldúa states the need to forge alliances and proposes an intersectional perspective which refuses to be reduced to and imprisoned within standardized identities (Premise Reading of Gloria Anzaldúa’s: 2008). She emphasizes the importance of forming alliances, with all minorities. To scrutinize each discursive construction in an intersectional way, is to exercise freedom and empowerment and is a strategy against homogeneous stereotypes, clichés and labels. It is possible for a dialogue to take place between intersectional subjects (Crenshaw 1989). The “new mestiza consciousness” reinterprets history and does not accept universalized labels; in this way, it is a consciousness that refuses established boxes or homogenized identities (Costa & Ávila 2005: 698).
The “mestiza consciousness” occurs when circumstances force a person to live in the borderlands, “where two or more cultures edge to each other” (Anzaldúa 1987: Preface). Historical, social, political and linguistic oppression led Anzaldúa to search for a style which fit with her pluralistic identity (Premise Reading of Gloria Anzaldúa’s: 2008). This “mestiza consciousness” is expressed in Persepolis. The “mestiza consciousness” is important to both authors in their quest for self-expression, as individuals who are orphans of land, language, culture, and “race”. They both had to negotiate the complexities of being constantly unterritorialized and seeking to find a way to fit in-between countries without being captured by any of the social, political and linguistic oppression of each (Costa & Ávila 2005). At the same time, it is a struggle against the process of othering and thus comes with a desire to belong to both cultures and countries. I think that the “transformed practice/applying” (Cope & Kalantzis 2000, 2009) advocated by these authors has the potential to lead to revolutionary social change (Premise Reading of Gloria Anzaldúa’s: 2008).

3. **PERSEPOLIS AS A MULTIMODAL INSTRUMENT OF MULTILITERACIES APPROACH IN CLASSROOM**

Thus far, I have examined the history of comics and discussed the concepts of graphic novels and graphic narratives before introducing the multiliteracies approach to pedagogy (New London Group 1996) and its theoretical framework. Next, I examined the concepts of immigration otherness, transcendence and gender. An understanding of these concepts is fundamental to consideration of the question: to what extent can Persepolis be used as a “multimodal” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009) and hybrid instrument of the multiliteracies approach in classroom (New London Group 1996).

I refer to the existing literature in order to examine ‘why’ and ‘how’ (Cope & Kalantzis 2009) the multiliteracies approach should be used in classroom and, additionally, I argue that the graphic novel Persepolis presents a striking opportunity to put this approach into practice.

According to Cope & Kalantzis (2009: 185), the multiliteracies approach combines the “available design meanings” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 185) with the “designing” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 185) in order attain “the redesign” (see Table 1). Here, the “available design” is the resource which the educator uses to develop the learners’ strategies of language acquisition. Thus, “available designs” are “culture, context and purpose-specific patterns and conventions of meaning making” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: table 2: 176). Then, “design”
refers to how these “available designs” are used by the meaning-makers in a fluid way where the subjectivity of the meaning-makers transverses their identity, culture and social context. Finally, during “redesign” creation occurs through the process of language acquisition. It is in this last, dynamic phase that learners create new meanings and transform their subjectivities, thus becoming empowered through the acquisition of language (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 177).

The “What” of multiliteracies—designs of meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Available designs</th>
<th>Found and findable resources for meaning: culture, context and purpose-specific patterns and conventions of meaning making.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designing</td>
<td>The act of meaning: work performed on/with Available Designs in representing the world or other’s representations of it, to oneself or others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The redesigned</td>
<td>The world transformed, in the form of new Available Designs, or the meaning designer who, through the very act of Designing, has transformed themselves (learning).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Cope and Kalantz, “Multiliteracies” New Literacies, New learning. table 2, 2009: 176

Despite heated discussions between scholars with respect to which field(s) of study graphic novels belong, multiliteracies approaches have been by teachers around the world used as a pedagogical tool to engage students in reading and in their raising critical awareness of language (New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2009). The adaptation of classic literature into comics has become a common practice. Lately, graphic narratives are also being used as a tool for language acquisition. A number of studies support the usage of graphic novels, such as: S. Mcnicol article’s “Freedom to teach: implications of the removal of Persepolis from Chicago Schools” (2015) L. Dong (2012) “Teaching Comics and Graphic Narratives: Essays on Theory, Strategy and Practice”, Danzak’s “Defining Identities through Multiliteracies: EL Teens Narrate Their Immigration Experiences as Graphic Stories” (2011). These studies support the use of the “Multiliteracies Approach in Pedagogy” (New London Group 1996) due to the fact that it increases students’ abilities in language critical awareness and reading engagement. However, more studies need to be conducted. To date, the graphic novel Persepolis has not been fully analyzed using the “multiliteracies approach in pedagogy” (New London Group 1996).

I argue that Persepolis can be used in the acquisition of EFL/ESL/EL transversally with the subjects of gender, transcendence, and immigration otherness. By applying these concepts, according to the multiliteracies approach, the aim is to increase the acquisition of EFL/ESL/EL and to foster reading engagement by developing the student’s critical literacy and language awareness. The existing literature shows that graphic novels help students to internalize such learning processes, since they require an active reader to fill the gaps
“between the frames” (Tensuan, 2006: 6). Comics are only complete with an active reader, as A. Freedman points out in her article “Comics, Graphic Novels, Graphic Narrative: A Review”: “the gaps or gutters between the panels defy the visual and establish crucial space for reader participation. This gutter space will prove to be a fruitful one, both in relation to the reader’s experience and as a space for critical interpretation and analysis” (2011: 31-32).

For this reason the usage of this “multimodal” (Danzak 2011) and hybrid tool can help students in the process of language acquisition and guide them towards becoming “meaning-makers” who are critically aware of the “market-driven” discourse and thus recognize their own empowerment them through literacy as exemplified by Cope & Kalantzis “as a consequence, the traditional emphasis on alphabetical literacy (letter sounds in words in sentences in texts in literatures) would need to be supplemented in a pedagogy of multiliteracies by learning how to read and write multimodal texts which integrated the other modes with language” (2009: 4).

Given advantages of the use of the multiliteracies approach in the classroom (above), I will next illustrate to what extent applying the graphic novel Persepolis (2008) as an instrument of the multiliteracies increases the acquisition of EFL/ESL/EL and fosters reading engagement by developing a student’s critical literacy and language awareness. Here, I refer to a large number of studies on the use of comics in classrooms, such as those conducted by on D. Yoon (2013), R.L. Danzak (2011), S. Sabeti (2013), C. Chun (2009), B. Morgan & S. Vandrick (2009), J. Lynch (2009), and B. Brenna (2013). These authors examine the usage of graphic narratives during the process of language acquisition and/or work transversally with gender and immigration otherness, and their results support my argument.

Here, the focus of attention is on the high level of multimodality of Persepolis (2008) which means that students follow the story through visual as well as literate means, which increases their potential for empathy. Persepolis (2008) offers students a “situated practice/experiencing” (New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2009) giving them to opportunity to relate to their own experiences of immigration and gender related issues (see section two). Moreover, both subjects are current affairs. This has the added bonus of ensuring that both students and educators stay up to date with and connect with contemporary and socially relevant issues during their acquisition of EFL/ESL/EL. Even though the classroom might not consist of immigrants, the students are able to put themselves in the position of Marji and thus empathize with a migrant’s perspective. In this way, using Persepolis (2008) in the classroom represents an opportunity foster understanding and empathy (Honary 2013).
Second, using *Persepolis* (2008) in the classroom as an instrument of the multiliteracies approach allows the educational body to introduce and process gender related content in an autobiographic, narrative and visual way (see section two). Following the narrative of a young Iranian girl and the process of her empowerment as a woman (which includes issues of Iranian citizenship and language struggles), the students are able to reflect on gender movements from different cultures and societies (Iran and Austria). Moreover *Persepolis* shows how it is possible to deconstruct the binary of masculinity and femininity, thus transcending the fixed notion of gender as being comprised of these standardized categories (see section 2.1).

Third, *Persepolis* deals with current affairs and thus provides a perfect opportunity for students to “critical[ly] framing/analyzing” (New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2009) the cultural and social context. Correspondingly, it also helps to demystify the Western depiction of Iran by dismantling the boundary idea of “us” and “them” (Honary 2013).

Fourth, this graphic narrative deals with the feeling of not belonging (see section two). Taking into account the high level of migration in our globalized world, many students might find themselves in a similar position to that described by Marji. Even if they do not relate to this situation, according to “over instruction/conceptualizing” (New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2009), this approach provides a context in “which learners develop strategies for reading the new unfamiliar, in whatever form these may manifest themselves” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 177). Hence, comics can be a medium that offers “design learning experiences” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 176) that bring together all the competences required of language learners (writing, speaking, reading) plus “viewing” and interpretation (Cope & Kalantzis 2009). After all, even though this “in between” place (Honary 2013: 51) in *Persepolis* is focused on migration, it is a comprehensible concept that can be applied to any kind of exclusion. Hence, even if the exclusion experiences of the learners originate from different sources, such as social, financial, appearance, linguistic or cultural ones, they still have the potential to emphasize with Marji’s situation. This connection between language acquisition and emotional attachment opens the door to critical awareness and empowerment through literacy. As mentioned, comics need an active reader to read between the gaps (Freedman 2011: 31-32). The process of learning and teaching is not separate from a person’s experiences. Bearing in mind that students internalize distinctive gender roles and often come from different (cultural) backgrounds and countries, applying pedagogy of multiliteracies by using a hybrid format such as comics can “help create conditions of critical understanding of the discourses of work and power, a kind of knowing from which newer,
more productive and genuinely more egalitarian working conditions might emerge” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 171).

The diversity present in classrooms cannot be ignored. Dealing with differences and intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; see Section two) is a means to reduce exclusion and the feeling of not belonging: the “in between” place (Honary 2013: 51). Moreover, considering the abilities and skills of learners enables new ways of teaching to be devised, such as learners creating their own narrative, music, drawing and so on, and thus achieving “transformed practice/applying” (New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2009).

Fifth, Persepolis offers the possibility to work with different backgrounds and cultures, a technique recommended by many of the studies I have previously cited. These studies found that learners creating their own narrative proved to be more effective teaching technique than using “a standard set of rules” (New London Group 1996). This means that, during the reading and comprehension process, the students are able discuss the comics transversally with subjects such as immigration (D. Yoon (2013), R.L. Danzak (2011), C. Chun (2009), B. Morgan & S. Vandrick (2009), and B.Brenna (2013) and, in this way, can link their own narrative with the chosen comics. Consequently, students are empowered by literacy and develop critical awareness. Hence, the language acquisition process passes through mind and body. The connection developed during this process with the students’ own experiences makes it more like an appropriation of a language, which is is the goal of Multiliteracies approach in pedagogy:

[W]e analyzed the limitations both of traditional literacy teaching which set out to transmit language rules and instill good practice from literary models (“overt instruction”), and progressivisms that considered the immersion or natural learning models that worked for oral language learning to be an adequate and sufficient model for literacy learning (“situated practice”). Instead, we suggested that pedagogy of multiliteracies would involve a range of pedagogical moves, including both “situated practice” and “overt instruction”, but also entailing “critical framing” and “transformed practice”. (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 106)

Consequently, the practical studies mentioned above support my argument that, by using a “transformed practice/applying,” students might be able to appropriate language by creating their own narratives, or even deconstructing pre-existing concepts about gender, the Western world and prejudice against Muslims or Iran as well as the fixed idea of boundary frames such as “us” and “them,” all the while internalizing the foreign language. Moreover, by discussing Persepolis transversally with topics such as immigration otherness, transcendence, and gender (i.e. using follow up questions, group discussion, etc.) vocabulary
association is increased and learners are able to use their own experiences in the deconstruction of these fixed ideas, and the “remaking (of) the world” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 177). Thus in the process of creating their own narrative they open the possibility of creating a narrative that is not part of their world, and in doing so create a new meaning through many mediums such as song, blog, video, and so on “learners may be able draw upon various metalanguages describing the forms of contemporary meaning—professional and specialist, for instance—and from these construct their own frames of functional explanation” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 177).

Finally, language is a “dynamic process of transformation” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 175; see section 1.2), which is why pedagogy aims to empower students to become “meaning-makers: they are fully makers and remakers of signs and transform meaning” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009). Therefore, by presenting an opportunity to the learners to actually become their own “meaning-makers” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009) through to the creation of their own narrative and the use of all the resources and skills that they have, language will be indeed appropriated, since the process of acquiring the language has passed through body and mind during this creation.

Yet, there is no doubt that putting the multiliteracies approach into practice represents a challenging task which strongly depends on the will and ability of the institutional educational body. However, it would support the learners’ empowerment and, moreover, follow the pedagogy approach of Paulo Freire, where the teachers and schools are open to broader “pedagogical repertoires” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 187) and re-think the goal of education towards “back-to-the-basis” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 182) “It is useful to be able to unpack the range of possible knowledge processes to decide and justify what is appropriate for a subject or a learner, to track learner inputs and outputs, and to extend the pedagogical repertoires of teachers and the knowledge repertoires of learners” (2009: 187).

The previous practical studies cited here took a minimum of six months to be conducted. D. Yoon (2013) developed a project with 10th grade students; B. Brenda (2013) has worked with grade four classrooms of English Language Arts. S. Sabeti (2013) conducted a study of an extra-curricular graphic novel reading group. R. L. Danzak (2011) taught EL learners, most of them immigrants from Mexico in the United State of America. C. Chun (2009) collaborated with a “pilot study of one teacher’s experiences in teaching Maus (1986) to her urban secondary school” (Chun 2009: 7) in the United States of America. Finally, B. Morgan & S. Vandrick (2009) worked in an ESL classroom and state that “including Muslim students employs a critical media literacy perspective to investigate post-September 11th
biases against Muslims” (2009: Abstract). All of these practical studies culminated in the students’ creation of their own narrative; therefore the process of acquiring language followed the steps proposed by the multiliteracies approach: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing of the cultural and social context, and transformed practice (New London Group 1996), which in the updated article is called “experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing and applying” (Cope & Kalantzis 2009: 186). These processes and their updated terminology are shown in table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical orientations—1996 formulation</th>
<th>Knowledge processes—2006 reformulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situated practice</td>
<td>Experiencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. . . the Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. . . the New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overt instruction</td>
<td>Conceptualizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. . . by Naming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. . . with Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical framing</td>
<td>Analysing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. . . Functionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. . . Critically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformed practice</td>
<td>Applying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. . . Appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>. . . Creatively</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Cope and Kalantzis, “Multiliteracies” New Literacies, New learning. Table 3, 2009: 187

4. DISCUSSION - SUPPORTING MULTILITERACIES AND GRAPHIC NARRATIVES

I have theoretically examined the high potential for the use of the graphic novel Persepolis (2008) as an instrument of the multiliteracies to increase the acquisition of EFL/ESL/EL and to promote reading engagement, critical thinking and language awareness in classroom (see section three) by focusing on the concepts of immigration otherness, intersectionality, gender and transcendence (see section two). A summary of my findings can be found in table 3.

Here, I support academic calls for the practical inclusion of the multiliteracies approach in the curriculum of educational institutions (Sabeti 2013) as a pedagogical tool in order to bridge the students deeper and in a more efficient way with the language compared to the current educational standard set of rules and, this way, to empower them to critical “meaning-

This covers the support of academic voices which defend the connection of the acquisition of EFL/ESL/EL with the strategical and pedagogical use of comics and graphic narratives (Cary 2004; Wright 1979) in classroom as an autobiographic, visual and narrative tool that a) requires an active reader of the multiliteracies to internalize the dynamic and critical understanding (Chute 2008; Freedman 2011; McCloud 1993; Tensuan 2006) of contemporary and sensible issues such as immigration otherness, intersectionality, gender or transcendence and b) helps to create own narratives and thus to deconstruct pre-existing stereotypes and “in-between places” (Brenna 2013; Chun 2013; Danzak 2011; Darda 2013; Honary 2013; Lynch 2009; Morgan and Vandrick 2009; Sabeti 2013, see table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situated practice</td>
<td>Experiencing</td>
<td>Experiencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>… the Known</td>
<td>The known: Learners own experiences transversally with gender and immigration otherness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>… the New</td>
<td>The New: new data: multimodal and hybrid composition of Persepolis, which requires an active reader to closure the reading process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overt instruction</td>
<td>Conceptualizing</td>
<td>Conceptualizing: “learners become active conceptualizers” (Cope and Kalantzis 2009: 185)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>… by Naming</td>
<td>by Naming: development of concept in Persepolis, as graphic narrative, gender towards transcendence through intersectionality, “mestiza consciousness”, and immigration otherness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>… with Theory</td>
<td>with Theory: “cognitive process” (Cope and Kalantzis 2009: 185) where learners are “meaning” and “theoretical makers” (Cope and Kalantzis 2009: 185)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Critical Framing

Analysing: “powerful learning” with a “critical capacity” (Cope and Kalantzis 2009: 185) process.
Functionality: learners, now with more new words internalized, deductively connect Persepolis transversally with gender, immigration otherness and current affairs, such Western image towards Iran.
Critically: Learners cross their own experiences with the subjects above, analyses other kinds of exclusion and guided to proposal to transcend gender by using intersectionality concept.

Transformed Practice

Applying: apply the skills and knowledge built (Cope and Kalantzis 2009:186)
Appropriately: learners apply in the knowledge and skills gained in the world, now internalized. They are active changers.
Creatively: “learners make an intervention in the world” (Cope and Kalantzis 2009:186), such as their own graphic narrative, a music, draw, and so on.

Table 3. Source: The New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2009; own development 2017

4.1 Lines of Future Research

This research is a theoretical review of findings from previous studies in using graphic narratives and graphic novels in the classroom. The proposal of applying Persepolis (2008) in the classroom by using multiliteracies pedagogy is recent and few examples of practical applications exist. Although this investigation is theoretical, it proposes the use of comics as part of the multiliteracies pedagogy. At the same time, the theoretical approach which is focused on the graphic narrative Persepolis (2008) used in this dissertation represents its limitation, because it cannot comply with more far-reaching and practical issues presented in the following.

Some questions must be addressed in future research, such as: what are the barriers that might impede educational institutions, particularly public ones, from rethinking the educational system, and adopting a more progressive pedagogy, such as that of Multiliteracies? What are the current policies? What power structure currently maintains literacy education as a set of rules instead of offering students a more holistic approach to the language acquisition process? How can teachers apply this proposal in the classroom? Finally, as noted by S. Sabeti (2013: 850), what would the impact of this inclusion in the educational system as part of the mandatory curriculum have on the graphic
novel/narrative itself. Would such an association compromise its underground connotations?

Considering that this particular graphic narrative is recommended for ages 12 and older, the target study groups are students aged between 12 and 17 in public or private schools and language academies. This age group is chosen because students at this age have the capacity to frame problems and deconstruct the mainstream discourse in relation to gender and immigration otherness. Moreover, this age is necessary to understand the relevant socio-political background, for example on continents such as North/South America and Europe, the history of immigration and current affairs including an awareness of refugees and the construction of gender roles. Thus, age is necessary and identifiable variable in this qualitative research.

5. CONCLUSION

Both works, Borderlands (1987) and Persepolis (2008), question the binary construction of masculinity and femininity and deal with pluralistic identities and the immigration othering process. Here, the “mestiza consciousness” is crucial their search for self-expression. The reader experiences intersectionality and understand the process of transcendence through the perspective of the main protagonist in the graphic narrative Persepolis (2008) and the hybrid essay Borderlands (1987). I have shown that the graphic narrative Persepolis (2008) has high potential to be an instrument of the “multiliteracies approach” in order to increase the acquisition of EFL/ESL/EL and to support reading engagement, critical thinking and language awareness in classroom. This is especially the case when teaching body focuses on the concepts of immigration otherness and gender.

Highlighting multimodal schemes of linguistic expression, multiliteracies is becoming more and more accepted as an empowering approach which brings together critical thinking and the acquisition of EFL/ESL/EL. Persepolis (2008) is exemplary for the didactic implementation of a graphic narrative in classroom within the multiliteracies approach in order to relate efficient language acquiring to the requirements of the modern world which is characterized by transnational migration, cultural diversity and gender related issues.

Despite having the support of numerous academic studies, innovative educational agendas like the multiliteracies approach is still undervalued by official curriculums in educational institutions. Having this in mind, questions regarding institutional barriers to the
implementation of progressive educational approaches arise (see section 4.1). These are fundamental issues to investigate in future researches if we seek to develop towards an educational system which focuses on the empowerment of citizens through literacy.
6. REFERENCES


