

## Literary education, cultural diversity and manga: a proposal for the training of readers

Educación literaria, diversidad cultural y manga: una propuesta para la formación de lectores

Jerónimo Méndez-Cabrera<sup>1,a</sup> , Francesc Rodrigo-Segura<sup>1</sup>   
<sup>1</sup> Universidad de Valencia, España

✉ <sup>a</sup> Correspondent author: [jeronimo.mendez@uv.es](mailto:jeronimo.mendez@uv.es)

Received: 27/02/2022; Accepted: 12/10/2022

### Abstract

Over the last few decades, the reading of Japanese comics has been considered in several contexts of reading literacy; and different studies have been developed that consider the didactic potential of this medium, in proposals on artistic creativity based on the literacy practices of young readers, or even as a didactic resource for literary education. Based on a qualitative approach, this work aims at studying the possibilities of *Tomoji*, by Jiro Taniguchi, as a paradigmatic example of manga for the training of readers, from an intercultural perspective and considering thematic linking options on diversity which this work offers. A reading motivation proposal has thus been designed, based on certain methodological keys typical of didactic sequences, with the aim of providing a replicable model of literary education which promotes, from the Japanese comics, discussion around cultural aspects such as the social role of women, the appreciation of nature or the concept of family.

**Keywords:** Literary education; reading motivation; cultural diversity; comic; manga.

### Resumen

Durante las últimas décadas, se ha considerado la lectura de cómic japonés en diferentes contextos de alfabetización lectora; y se han desarrollado estudios diversos que contemplan la potencialidad didáctica de este medio, en propuestas sobre creatividad artística a partir de las prácticas letradas de jóvenes lectores, o como recurso didáctico para la educación literaria. Mediante un análisis cualitativo, este trabajo pretende estudiar las posibilidades de *Tomoji*, de Jiro Taniguchi, como ejemplo paradigmático de manga para la formación de lectores, con perspectiva intercultural y atendiendo a las opciones de vinculación temática en torno a la diversidad que la lectura presenta. Así, se realiza una propuesta de motivación lectora basada en ciertas claves metodológicas propias de las secuencias didácticas, con el objetivo de proporcionar un modelo replicable de educación literaria que promueva, a partir del cómic nipón, la discusión alrededor de aspectos culturales como el papel social de la mujer, la apreciación de la naturaleza o el concepto de familia.

**Palabras clave:** Educación literaria; motivación lectora; diversidad cultural; cómic; manga.



## INTRODUCTION: JAPANESE COMICS IN THE CONTEXT OF READING AND LITERACY EDUCATION

In recent decades, and in different contexts, the reading of Japanese comics or manga has been considered as a resource for reading literacy in children and adolescents (Murakami & Bryce, 2009; Nakazawa, 2005), and different studies have been conducted and consider the didactic potential of this medium (Rivero-Gracia, 2018), both as a cultural phenomenon (McCarthy, 2014) and in proposals on artistic creativity (Bitz, 2009), as a resource for teaching social sciences (Delgado-Algarra, 2018) and also for literary education (Almazán, 2018; Méndez-Cabrera, 2019). There have also been approaches to the multiple possibilities of reading the most representative themes and subgenres of Japanese comics from the perspective of cultural studies (Berndt, 1996, 2010). However, this has not prevented different attempts to configure a more or less broad canon (Bernabé & Estrada, 2019; Gravett, 2004).

Taking into account the hybrid discursivity of comics as a “mutant” medium (Altarriba, 2008), with a sense of reading that arises from the interaction between written text, image and sequentiality (despite the limitations pointed out by Vilches, 2019), as a discourse that embraces both what happens inside the cartoons and what happens between them, thanks to the active participation of the reader in the interpretation, this paper aims to offer a representative case to study what reading manga means in the framework of current reading and literary education, especially if we consider the opportunities for the promotion of intercultural communication in favour of diversity. In this vein, the consolidation of the reading habit and the development of literary competence (Mendoza, 2010) based on the reading pleasure that manga arouses in the literary practices of young people provides a good pretext. The inclusion of comics, and by extension manga, among the reading proposals contributes to the purpose of configuring a necessarily plural canon (Ballester & Ibarra, 2013; Rovira-Collado & Baile-López, 2021), capable of attending to the growing complexity of readers in formation. However, it should be noted that research in literary education preferably involves the development of didactic proposals that give formative meaning to the reading experiences that the teacher selects as an object of study (Ballester & Ibarra, 2020).

First, however, we would like to stress the particularity of manga as a reading experience. Both in Spain and in Europe, the first theoretical approaches already point out that Japanese comics involve the activation of certain mechanisms of interpretation that affect cultural and encyclopaedic knowledge in a specific way, while manga involves a reading process that assumes somewhat different codes (due to its iconicity, conventions of representation and visual language), relatively distant from those of European and American comics. “Reading Japanese comics requires a new apprenticeship, getting used to new tones, registers and accents that are not used in the West” (Bermúdez, 1995, p. 117). It could be said that manga is a sign system that does not refer to any iconic realism (Berndt, 1996).

We can speak of a specific narrative of Japanese comics and, thus, of a somewhat particular reading experience, with differential features that establish a certain reading process as an exercise in cognition. This predominant style of Japanese comics supports both a certain conventionality and iconicity and represents patterns no less cognitive than any other linguistic form of sequential communication. This narrative code of manga

involves a specific visual language constructed from certain iconic, emotional, pragmatic and graphic conventions that are specific to Japanese culture (Cohn, 2010). Therefore, the link between word and image as a sequential narrative is somewhat different from Western comics (Cohn, 2013; Pintor, 2017). In addition to the reverse sense of reading, which affects the text and page layout, reading Japanese comics implies an intercultural experience, by virtue of formal characteristics such as the acceptance of narrative emptiness and frenetic or paroxysmal rhythms, the aesthetic game in black and white (and the immense range of greys); and also intradiegetic characteristics of content: stereotypical characters marked by gestures, reactions and behaviours typical of Japanese culture, as well as media references and socio-cultural issues specific to the context of production that constitute certain anthropological and cultural structures of the narration.

If we start from the premise that reading takes place in a social context and that the reading process involves a communicative purpose through reader-text dialogue, reading Japanese comics favours certain processes of understanding and construction of cultural thought, as it allows us to share artistic and literary references and at the same time establish a differential contrast between other elements that may be alien to the Western reader. Moreover, because of their textual component in a narrative framework with numerous dialogical representations, comics have a positive impact on linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. In this sense, it should be noted that reading and literary education takes as its main axis the reader's activity in the process of reception, integrating the links between social and cultural systems, rhetorical systems and discourse strategies, as well as the systems of ritualisation and symbolisation of the imaginary (Ballester, 2015). We thus consider Japanese comics as a type of reading that, following appropriate selection criteria, can become an interesting intercultural and multimodal experience.

In this sense, although manga has its origins in print, manga characters are the first to move across television screens in the 1990s and on mobile phones, the Internet and gaming devices from the 2000s onwards, forming part of teenagers' media practices (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2005; Ingulsrud & Allen, 2009) and setting significant precedents for what has subsequently come to be known as *transmedia narratives* (Scolari, 2013). In any case, the multimodality of manga extends the traditional notions of text and literacy, as the meaning of reading is conveyed on different levels, such as page layout, illustrations, dialogues and text balloons, as well as all the paratextual elements that accompany the different types of editions, serialised in specialised magazines or in volumes or tomes called *tankoubon* (Schwartz & Rubinstein-Ávila, 2006). Reading promotion through manga involves understanding and responding to the multiple modes used in the construction of meaning, most of which come from Japanese culture but which converge, however, with those of our own culture in an aspect that will allow us to take on Japanese comics as a formative reading experience: the selection of themes of interest in accordance with the different genre conventions.

Thus, reading manga can be an interesting bridge between cultures and assume the function of cognitive construction of reality through the recognition, understanding and critical appraisal of cultural similarities and differences. Beyond the concept of the *otaku* reader (Menkes, 2012), Japanese comics, through the configuration of characters, historical frameworks and themes, can bring us closer to other traditions, social uses, rituals, knowledge, etc., allowing for the notion of cultural diversity from an inclusive perspective. In this sense, from an intercultural approach, stories (literary or under the form of vignettes) facilitate the dialogue and communication necessary to understand one's own

and other people's experiences through reading, thus affirming reciprocity in the construction of meaning (Leibrandt, 2006; Sabariego-Puig, 2004).

## OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

With this in mind, this paper presents the following research objectives: firstly, to consider and value manga as a reading proposal for literary education today, taking into account its particularities as a reading experience and its potential for the promotion of reading from an intercultural perspective; secondly, to carry out a textual analysis of Jiro Taniguchi's *Tomoji*, as a representative case of Japanese comics that allows us to establish significant thematic links between Western culture and Japanese culture (from both identity and otherness), promoting the notion of cultural diversity through certain categories of analysis of the story; thirdly, based on the results of this analysis, and taking into account the possibilities of the selected work, the paradigm of literary education and the methodological strategies that are most interesting for including the reading of comics in the classroom, we intend to make a proposal for the training of readers that allows for reflection on certain cultural aspects raised in the reading of *Tomoji*.

## TOMOJI: APPROACH TO THE SUBJECT MATTER

In this section, we will make a contextual approach to the work selected as the subject matter, both extradiegetically and intradiegetically. *Tomoji* is a comic book drawn by Jiro Taniguchi (1947-2017), with a script co-written by Miwako Ogihara, a television scriptwriter. The title in question was originally published in Japan in 2014 by Futabasha, then published in French in 2015 by Rue de Sèvres. In Spanish, it is published by Ponent Mont in 2016, in a western reading sense and with translation by Víctor Illera Kanaya, in a 176-page volume that includes a final interview with Taniguchi on the origin and gestation of the work, something peculiar in the author's production as a whole. This is a comic where we can appreciate the narrative mastery of the last Taniguchi: The story has a restrained rhythm, sobriety in the expression of the characters, with few but effective peaks of drama, in a leisurely tone, far removed from previous action manga such as *Blanco* (1984-1986), *The Summit of the Gods* (2000-2003), or *Un ciel radieux* in French (2004), although with numerous detailed backgrounds and landscapes, surely due to the Franco-Belgian influence of the author (who went on to publish *Icarus* with Moebius in 1997) and his typically Japanese insistence on an appreciation of the ephemeral (though dazzling) beauty of the natural environment.

On an intradiegetic level, the story of the comic book begins in 1925 and continues in six chapters where, in a continuous game of flashbacks, we are told the life story of a young girl born in the spring of 1916 in a small village of peasants in the Yamanashi region, in a valley next to the Yatsugatake mountain range, in rural Japan in the 1920s. It is about a young girl who, after the premature death of her father and the abandonment of her mother, will have to face, together with her siblings and grandmother, the harsh routine of the countryside and the different family, historical and social vicissitudes of that time; and who seems to embody a certain archetype of a simple, brave and virtuous heroine. It is not until the last page of the book that we discover that the reading is in fact a biography made to order. Although, as Taniguchi himself states in the interview that accompanies the Spanish edition, conducted in August 2014, it is a fictionalised biography. The author

recreates the childhood and adolescence of Tomoji Uchida, who was the first spiritual leader of the Shinnyo-en Buddhist temple, where the cartoonist's wife used to go. "I decided to favour a narrative angle that would show the life journey that shaped Tomoji's personality and that finally led him to choose the path of spirituality" (Taniguchi, 2016, p. 170), where the dramatisation elements of the biographical account are clear.

## STUDY METHOD

Following a qualitative procedure and using the critical reading method, we conducted a textual analysis (thematic and narratological) of the work as a case study, focusing on the thematic cores, character and space configuration, as well as the narrative time and intradiegetic elements that refer to genres and literary intertexts in the Spanish version of *Tomoji* (Taniguchi, 2016). Subsequently, we have carried out an exploratory research work to adapt the reading of comics as a proposal for literary education; taking into account, at a theoretical level, the objectives and characteristics of this teaching model for the training of readers (Ballester, 2015) and the methodological model of didactic sequences (Camps, 1996, 2003), considering its adaptation for the teaching of literature and the promotion of reading (Margallo, 2012).

## RESULTS

In this section, we include the results obtained from the thematic and narratological analysis of the work. For reasons of space and relevance, we will present the results of the following categories of analysis only: themes, sub-themes, literary and discursive genres, intradiegetic discourse and intertexts of the work. It should be said that some of the central themes detected (family relationships, the importance of memory for the interpretation of the world and the love of nature from a certain contemplative approach) also appear in Taniguchi's previous works, such as *A Journal of my Father* (1994), *Quartier lointain* in French (1998) and *The Walking Man* (1992). In any case, if we take a critical approach to the object of study, we can see what aspects the reading of this manga can contribute to literary education and what aspects are useful for the promotion of reading from an intercultural perspective. Through the description of the didactic proposal designed, we assess the suitability of the reading and indicate how we can work on these aspects in educational contexts.

### Themes and sub-themes of the work

Nature (the beauty of mountains, forests and valleys), life in the countryside (difficult but simple and peaceful), together with the contextual importance of orography and the contrast with life in the big city, make up one of the most important thematic cores of the work. In fact, the comic begins with some vignettes that tell us about the rural context in which the story is set and is a characteristic way of introducing the main character. The Yatsugatake mountain range and its eight peaks (as well as the repeated appearance of birds such as the kite) will form a symbolic background throughout all the chapters of the manga, associated with Tomoji's life development. The joy of childhood, the challenges of adolescence, the nostalgia of youth, or the memories of early maturity are visually related to the small corner of the world where the young woman is born and raised and are

configured as stages of progression in the character's personality that facilitate the reader's identification with the main character.

As a woman's life story, it is worth highlighting the conception of the different stages of life understood as a path not without difficulties (*Tomoji*, although originally a male anthroponym, includes a play on the Japanese words *tomo*, 'friend' and *ji*, 'path'). The attitude towards adversity, the will to learn and the acceptance of loss in the process of individual maturation are another thematic core of the work, which is developed through the different roles and conventions assumed by the main character as a woman in Japanese society at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which allows for a comparative exercise with the reality of young Western female readers.

Closely linked to the above is the theme of the family, in a rural setting and not far removed from the Western model of the time: *Tomoji* is born from a second marriage; she has to take care of the house and the family business; she lives with her siblings in her paternal grandparents' house, as tradition dictates; later, the mother abandons the children when her husband dies; and her grandmother is a protective figure. The work exemplifies certain Japanese lifestyles and includes, with a historical perspective, the incipient art of photography as something unusual and extraordinary linked to the idea of family, death and memory.

Love, in a non-romantic concept, is also thematically significant in the work. In the family context, *Tomoji's* sibling relationship with his younger sister and grandmother, both female characters of narrative importance in the story, is noteworthy. On the other hand, the romantic awakening of *Tomoji*, who will end up happily engaged to Fumiaki, the male main character (presented in parallel to the young woman), does not escape the protocols and strict social conventions of the time, such as the traditional custom of arranged marriages.

Other secondary themes, although decisive in the tone and content of the work, and which also allow for intercultural contrast and the notion of diversity conditioned by historical, social and religious factors, are: Eastern philosophy, specifically Buddhism and Taoism (albeit from a secular and exoteric perspective), in its approach to the observation of nature and the conception of human relations in a chain of causes and consequences; school, specifically the Japanese rural school, with its ceremonies, moments, readings and excursions; and also the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with some vicissitudes of Japan in the 1920s, such as the cultural influence of the West, typical of the Taisho era, or the processes of industrialisation and technical advances, the Tokyo earthquake of 1923, and even a slight approach to the temporary emancipation of women in their professional training (*Tomoji*, after her studies, will enter a dressmaking school as an apprentice).

## Literary genres and intertexts in the work

Within the narrative framework of the work, this manga has the enriching peculiarity of including different literary genres and intertextual references, something that can be beneficial from an educational perspective. Popular song is by far the genre that appears most frequently in the work: in the different chapters and performed by different characters, there are various farm, seasonal, religious and school songs, which are intended to form a soundtrack to the main character's childhood and adolescence. At some point, the recitation of a Buddhist prayer in honour of Kannon (in the Japanese tradition) or

Avalokiteshvara (in Sanskrit), the *bodhisattva* of compassion, one of the most widely revered in mainstream Mahayana Buddhism is added to these songs.

As we said and continuing with Eastern religion and philosophy, there is also a clear reference to Taoism in this comic, when in chapter 6, Fumiaki, the male main character, is studying the *I-Ching*, the oracular book of reference of Taoism, together with the *Tao Te Ching*.

As for the configuration of literary intertexts (Martínez-Fernández, 2001; Mendoza, 2001), it is worth highlighting the significant appearance in chapter 4 of the story “The Spider’s Thread” by Ryunosuke Akutagawa (published in 1918 in the Japanese children’s magazine *Akai Tori* or *Red Bird*), which is read in the school Tomoji attends as shared reading in the classroom. We can also see how Tomoji questions herself about the text and wonders about the ending of the story, in a representative example of dialogue with the literary work.

We also find the inclusion in the narrative of discursive genres such as the letter, when Tomoji and Fumiaki exchange letters about the arranged marriage they both accept; and also the interview, in a metafictional addition to the story, as the Spanish edition of the manga has a final conversation with Taniguchi, through which he adds a perspective of metatextual reflection. In it, an approach is made to the novelised biography as a genre, it talks about historical contextualisation, about the decisions and difficulties in adapting it to vignettes, etc.

## Didactic proposal

Our proposal is based on three basic methodological keys of the paradigm of literary education. The first is to strengthen the link between reading education and interculturality as a valuable tool for fostering critical citizenship that respects social, cultural and gender differences (Martínez-Muro, 2016). Ibarra and Ballester (2015) state that intercultural literary education fosters the construction of an active and conscious citizenship and defend the importance of approaching reading from an inclusive perspective. Therefore, in addition to cultural diversity, certain social issues (the contrast between the countryside and the city or forced migration) and gender roles can be addressed when reading *Tomoji*.

As a second methodological key, we propose the need to start from a broad conception of the concept of reading and literary competence that includes, for its development, the diversity of literary genres and other multimodal media in order to make it consistent with the characteristics of communication in today’s society. Thus, the factors that modify and condition the notion of literary reading must be considered: the impact of the new digital media and social networks on the reading practices of young people, the diversity of subjects and reading practices and the relationship with the academic institutional fabric. According to Hernández-Ortega et al. (2021), these elements revolutionise the traditional concept of reading, create a new book ecosystem and shape elements of reading motivation.

The third key argues that literary education should be based on forced methodological pluralism, should be developed through use of active methodologies and should involve a major change in the conception of assessment, including the interpretative and creative skills of the learner. Therefore, the current paradigm of reading and literary education must be based on a communicative approach that relates the development of literary

competence to the integrated work of basic linguistic skills, in favour of the diverse experiential possibilities of reading.

This communicative approach to literary-reading teaching can only be developed through the use of active methodologies, such as teaching sequences, literature projects or text creation workshops, which make it possible to integrate the specific skills of literary training and other basic skills such as teamwork, ethical or digital competence.

In this sense, as for the typology of activities to work on comics, we propose reading comprehension exercises, text analysis and commentary, reflection and personal evaluation, as well as literary and artistic creation activities, articulated around the moment of reading, with the aim of didactically exploiting Japanese comics from an interdisciplinary point of view. To that end, we based ourselves on the didactic sequences proposed by Camps (1996, 2003) and Margallo (2012). The following is a brief description of each of the phases of this approach to reader training.

Firstly, the planning phase corresponds to the motivation for the act of learning. It sets out the purpose of the intended task and makes explicit the learning objectives to be pursued. The discursive situation to which the work will respond is also explained, so that the students represent the activity to be carried out, for example: reading reviews, researching the context of the work, writing an opinion article or making an anthology of thematically related texts, etc.

In the development phase of the project, two types of activities are distinguished: those related to production (aimed at learning the characteristics and conditions of use of the genre or medium) and those activities which involve an approach to the conceptual contents (linguistic, literary, cultural) which are being worked on and which have to be used in the discursive task. It should be added that this whole process of textual production, which involves the operations of planning, textualisation and revision, is developed in interrelation with other tasks or reflections which help the progressive construction of know-how on the part of the students. Before reading (special attention being paid to paratexts), during reading (such as conducting an interview with the grandmother or female family member from a previous generation, relevant characters in the manga analysed), and after reading, such as synthesising the relevant information of each chapter (figure 1) or carrying out an analysis of the work (figure 2).

**Figure 1. Basic worksheet for narrative content analysis**

CHAPTER	SUMMARY	TIME FRAME	SPACE FRAME	CHARACTERS	THEMES
1. Tomoji					
2. The happy days					
3. The farewell					
4. Distant skies					
5. The departure					
6. Spring arrives					

**Figure 2. Worksheet to analyse a comic, based on Duran (2007, 2009) and McCloud (2005)**

---

**FORMAL FEATURES**

---

- Size and format of the comic.
- Number of vignettes per page.
- Types of vignettes and page layout (vertical, horizontal, etc.).
- Relationship between the elements (text, drawing, vignettes, page layout).
- Technique used (colour, black and white, grey) and line (fine, thick, detailed, rough).
- Relationship between the plastic resources and the tone and rhythm of the work.

---

**COMMUNICATION FEATURES**

---

- Rhetorical (metaphors, hyperbole, similes, metonymy, etc.) and stylistic procedures.
- Do the vignettes maintain stylistic and expressive coherence?
- Character creation: is the main character easily recognisable? Are Secondary characters stereotypical or do they show feelings and emotions?
- Are the depiction of the settings and the period well defined in the play, providing cultural significance?
- Relationships and oppositions activated or read in the image (visual tour).
- Value system derived from the location of the characters in the planes, angles and directionalities.
- Social and ideological representations (beliefs, opinions, prejudices and stereotypes).
- Do the images provide more information than the text, or the other way around, or do they complement each other?
- Emotional reaction triggered in the reader by each vignette or page.

Thirdly, the evaluation phase is seen as part of the learning process. In projects, formative assessment is concerned with the products achieved as a result of a complex process, which is itself the object of learning and evaluation. Formative assessment is thus a dynamic reality, which develops in parallel to the learning process. From this point of view, it will need various instruments (guidelines, textual models, evaluative comments, etc.) adapted to the characteristics of the project and the working group. At the final moment when the task is assessed, the resulting assessment contributes to the metacognitive retrieval of the procedures followed, their conceptual results and the strategies used, something that encourages, in this case, reflection on manga and Japanese culture. In this same vein, some creation and assessment activities may be the following: drawing a timeline with the most important moments in Tomoji's life; or with the most important moments in the reader's life and writing an autobiography (where the differences and similarities with the main character of the manga can be identified); produce a comic strip of one of the most important sequences in the life or a female member of the reader's family (given the importance of this theme in the work); write a theatrical scene from one of the chapters of the work and perform it in the classroom; produce argumentative texts and a book trailer of the work, with subsequent publication on social networks, blog or school website (see [Appendix](#)).

Finally, for the overall assessment of the work, [Chambers \(2007\)](#) proposes adding a series of final questions that will enable young readers to achieve a higher degree of reading comprehension and help them to acquire the habit of critical reading. The aim is to propose global interpretative tasks that allow students to give their opinions, evaluate and

relate the elements of the work to their own personal reality and to their knowledge of the world, thus promoting significant learning. These questions, which should be included in any worksheets, questionnaires or debates, are of a general nature and also allow for working on emotional education in relation to the reality of another cultural context, the interpretative assessment of reading and the promotion of the reading intertext.

## CONCLUSIONS

Considering its most defining particularities (linked to Japanese culture and mentality) and its publishing framework in Spanish, manga is a type of comic where we can find interesting opportunities for intercultural literary education, understood as a teaching model that conceives the reading experience as an act of communication and a process of dialogue capable of assuming different cultural realities in an inclusive way. On the other hand, it favours the knowledge of shared meanings with the readers' intertext; and, at the same time, it fosters cognitive abilities that optimise the development of skills and attitudes for the valuation of cultural diversity as a richness.

Reading of a manga such as *Tomoji* is thus a paradigmatic example, since, thanks to its subject matter and the intradiegetic elements that make up its narrative framework, it makes it possible to structure an educational proposal in the form of a didactic sequence based on an interdisciplinary approach (where the curricular contents of literature, history or philosophy can be combined on the basis of the manga story). The didactic approach to Taniguchi's work also makes it possible to promote the development of the different components of literary competence (Mendoza, 2010), both linguistic, cultural and encyclopaedic, discursive, pragmatic and intertextual knowledge, through reading and writing tasks, the development of different textual typologies, activities relating to other works and contexts, proposals for literary creativity and reflective evaluation of the content and form of manga as a reading experience.

The foregoing is approached from an intercultural point of view, through a deliberate exchange between the reader's previous knowledge and experiences and the elements of Japanese culture that we find in the work analysed, thus allowing for the possibility of relating Taniguchi's biographical fiction to life, society and the family history of the Western reader, taking as the main point of connection and reflection the thematic nuclei relating to the social role of women, the vicissitudes of rural life, the characteristics of family organisation, the conception of love according to contextual conditioning factors or the appreciation of the beauty of the natural environment. In this sense, we hope this paper will provide grounds for claiming a place for Japanese comics in the necessarily plural reading selection for current literary education and the training of readers in favour of cultural diversity.

## References

- Allen, K., & Ingulsrud, E. (2005). Reading Manga: Patterns of Personal Literacies Among Adolescents. *Language and Education*, 19(4), 265-280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780508668681>
- Almazán, V. D. (2018). Educación, literatura y manga: homenaje a Jirō Taniguchi (1947-2017) y La época de Botchan. En J. A. Gracia-Lana, & A. Asión-Suñer (Eds.). *Nuevas visiones sobre el cómic. Un enfoque interdisciplinar* (pp. 25-40). Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza.

- Altarriba, A. (2008). La historieta, un medio mutante. *Quimera, revista de literatura*, (293). <http://www.antonioaltarriba.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/H00EC06.pdf>
- Ballester, J. (2015). *La formación lectora y literaria*. Graó.
- Ballester J., & Ibarra, N. (2013). La tentación diabólica de instruirse. Reflexiones a propósito de la educación lectora y literaria. *Ocnos*. 10, 7-26. [https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos\\_2013.10.01](https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos_2013.10.01)
- Ballester, J., & Ibarra, N. (2020). El área de Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura. Identidad e investigación. En J. Ballester, & N. Ibarra (Eds.). *Entre la lectura, la escritura y la educación. Paradigmas de investigación en Didáctica de la Literatura y la Lengua* (pp. 15-28). Narcea.
- Bermúdez, T. (1995). *Mangavisión: guía del tebeo japonés*. Glénat.
- Bernabé, M., & Estrada, O. (2019). *501 mangas que leer en español*. Norma.
- Berndt, J. (1996). *El fenómeno manga*. Martínez Roca.
- Berndt, J. (Ed.) (2010). *Comics Worlds and the World of Comics: Towards Scholarship on a Global Scale*. International Manga Research Center (Kyoto Seika University).
- Bitz, M. (2009). *Manga High. Literacy, Identity and Coming of Age in an Urban High School*. Harvard Education Press.
- Camps, A. (1996). Proyectos de lengua, entre la teoría y la práctica. *Cultura y Educación*, 2, 43-57. <https://doi.org/10.1174/113564096763277715>
- Camps, A. (Ed.) (2003). *Secuencias didácticas para aprender a escribir*. Graó.
- Chambers, A. (2007). *DIME. Los niños, la lectura y la conversación*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Cohn, N. (2010). Japanese Visual Language: The Structure of Manga. In T. Johnson-Woods (Ed.). *Manga: An anthology of global and cultural perspectives* (pp. 187-203). Continuum.
- Cohn, N. (2013). *The Visual Language of Comics: Introduction to the Structure and Cognition of Sequential Images*. Bloomsbury.
- Delgado-Algarra, E. J. (2018). Educación ciudadana y competencia emocional en la enseñanza de las ciencias sociales: el manga como recurso educativo. En J. A. Gracia-Lana, & A. Asión-Suñer (Eds.). *Nuevas visiones sobre el cómic. Un enfoque interdisciplinar* (pp. 287-292). Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza.
- Duran, T. (2007). *Àlbums i altres lectures: Anàlisi de llibres per a infants*. Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat.
- Duran, T. (2009). Eines per a l'anàlisi de la il·lustració. *Caplletra*, 56, 219-236.
- Gravett, P. (2004). *Manga: 60 Years of Japanese Comics*. Collins Design.
- Hernández-Ortega, J., Rovira-Collado, J., & Álvarez-Herrero, J. (2021). Metodologías activas para un aprendizaje transmedia de la Lengua y la Literatura. *El Guiniguada*, 30, 122-134. <https://doi.org/10.20420/ElGuiniguada.2021.409>

- Ibarra, N., & Ballester, J. (2015). Cómics interculturales, educación literaria y productos políticamente correctos. *Tonosdigital: revista de estudios filológicos*, 28. <https://digitum.um.es/digitum/bitstream/10201/42932/1/Comics%20interculturales.pdf>
- Ingulsrud, J. E., & Allen, K. (2009). *Reading Japan Cool: Patterns of Manga Literacy and Discourse*. Lexington Books.
- Leibrandt, I. (2006). El aprendizaje intercultural a través de la literatura. *Espéculo: Revista de Estudios Literarios*, 32. <https://webs.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero32/aprendiz.html>
- McCarthy, H. (2014). *A Brief History of Manga: The Essential Pocket Guide to the Japanese Pop Culture Phenomenon*. Ilex Press.
- Margallo, A. M. (2012). La educación literaria en los proyectos de trabajo. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, 59, 139-156. <https://doi.org/10.35362/rie590460>
- Martínez-Fernández, J. E. (2001). *La intertextualidad literaria*. Cátedra.
- Martínez-Muro, M. A. (2016). El cómic como recurso didáctico intercultural en la enseñanza. En A. Martínez, & M. M. Campos (Eds.). *Cultura en la diversidad: educación lingüística y literaria en las aulas del siglo XXI* (pp. 197-210). Octaedro.
- McCloud, S. (2005). *Entender el cómic: el arte invisible*. Astiberri.
- Méndez-Cabrera, J. (2019). Educación literaria y manga: *El caminante* de Taniguchi como modelo de deriva poética. *Tebeosfera*, (10). [https://www.tebeosfera.com/documentos/educacion\\_literaria\\_y\\_manga\\_el\\_caminante\\_de\\_taniguchi\\_como\\_modelo\\_didactico\\_de\\_deriva\\_poetica.html](https://www.tebeosfera.com/documentos/educacion_literaria_y_manga_el_caminante_de_taniguchi_como_modelo_didactico_de_deriva_poetica.html)
- Mendoza, A. (2001). *El intertexto lector. El espacio de encuentro de las aportaciones del texto con las del lector*. Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha.
- Mendoza, A. (2010). La competencia literaria entre las competencias. *Lenguaje y Textos*, 32, 21-33.
- Menkes, D. (2012). La cultura juvenil otaku: expresión de la posmodernidad. *Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Niñez y Juventud*, 10(1), 51-62. <https://revistaumanizales.cinde.org.co/rllcsnj/index.php/Revista-Latinoamericana/article/view/580>
- Murakami, S., & Bryce, M. (2009). Manga as an Educational Medium. *The International Journal of The Humanities*, 7(10), 47-55. <https://doi.org/10.18848/1447-9508/CGP/v07i10/42761>
- Nakazawa, J. (2005). Development of Manga (Comic Book) Literacy in Children. In D. W. Shwalb, J. Nakazawa, & B. J. Shwalb (Eds.). *Applied Developmental Psychology: Theory, Practice, and Research from Japan*. Information Age Publishing.
- Pintor, I. (2017). *Figuras del cómic. Forma, tiempo y narración secuencial*. Aldea Global.
- Rivero-Gracia, P. (2018). Potencialidad didáctica del manga: *Cleopatra* de Machiko Satonaka. En J. A. Gracia-Lana, & A. Asión-Suñer (Eds.). *Nuevas visiones sobre el cómic. Un enfoque interdisciplinar* (pp. 315-321). Prensas Universitarias de Zaragoza.

- Rovira-Collado, J., & Baile-López, E. (2021). Un cànon de còmic com a proposta de lectures per a l'aula de secundària. *Articles: Revista de didàctica de la llengua i de la literatura*, (90), 29-35.
- Sabariego-Puig, M. (2004). Estrategias metodológicas en aulas multiculturales. En E. Soriano-Ayala (Ed.). *La práctica educativa intercultural* (pp.133-178). La Muralla.
- Schwartz, A., & Rubinstein-Ávila, E. (2006). Understanding the Manga Hype: Uncovering the Multimodality of Comic-Book Literacies. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(1), 40-49. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.50.1.5>
- Scolari, C. A. (2013). *Narrativas transmedia. Cuando todos los medios cuentan*. Deusto.
- Taniguchi, J. (2016). *Tomoji*. Ponent Mon.
- Vilches, G. (2019). El cómic: ¿un arte secuencial? Una crítica al concepto de secuencia y la clasificación de las transiciones entre viñetas de Scott McCloud. *Neuróptica*, 1, 203-217. [https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs\\_neuroptica/neuroptica.201914328](https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_neuroptica/neuroptica.201914328)

## Appendix

### Appendix

#### Summary worksheet of the SD activities designed.

1. PLANNING		2. IMPLEMENTATION	3. ASSESSMENT
PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES	MOTIVATIONAL	ACTIVITIES ON READING Before reading: 2.1. What do paratexts about the content reveal? (cover title, back cover synopsis, final interview). Class discussion. On reading: 2.2. Elaboration of the description of the characters: what are they like, what are their origins, what problems have they experienced, what are their desires, their dreams, their concerns? Activity: Description of each character. 2.3. Identification of other literary genres contained in the work. What is their function? 2.4. Content analysis. (Complete the Narrative Content Analysis Worksheet). After reading: 2.5. Formal analysis: narrative structure, language, visual resources, etc. (Complete the Comic Analysis Worksheet).	LITERARY AND ARTISTIC CREATION 3.1. Timeline with the most important moments in Tomoji's life. 3.2. Timeline of the most important moments in your life. Based thereon, write your own autobiography. 3.3. Comic book out of one of the most important sequences of your life. 3.4. Write a theatrical scene from one of the chapters of the play and perform it in a classroom. MULTIMODAL PRODUCTIONS 3.5. Team production of a booktrailer about the work. 3.6. Viewing and selection for inclusion in social networks, blog or school website. ARGUMENTATIVE TEXTS 3.7. Drafting of a review of the work for publication. 3.8. Preparation of the bibliographic record for the library. 3.9. Twitter or Instagram post about the work. 3.10. Conclusions:
1.1 Read reviews of the book.			
CONTEXTUALISATION ACTIVITIES			
1.2. Research the work, its author and the main character.			
1.3. Search for information about comics in general and Japanese comics or manga in particular.			
1.4. Familiarisation with the basics of Zen Buddhism.			
1.5. Activity: Produce an expository text introducing the author, the actual main character of the work and the manga genre.			

1. PLANNING	2. IMPLEMENTATION	3. ASSESSMENT
		3.11. Writing a final individual text of global evaluation of the work. 3.12. Final class discussion based on individual conclusions.

---

### INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK

---

Social Science (Geography and History)

1. Enquiry into the situation of women in Asian cultures. Description of the living conditions of the manga's main character in relation to those of the reader.
2. Contrastive work on rural life in Japan and Spain. Why do people migrate from the countryside to the city? Interview your older relatives and find out where they came from (did they live in the countryside or in the city?). What is the *empty Spain*? How do you relate it to manga?
3. Japanese history and culture. Timeline of the main events in its history. Places the space of Tomoji's life in the timeline. What do we know about their culture? What products do we consume: literature, gastronomy, martial arts, cinema, etc.?

### ETHICS

Topics for discussion: life in Japan, Buddhism/Christianity, rural/urban, respect for nature and the environment (climate change), gender roles, the role of women in different cultures and historical contexts, the role of older people in the family and social framework.

---

### ASSESSMENT TOOLS

---

1. Digital portfolio (shared folder) where each work team collects its productions.
2. Booktrailer of the work.
3. Literary creation activities.
4. Group evaluation and self-evaluation questionnaire.