

**Lost (and found) in trans-lation: *The Handmaid's Tale* as a Respond-able Literary Lab (LitLab) in the ESL classroom with a feminist new materialist pedagogy.**

**Abstract**

This article reports in an exploratory case study that investigates how to design a feminist new materialist pedagogy in a higher education class. This exploratory case is the pilot respond-able Literary Lab (LitLab) of the Junta de Andalucía I+D excellence project P20\_00337 “Laboratorios de enseñanza responsable con perspectiva de género: La interacción entre culturas literarias y visuales como agente de intervención social”; The students are learning English as a Second Language (ESL) in a public university. It focuses on how affective pedagogical strategies improved competences of the students, such as critical thinking; as well as they improve the objectives in second language acquisition. In particular, it provides empirical evidence to contribute to a change in the design of the curriculum by including a close reading of an original version of a contemporary English novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. As a result, the participants learned English unconsciously and acquired a collective capacity instead of pursuing a neoliberal competence. They acquired better oral communication in English, complexified their written expression and a growing self-confidence necessary for students in their L2 classes. With the illustrative data that I present here, I aim at contributing to a larger research field in the feminist new materialist pedagogies that promotes a horizontal learning process based upon affects and intra-actions, instead of hierarchies and pre-designed curricula.

**Key words:** affective pedagogy, feminist new materialisms, contemporary literature, critical thinking.

One of the principal concerns regarding the acquisition of a second language is not only to design a new curriculum but also how to include “sufficient recognition by policy makers and system leaders of the resources - physical, human and social/institutional - required to create learning environments that support the aims of the new curriculum” (Early & Kendrick, 2020: 149 - 150). This article aims at contributing to a larger research field (Bangou, 2018; Hickey-Moody, 2019; Juelskjær, 2020, Nxumalo, 2016) dedicated to explore different pedagogical processes from a new materialist perspective. In this sense, I will provide an exploratory research case that specifies the pedagogical strategies that I have followed during the academic course 2019/2020 and what were the main results of that. I propose a curriculum constructed upon the premises of inquiry-pedagogy (Early & Kendrick, 2020), affective pedagogy (Hickey-Moody, 2019) and a reformulation of what do we mean by competences, language objectives and critical thinking from a new materialist perspective. I argue that the results of this academic course can provide empirical evidence for the need to support a strategic change in the design of the curriculum in higher education. Especially taking into account all the difficulties and challenges that the contemporary pandemic COVID-19 has meant for our traditional conception of learning environments.

Authors dealing with learning English as a second language suggest the need to tailor the methodological strategies towards the cultural and linguistic needs of the student (Li, 2018: 55). This specifically tackles two considerations: 1. To situate (Haraway, 1988) the context in which we are developing our research; 2. To implement different strategies according to location, that is entering the realm of specificity. While I am not arguing that we need a pedagogical umbrella suitable for all, I would rather direct efforts towards a glocal approach. That is why my research is situated in one specific location, but designs

pedagogical strategies based in feminist new materialist pedagogies (Hinton & Teusch, 2015). The location is the Spanish public university since I believe that “context is crucial for ethics, and for assessing gendered affects, especially once we consider that bodies also include discourses and other nonmaterial bodies.” (Hickey-Moody, 2019: 51). Nevertheless, I will provide with certain lines of thought that allow to think beyond physical boundaries since in order to promote an experimenting model, we need to clearly define the elements that compose it and how they affect to the pedagogical process itself and to the creative process itself (Bangou, 2018: 85).

L2 learning strategies are divided in two different groups: direct and indirect (Li, 2018: 56). Among the indirect ones we have metacognitive, social and affective strategies that include cooperation, encouraging oneself, asking questions and lowering anxiety. These requests clearly direct towards carefully defining what do we mean by affective strategies, how do we ask questions that do not increase anxiety and within a neoliberal system of competition (as it is currently the case of the Spanish public university), how to promote cooperation between students. Current research points towards the need to explore “reading comprehension and other communication language activities” (ibid, 73) able to integrate vocabulary in an implicit way. In order to do this, in my pedagogical practices, and the exploratory case presented, I proposed a collective reading of Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1986). Christina Weber (2010: 351) affirms that literary fiction is able to develop “student’s ability to do theory.” Additionally, in this article I want to demonstrate how it is that students can learn how to do “theory-making” that is a new materialist term that supports how different concepts are always in the making (Barad, 2007). Therefore, the conceptualization that I sustain in this article is that literature, as a concept, is always in the making and enabling possibilities to materialize social transformations within and without the classroom.

All in all, the main objective of this article is to provide empirical evidence for the benefits that a new materialist pedagogy can have for L2 language based upon the concept of experimentation (Bangou, 2018). This feminist new materialist pedagogy is based on affective strategies, the ability of literature to promote critical thinking and re-defining competences as a collective effort. Students show a growing self-confidence to communicate themselves, and better results in the evaluation practice compared to other academic years in which this approach was not followed.

### **Feminist New Materialist Pedagogies**

Designing the pedagogical curriculum of a discipline in humanities is particularly complicated for two different reasons: one is the alleged lack of scientific method (Griffin, 2011) and the other is designing a pedagogical curriculum in posthuman times when the traditional object of inquiry of the humanities has been the human (Sidiqqi, 2016). According to Sidiqqi (2016: 64), Braidotti's *Posthuman Turn* already warns us to identify how "energy should be directed toward this question of pedagogical and curricular relevance to present times, rather than toward the neoliberal presence in higher education." This has two main consequences for the curriculum design in translation: one is the compilation of differing activities that move beyond the conceptualization of language as a textual product of communication between two interlocutors; and the other, designing activities that can be linked to present times through the implementation of a critical thinking activity. Particularly important here is to understand a posthuman notion of thinking. Turning back to Siddiqui (2016: 66), "[t]hinking moves beyond representational images and into new realms". Therefore, it implies opening up to new forms of human relations and images. In other words, "[t]aking sensuality, affectivity, and corporeality as starting points [...] and formations of

subjectivity [...] fundamentally entangled with heterogeneous otherness, and if that is the case, then subjectivity will have to be otherwise than the humanist Subject.” (Kaiser, 2019: 104).

Feminist new materialist pedagogies (Hinton & Teusch, 2015; Author 2017; Hickey-Moody, 2019; Juelskjær, 2020) is a growing field that precisely tries to open up boundaries between subjects and objects, teachers and learners or spaces and times. Charteris et al, (2017: 812), argue that “new materialism aims for a new conception of ontology, epistemology, ethics and politics where the natural world and technical artefacts cannot be reduced to resources for progress, production or construction.” (Charteris et al, 2017: 812). On the contrary, new materialist pedagogies focus on the affective processes that build a specific space-time in which a learning experience is being produced. This learning experience, rather than being identified according to human subjects (whether it is signaled by departing from the learner or the teacher), can be identified by the materialization of affects. According to Hickey-Moody (2019: 48), “Affection are *traces of interaction*: residues of experience that live on in thought and in the body.” Therefore, what is at stake is how literature can produce traces of interaction producing collective experiences that transform certain bodies and how can all of that empirically materialized in two different moments of the learning experience: the curriculum design and the evaluation.

A post-human approach or non-human centred might be common in studies concerning translation, but it is always paired together with technological applications, or simultaneous translation. What I aim to explore here is how posthumanism, or rather new materialisms, can help to move beyond translating practices that entail an exclusive focus on language. I aim at understanding trans-lation as a transversal approach (new materialism) to language that implies moving beyond linguistically reductionist approaches. This move was

already initiated by Maeve Olohan (2016) in deepening towards the implications of studying the mangle between material and human agencies in the field of scientific translation. Concretely, she “explore[s] here how the study of such translation activities would be further enlightened by an approach which is grounded in science and technology studies and which takes greater account of material as well as human agency, and approaches scientific translation as a form of sociotechnical practice.” (ibid: 7). In this article, I pursue exploring the entanglement between matter and language but with a divert in focus. Following this epistemological trend, I would like to explore the implications for teaching English translation via contemporary literature in order to materialize trans-lation as *a form of sociotechnical practice*. In order to do this, I will articulate the following analysis by situating the concepts of “competences”, “language objectives” and “critical thinking” from a new materialist perspective.

### *Competences*

According to the Standard 1 in Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts (in Eppley, 2019: 4), one of the main techniques to approach texts is close reading defined as: “determin[ing] what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text” (ibid.). Thus, in our class, students stopped at differing sentences that were calling their attention for reasons, at times known, at times unknown. The students needed to “demonstrate comprehension by their ability to ‘gather evidence and knowledge from the text’ (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 16) as a result of a close reading.” (Eppley, 2019: 5). However, defining a learner’s ability or competence varies according to the context, the age,

and the level of English (Yarobe & Zenotz, 2015); as well as it has been proven that standard tests do not always work for testing reading strategies (ibid).

Competence is a highly controversial term nowadays (Danvers, 2016; Author, 2017) since, as Canagarajah (2018: 268) explains, “[it] is still largely treated as an individual’s cognitive internalization of [...] knowledge, despite mediation and embodiment.” Especially, under the H2020 theoretical framework, it is defined as a neoliberal capacity that is acquired by self-sufficiency (Author, 2017), promoting, at the same time, individualistic competition instead of collaborative work. Thus, when thinking competence via a new materialist perspective an alternative reading to the whole concept of university is performed. I argue that pursuing this approach in the class acquires involves understanding “[t]he university as an institution morphs into a ‘transfer hub’ of sorts, rather than an authority organized around disciplines and faculty expertise. Being locally specific invites local values (of utility, sustainability, and the like) into the humanities curriculum as opposed to a prefigured, transcendent set of values.” (Sidiqqi, 2016: 69).

Therefore, we need to redefine how we include our competences in our curriculums. In Spain, the “guía docente” (teaching guide) include several competences that include the ones previously mentioned but also “[e]ncouraging the development of the communicative skills in English language through an integrated curriculum emphasizing the reading skill.”<sup>1</sup> However, if the main competence (or transferred ability to the students) in this course is communication, a more precise definition of the term is needed. Canaragajah (2018) uses communication as a networked competence in which individual’s agency is substituted by Barad’s (2007) non-human agency that is materialized in the relation, and not in the elements

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<sup>1</sup> My own translation. The entire teaching guide can be found in this link. [http://grados.ugr.es/traduccion/pages/infoacademica/guiasdocente/gd1819/\\_doc/lenguasc/lenguacnivell1ingles](http://grados.ugr.es/traduccion/pages/infoacademica/guiasdocente/gd1819/_doc/lenguasc/lenguacnivell1ingles) Last accessed: July 22nd, 2020

interacting in a determined process. That is to say, “communication is treated as a qualified, responsive, negotiated, and ongoing activity in which people engage with rhizomatic networks for possible outcomes (Canarajah, 2018: 285). This directly affects the design of the curriculum. Therefore, I decided to read collectively a particular novel in order to produce a collaborative object in which their own interpretations were producing meaning-making by reading fragments and not the entirety, also to avoid putting pressure on the students by reading the entire original novel (not an adapted one following their level of English). Additionally, each time I selected a group of 5 to 7 difficult words, that we translated into Spanish, and a group of 4 to 6 common phrasal verbs, vocabulary that they proved to understand better than regular lists modified to their level.

### *Language objectives*

Learning a language does not only depend in grammar and vocabulary since other factors such as space, context and non-verbal communication affect the success of language exchange (Canagarajah, 2018). Coming back to the previous section, it can be seen how communication tends to be a large objective in L2 learning. However, re-defining what do we mean by communication from a non-humanist position implies a twist beyond post-structuralist approaches of language. Proposing *trans-lation*, a displacement in spacetime (Barad, 2007) is needed. The objective, thus, would be to be able to move spacetimematterings (Barad, 2007) with the students. The prefix ‘trans’ already moves us to go beyond the limits. According to Palmer (2014, xxii), “[i]t presupposes a metamorphosis, a difference or a spatiotemporal change or relocation.”, that is a transference of meaning.

Coming back to the main objective of our *guía docente*, we see how it is paramount to “emphasize the reading skill.” Fisher & Fray (2012, 185) identify these types of questions as



the articulation for a close reading: general understanding questions, key detail questions, vocabulary and text structure questions, author's purpose questions, inferential questions, opinion and intertextual questions. Nevertheless, what are we implying when we define text. Following Sidiqqi (2016), we need to invite the transference of local value into our curriculums, which in this case, would entail transferring these local values into our texts. Carnaragajah (2018, 282) defines the text as "a *practice* that draws from diverse spatiotemporal and material resources. Materiality opens up language and texts to unveil their social, historical and geographical 'becoming'". Thus, in order to combine both approaches, what will be pursued is a situated and affective inquiry-based pedagogy in our collective readings.

Producing transference of meaning, relocating our situatedness, and displacing our zones of comfort is one of the primordial objectives of L2 learning practices if we want our students to grow their own self-confidence. Producing affective strategies implies a constant re-configuration of our objectives and goals as professors. Thus, we need to rely upon the becoming of the student herself or himself and not upon the acquisition of pre-established objectives that make an unequal distribution of knowledge since not every student departs from the same learning process.

### *Critical thinking*

Mannion (2019, 9) defines "assemblage pedagogies", which I include as part of the new materialist pedagogies, as a "demand reciprocal place-responsiveness from participating entities. [They] are designed and experienced through practicing, relating and becoming entangled with more-than-human elements and processes." Thus, it focuses in the relations and how the self-transformations are coming to place. As previously stated, critical thinking

has been a very controversial term that more often than not, has been used as a neoliberal strategy to produce economical (although labelled as innovative) benefits (Danvers, 2016). Nevertheless, when we think about becoming with more-than-human elements and being responsive to our immediate context, critical thinking becomes as well what Caranagajah (2018) defines as a “collective network”. Thinking again through the affective strategies that we need to include in our pedagogical strategies, elsewhere I define an “affective critical thinking” (Revelles-Benavente, 2017, 135) as a capacity that include feelings in students’ reasoning through three different ways: 1. “the students feel emotionally challenged”; 2. ontologically conform a “position to respond”; 3. they acquire the ability to “respond to social injustices.”

Thinking through Hickey-Moody’s (2019, 46) definition of affect as “an increase or a decrease in the capacity to act of a given body or assemblage”, automatically positions again the focus of our pedagogical process in the students’ ability to trans-late their own practices. Critical thinking is a process to empower oneself, a process to empower a dislocation, a displacement, a transference of assembled bodies in collective networks. According to Weber (2010: 350 - 351), “critical consciousness is a process by which individuals become ‘empowered subjects,’ developing their awareness of the relationship between the social world and their own lives, while resisting passivity by realizing their own capacity to shape the social world”. It is important to highlight here one crucial question: it is a process to become empowered by oneself, very different from the traditional notion of giving the students tools so that they can be empowered. On the last hypothesis, we are producing passive subjects who expect to be given a piece of information, which would be contradictory with how to implement a feminist new materialist pedagogy or an affective pedagogy.

Therefore, what we are looking for is to awaken awareness to the social world that is surrounding them.

### **Our study and participants**

As stated above, the object of this exploratory case study is to design pedagogical strategies following a feminist new materialist methodology (Colman, 2020) based upon the concept of “experimentation” (Bangou, 2018). Claire Colebrook (2019: 14) defines a concept as “an orientation formed in relation to other concepts, allowing for new formations of thought to emerge.” That is, taking into account the connection between experimentation and creativity (Bangou, 2018: 85), this paper provides lines of thought in order to experiment within a ESL classroom in higher education. Situating this research is very important since public education in Spain is very varied. The amount of students per class varies from 20 up until 80 students and the skills that they need to acquire are also different. That is why, in order to replicate the pedagogical methodology that I am about to present is important to understand the characteristics of the group and the degree. The research was carried out in the academic year 2019 / 2020 during the first semester with a 25-students class of Translation and Interpretation who have English as their third language and are required to reach a B1 of the international framework of languages. This graduate course prepares the students to acquire professional and documentary competencies to work at editorials, multinationals and other areas related with languages and intercultural communication according to their website.

The class is meant to be 30 hours long divided in 2-hours sessions and they knew from the beginning of the course that we were going to participate in what I called “a collective experiment for learning.”

### ***Data generation***

The material was collected during our classes and with full consent from the students. In order to guide what we (the students and myself) called our “experiment”, we used the contemporary phenomenon *The Handmaid’s Tale*, mostly the novel although we also watched two episodes from the first season. It is important to specify that, for the purpose of contributing to a larger theoretical perspective, the data provided here is illustrative. Data can’t “privilege representation and interpretation, rather opens up avenues for discussion” (Bangou, 2018: 87). It will offer lines of thought in order to engage with future pedagogical strategies. Additionally, the data generated came from many different angles in order to provide a multi-directional assemblage. That is to say, the first phase of the research we were reading collectively one episode, meaning that one student was in charge of reading one chapter and explaining it to the rest of the class (1. Reading phase). The second phase was a twist coming from the students. They decided that they could not leave the story like that, and asked for continuing its writing; thus, each student was writing a chapter and continuing according to what the previous one explained (2. Writing phase). Lastly, I was given the opportunity to present the experiment at the conferences “Pedagogies of the affect”<sup>2</sup> and they wrote the conclusions with me, as well as listened to the keynote speech before the audience and participated via “Skype” in my keynote speech (3. Reflexive Phase).

### ***Data analysis***

The beginning of this analysis started during the conferences “Pedagogies of the affect” held in the University of Barcelona in November 2019. The students and myself prepared a conference paper and presentation to be one of the three keynotes. In the middle of the course, we started to reflect upon what was that we have learned during the course and what

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<sup>2</sup> <https://esbrina.eu/es/portfolio/affects-as-pedagogy-relation-between-space-time-and-bodies-2/> Last accessed: July 22nd, 2020.

were the strategies that provoked a positive impact on them. In other words, we started to test our own experiment. This paper included their own conclusions as well as a connection via Skype to be able to be part of the conference room so that they could be asked questions as well.

This paper presented our findings until that moment and what I will be presenting are two moments of this pedagogical entanglement: the middle of the course and the end of the course. The reason for this is that I believe that at times, evaluation is one of the main problems that new materialist pedagogies face (Greene, 2013), but I wanted to include an intra-active (based on Barad's intra-action) evaluation: one that included ours as a course and the iteration of the pedagogical process by evaluating it once the course was over since "our capacities to affect and be affected are set up by experience." (Hickey-Moody, 2019: 49)

### **Findings**

New materialist pedagogies are fundamentally based upon processes and not results, which implies a twist in the textual representations of our experiment. I have decided to divide the findings in the three different phases and summarize what each of them provided to the students and to us. Especially since the concluding remarks will produce an intra-action (Barad, 2007) of three very different moments in the learning process; or, the trans-locating effect.

#### ***Phase 1: Reading***

As previously mentioned, this phase was the first part of the experiment and it consisted in a collective reading of the text *The Handmaid's Tale*. At the beginning of our course, I started asking them what was their languages choices and their biggest fear. The answers were varied, some of them focused in their fears when it came to L2 learning, and some of them provided their biggest personal fears. At the end of the course, Lisa told us a conversation

that she had with her flatmate in which one of them was asking how was it possible that she was coming so happy after the classes and she told her that she recalled the very first day when she thought of her teacher as “Ms. Wonderful” because she immediately felt that with that class the “problems could go away”. That is, from the beginning of the class we need to create a “safe space” (Colman & Estapleton, 2017) for all the participants in our course. The intention behind my question was not entering in their personal lives, rather focusing on our collective strategy to overcome what resulted to be the most repeated answer: “talking in English in public.”

*Trans-lation: a form of sociotechnical language and the materialization of a Responsible LitLab*

The beginning of our experiment was a complete accident. I was doing some research about Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and decided to purchase a copy of the book online. Nevertheless, I committed a mistake and bought two copies of them that were delivered to me during one of my classes. Receiving the package made students’ expectations grow and they wanted to know more about the book and the writer. Only two had watched the TV show and none of them had read the novel. According to Fisher & Fray (2012, 179), “[t]he primary objective of a close reading is to afford students with the opportunity to assimilate new textual information with their existing background knowledge and prior experiences to expand their schema.” Thus, I started to believe that our experiment could depart from a collective reading of the novel for two main reasons: 1. The level required by the *guía docente* included an adapted version from a different book given their initial level of English; 2. Dealing with an entire novel that was not included in the *guía docente* was an extra effort that I thought could result in a detriment of their working capacity; while at the same time, it allowed me to start thinking about competence as a network and not an individual capacity.

Everyday we were reading two chapters and each of them was explaining to the rest what was happening in each of these chapters. Surprisingly, everyone was waiting for the following day to know about our protagonist so eager that in the period of a long weekend, Emily stated “teacher, I can’t live so long with this stress of not knowing what is going on.” Additionally, students started to hypothesize about what was going to happen next and they were writing down their own thoughts. Apart from that, I was also including a group of five words and phrasal verb that they needed to “research” if they wanted to know their meaning. From the beginning, I told them that I was not a “walking dictionary” and if they wanted to know their meanings they were going to need to do proper research. Some of them started to look for online translations, and when comparing them with the meanings that established dictionaries (such as Oxford, Cambridge, etc) were providing, automatically decided to change those sources. As Li (2018, 55-56) affirms, “[p]oor reading comprehension impedes students’ further learning of vocabulary and general knowledge (Stanovich, 1986), which can in turn lead to learning difficulties across content areas (Pressley, Reed & Vaughn, 2010) and, ultimately, frustration with schooling and academic failure (Snow, 2010). It is important to stress out how students were presenting from 5 to 10 minutes (the duration of their presentation started to be longer as the reading was advancing) without reading, without stressing about how good or bad they were talking, they only wanted to fulfil their colleagues’ expectations and desires to know how the story was going. Fear to talk in public was gone.

Nevertheless, apart from the vocabulary strategies and their growing confidence, there was another primordial aspect that catalyzed the technology of language into a social form, that is, the creation of material-discourses practices. As previously stated, students were creating their own theories regarding the content of the book. As Webber (2010, 355) states,

“[t]his type of theorizing helps students develop their question-posing skills as well as their ability to imagine the social world in new, potentially transformative, ways.” The result can be appreciated in the following illustration<sup>3</sup>:

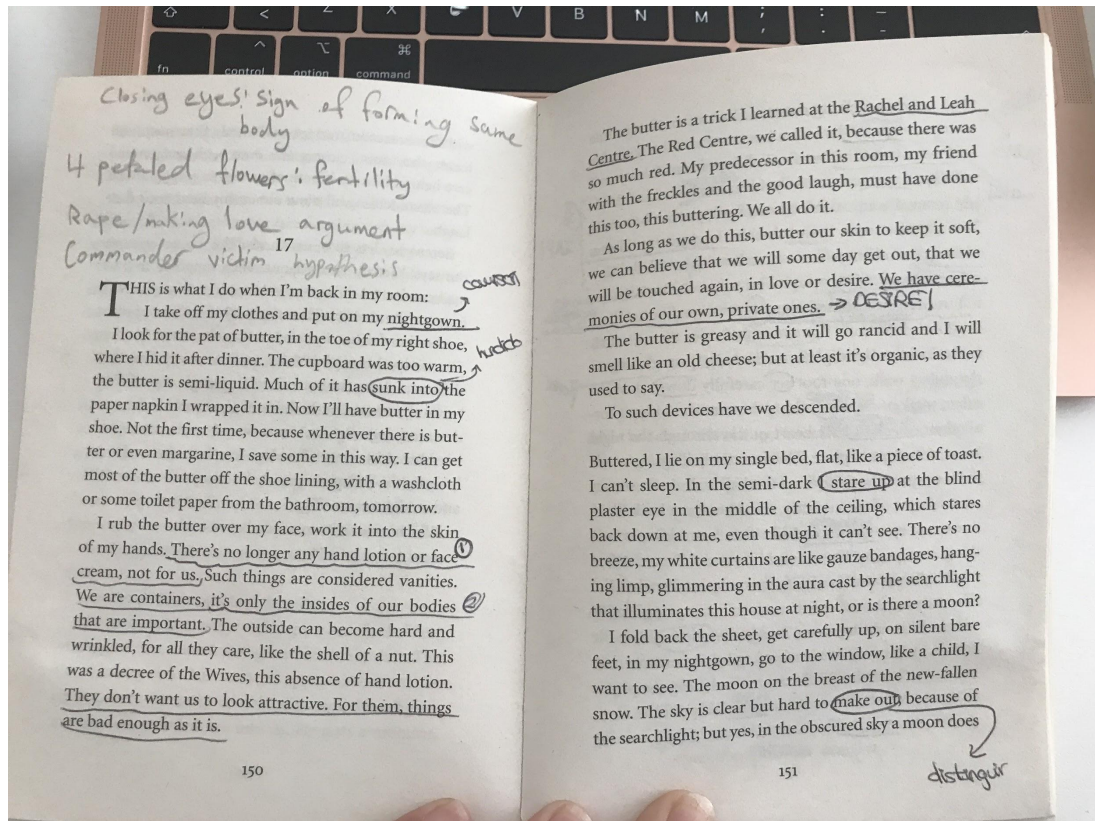


Illustration 1: The hypothesis

John and Jill Schostak identify a precise methodological strategy in order to problematize contemporary society which is “raising questions that make the powerful feel uncomfortable, even threatened [...] this political dimension [that] suggests the possible overthrow of a previous stable or at least dominant order of ways of knowing, thinking, believing, acting.” (2008,1). Everyday, I was raising questions as “Why are there so precise definition of flowers?” and Tom started his own theory: “Flowers mean fertility which is the

<sup>3</sup> The illustrations are photographs from the collected book that they are passing onto each other in order to read the chapters.



most important thing in the novel.” All of a sudden, a collective understanding was generated and the entire class started to question what was the role of women in the novel, but connecting it with the present.

### ***Phase 2: Writing***

When the students read the last chapter, they were truly disappointed, their faces showed sadness (even in the edge of crying). Emily was in a permanent awe listening to their colleagues and when it finished she asked me: “teacher, is this real? This is how it ends?”

#### *Affective strategies: writing in the making*

The student in charge of the last two chapters (everyone wanted to be part of the last three chapters so we needed to write piece of papers and choose anonymously who was going to be the lucky one), Marissa, said: “But teacher, I found an extra passage! It explains a lot” And she told the rest of the class that what they were reading was a diary that the protagonist was writing. Automatically, Ben asked, “Teacher, can we continue the diary? There is an important fact missing, perhaps, the protagonist didn’t leave the diary in the house, perhaps she took it with her!” In the middle of our reading, I asked them to write their hypothesis regarding how the book was going to end. In a way, I was trying to figure out how were their writing skills, and at the same time, what was the collective reading that they were doing. The writings were full of grammatical mistakes and very simple sentences. Personally, at that moment I feared that the experiment was not going to result in a positive development for them, at least in their writing skills. Nevertheless, the moment they continue the story, the level of their writing was as followed:

*The van stopped again, it looked like we had reached our destination. Nick said something to a man, but he didn’t get out of the van. The man was the one who took out all the maids except me. My thoughts on Salvaging were not wrong. And they knew that they were the protagonists of the new Salvaging when they got out of the van. At that accurate moment, when the doors of the van were*

*closed with me inside, my mind was divided into two parts. On one side, hope was waking up within me. While my doubts grew on the other side. Why didn't they get me out of the van?*

This piece also has grammatical mistakes, but they were sharing their writings was a more elevated kind of writing because they wanted to be “faithful” with our protagonists. The piece was shared in google drive and they admitted that some of them were writing according to what they thought their colleagues wanted to hear and some others wrote what they wanted to happen. Early & Kendrick (2020, 140-1), quoting Cammarata, affirm that “the act of questioning and the relentless search for answers to important questions that require deeper forms of thinking - is a core feature of human lifelong experience.” While at the beginning of the reading the most repeated way to start their presentations was “Well, in these two chapters nothing really happens” (although when they were elaborating their explanations they realized that something happened); when they were writing, passages like these became examples of those instances of “nothing really happens”. When asked, Emily answered: “Well, we think that we need to give the story the pauses that it needs, no need to rush”. They were becoming something else, they were becoming masters of their own narratives.

### ***Phase 3: Reflection***

The last of them writing the story (again, all of them wrote a paragraph that went from the 100 words to an entire page) was Miquel. Miquel decided to end the story without asking the rest by killing every character that was mean to the protagonist; as well as reuniting the protagonist with her daughter. Although this was the “desired ending” from the beginning, the colleagues showed discontent with Miquel for ending the story “so fast”. Nevertheless, when they were asked whether they wanted to re-write the ending collaboratively (which was my initial idea for the last class of the course), Lisa said, “Well, everyone of us has written how they thought that the story was going to be followed, and at some point, this needed to end. I

know there is another book of the story [referring to Atwood's latest production], perhaps, in the future, if we see the teacher again we can start with that other book and compare ours with Atwood's."

*Awing moments: 'This looks like Master Chef!'*

Prior to the conferences, I asked them if they wanted to write the conclusions of the paper and make the experiment completely collaborative. Olivia immediately said, "this [class] looks like Master Chef! Because you never know what is going to happen." The three main question points that they raised were the following:

1. *The thing that read the book together make us listen to each other. And you making us questions about: why is this like this and not in other way? what do you think is going to happen? You make us think.*
2. *I remember the day you told us that you were evaluating us while explaining the chapters. For me it was much easier, because we didn't realize we were doing our presentation. I really enjoyed the experience as a whole.*
3. *The fact of reading and writing together made it have a sense of partnership and no matter how much you wanted to continue reading, you always looked forward for someone else to read the next chapters.*

The language objectives described in *guía docente* were acquired; while it was through an affective strategy that made them believe that they were not part of an evaluating process. Sharing in a safe space displaced them from a traditional classroom to a collective experience. Coming back to Hickey-Moody's definition of affect (2019, 48), she explains that "[a]ffectus, then, is the materiality of change: it is 'the passage from one state to another' which occurs in relation to 'affecting bodies'." Regarding the partnership, Ben explained: "the thing that I liked the most was that the Fridays that we had class, we went to have some drinks all together." In their first year in a public university, they learn how to be a group by helping each other and not competing with each other since organizing the curriculum and our evaluation also matter. As Sidiqqi (2016, 69) explains, "it is a politically loaded

reorganization of the curriculum that aims to provide a forum for the unique knowledges of each locality to network within and without, quite rhizomatically and on their own.” (ibid.)

### **Concluding remarks: or.. to be continued?**

One of the editors of this volume states: “life is foremost creative and cannot be considered apart from its myriad expressions, which are constantly becoming other.” (Bangou, 2018, 83). Even if applying a posthuman curriculum is not possible regarding the current situation of the university (Sidiqqi, 2016), this article shows that it is important to move towards differing ways of teaching-learning, designing and evaluating our pedagogical curricula that are correlative to the myriad expressions that our students and ourselves encounter in our own lives. Connecting the reading to their immediate surrounding (they were even looking for news of certain facts like abortion laws in Latin America) opened their capacity to critically engage with the world. Eppley (2019, 13) explains that “[e]ngaging with texts [...] opens up the possibility for readers to use texts as tools with which to understand and take responsibility for local, regional, national and global places. [...] Reading texts as tools with which to engage the social and ecological components of places exposes readers to the political processes inherent in place making.” Agential movements become within the network and not as a result of an individual capacity.

Before concluding this article, I would like to make a brief reflection also upon what it meant for the evaluation of the students. I have decided to make a brief reflection here because this is the part of the process that needs to be re-iterated and that I hope that I will have the chance to do it if I encounter them in successive years of the degree, as such part of the rhizomatic move that escapes the agency of the researcher (so well-known in new

materialist research). None of the students failed the course (even when evaluated with traditional forms, such as the Cambridge-simulated English test); and, what is more, they remembered better the vocabulary learned in *The Handmaid's Tale* rather than the one used as formative handbook. They did improved according to the criteria of our normative teaching guide.

As Deleuze and Guattari confirm (in Bangou, 2018, 84), it is the “minority elements”, the “unforseen”, or in other words, the unexpected what provoques a rhizomatic loop in our pedagogical practices that make differences that matter. Learning with them, being open about the experiment, learning from their facial expressions, listening to what they need to say and how they comprehend the world is absolutely necessary. I have argued that literature provides that window to different paths in order to learn a different language from your mother tongue, differently.

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