**Integrating Multiliteracies into the ESL Curriculum: Graphic Novels as a Means of Expression and Motivation**

by

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**Abstract**

This study focuses on using graphic novels to interest students and develop their reading skills in English. The participants were ESL (English as a second language) students taking their fourth and final English class (INGL 3202) of the basic track in the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez. This class in particular was selected because it focuses mostly on readings and reactions towards these. When the students were given the choice of whether to read a more traditional text or a graphic novel, the majority chose the second option. At the end of the unit the participants expressed that the graphic novels helped them to better understand what was happening in the story and relate to the reading. Results demonstrated that integrating graphic novels in the classroom facilitated the reading process for students, and their motivation to read in English increased exponentially.

# Resumen

Este estudio se enfoca en la utilización de novelas gráficas para interesar a los estudiantes y desarrollar sus destrezas de lectura en inglés. Los participantes fueron estudiantes de ESL (inglés como segundo idioma) del cuarto y último nivel de inglés básico (INGL 3202) en el Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez de la UPR. Esta clase en particular fue escogida porque se enfoca mayormente en lecturas y las reacciones escritas sobre estas. A los estudiantes se les ofreció la alternativa de escoger entre un texto tradicional o una novela gráfica y todos seleccionaron la segunda opción. Al final de la unidad los participantes expresaron que estas novelas los ayudaron a entender con mayor facilidad el texto y, a la vez, relacionarse con la lectura. Los resultados demostraron que integrar novelas gráficas en el salón de clases facilitó el proceso de lectura en inglés para los estudiantes e incrementó su motivación para leer en dicho idioma.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

I have been an avid reader or graphic novels ever since I was in the tenth grade. I stumbled upon a manga (a Japanese graphic novel) in a store titled Fruits Basket and decided to buy it, not realizing that it was only the first of twenty-three volumes. I would patiently wait and look forward to the other volumes, each volume would be sold in stores every two to three months, if not more. That for me became the catalyst for becoming an avid reader, and I started buying different types of manga and graphic novels to add to my collection and at the same time form my own personal library.  All the while I decided to also read the classics such as Beowulf and Shakespeare in their graphic novel format. Then I proceeded to read the original versions of the story, whilst having a more clear understanding of the reading that I had already gained thanks in part to the graphic novel version. While I was being immersed in the world of reading I also wanted my friends to join me and I started lending my books, insisting that they had to read the novel. I would mostly get positive reviews from them and they would ask for the next volume. Thus this passion in me to share my love for graphic novels grew and when I finally decided that my true calling was to be an educator. From that time I always knew that I would someday incorporate graphic novels in the classroom. Thus this thesis is the result of sharing my passion and love for reading with my students, while proving that it can actually motivate and promote students to read and perhaps one day loving to do so.

**English Language in Puerto Rico**

Reading graphic novels can be motivating for struggling students and reluctant readers, and can also support the development of multimodal literacy skills needed for school success in

Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rico it is important to learn English, because not only are Puerto Ricans American citizens, but also one of the official languages of Puerto Rico is English. According to the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration, Spanish and English are the official languages, but Spanish is without a doubt the dominant language. In 1902, both Spanish and English were designated as official languages, and it is estimated that the island has the highest proportion of bilingual citizens in the United States – as well as in all of Latin America. English is an integral part of the K-12 public school curriculum, and the level of bilingualism continues to grow throughout the island. This can also relates to the information found in topuertorico.org in which declares that English is spoken by about 1/4 of the population-with limited capabilities. English is required in all federal matters and is spoken in all major tourist areas (80% Spanish, 20% other).

President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated in 1937, "Clearly there is no desire or purpose to diminish the enjoyment or usefulness of the rich Spanish cultural legacy of the people of Puerto Rico. Nickels (2005) stated that what is necessary, however, is that the American citizens of Puerto Rico should profit from their unique geographical situation and the unique historical circumstance, which has brought to them the blessings of American citizenship by becoming bilingual. In Puerto Rico many parents decide that they want their children to have a good English education. Thus instead of enrolling them in the public school system, they decide to instead pay tuition in a private institution in order to provide their offspring with a school that focuses on English immersion. Which means that all the classes will be given in English except for the Spanish class, and in this manner guarantee that their children will be able to master the English language. Thus ensuring them better professional opportunities in the future; since knowing how to speak English is a requirement for most jobs in the island. Also there is a

constant migration of Puerto Ricans leaving to the mainland looking for better job opportunities, and this is an easy transition for them since, Puerto Rico is territory of the United States of America.

With this in mind it has always been very clear to me that learning English is of fundamental importance. Therefore based on my experience as an educator and what I have observed after teaching basic English college courses in the University of Puerto Rico, in community colleges or institutes, and also in the Department of Education public school system of Puerto Rico; is that after years of receiving schooling in English; due in part that students in the island receive an English class starting from Kindergarten to the twelfth grade. Students still find it hard to cope with English upon entering college level courses, which require them to have certain knowledge of and skills in English.

Taking this situation into account, and also my interest in improving English education in Puerto Rico, I searched for ways in which students could better enjoy reading. Since students see reading as a task and not a pleasurable experience, many of the students lack the motivation to read outside of the classroom. Since reading is of vital importance in the Puerto Rican educational system one of the most common school reform strategies that is chosen by schools is to improve reading comprehension skills. Educational reform is the name given to the goal of changing public education.

As explained by the Department of Education's glossary of education reform (2014) these reforms desire to make public education more effective, with higher standards, higher achievement, and higher focus on the needs of students. This definition is further described by Silver (2004) at John Hopkins University, who explains that in the last couple of decades, a variety of serious attempts have been made to improve schools and to produced model

classrooms and model schools. He further states that some interventions have been targeted as "turnaround" efforts to improve low achieving schools. Standards identify the centerpiece of the curriculum for academic learning responding to questions such as, "What do students need to know?" and "What are they expected to do?" to succeed in life. At the heart of standards based reform is the assumption that higher standards are a core component of school improvement and student success. It is about forming a clear idea of what excellence is and improving the quality of student work and learning. However as evidenced by my experiences with these students there is still a gap to be filled and the students are still not making reading connections or actually comprehending what they read based on reading comprehension test scores in my classes.

Nevertheless according to the Department of Education's English Program Core Standards – "The Reading standard places equal importance on the complexity of what students read and the skill with which they read. This standard defines a grade-by-grade level of text complexity that rises from beginning reading to the college and career readiness high school level. Whatever they are reading, students must also demonstrate a gradually growing ability to understand more from and make fuller use of text, including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between texts, considering a broader range of textual evidence, and becoming more perceptive to contradictions, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in texts." (Puerto Rico Core Standards English Program 2014, p. xi). While the English curriculum adds that "The student demonstrates confidence, independence and flexibility in the strategic use of reading skills, critical thinking and the conventions of language for reading a range of simple to complex texts." (Curricular Framework, p. 26). However this was not the case in the previous courses that I had given to University students or to high school students that I tutored. Therefore, it seemed pertinent for me as an English instructor to take my students interests and learning skills into

consideration and look for ways to foment reading and to provide students with a means to understand the text. That was the moment that I remembered my experiences with reading in English and how I got my friends who were not proficient in the language interested in it. It was by showing them my graphic novels, which were not available in Spanish, thus they had to read them in English. Thus taking this into consideration and also by taking my students needs into consideration I decided that the best way to promote reading in an ESL college level classroom was to integrate graphic novels into the curriculum. Consequently this research was based on the necessity to improve reading comprehension in students.

**Definition of Terms**

Various terms have been used in this thesis, which need to be defined for better understanding of the terminology and content used. First, the term "teaching method or approach" refers to a set of core teaching and learning principles together with a body of classroom practices that are derived from them.  The teaching of any subject matter is usually based on an analysis of the nature of the subject itself and the application of teaching and learning principles drawn from research and theory in educational psychology. A method in teaching is the notion of a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning. Whereas an approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching, It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught (Richards, Rodgers, 2006). When referring to the "instructor", this is the educator who serves as the primary teacher and decision-maker in terms of lesson planning and delivery of lectures.

In this thesis it is important to define motivation, since it will be questioned further on in

various aspects. Motivation is defined as "a driving force that initiates and directs behavior" (Romando, 2007). In other words, motivation is a kind of internal energy, which drives a person to do something in order to achieve something. Motivation can be divided into two different theories known as Intrinsic (internal) motivation and Extrinsic (external) motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the self-desire to seek out new things and new challenges, to analyze one's capacity, to observe and to gain knowledge. It is driven by an interest or enjoyment in the task itself, and exists within the individual rather than relying on external pressures or a desire for reward. Extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain a desired outcome and it is the opposite of intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation comes from influences outside of the individual (Richard, Deci 2000). For the purpose of this thesis both types of motivation will be considered, but hope to encourage intrinsic motivation. That the students understand the importance of reading, as well as the advantages that learning English can have in their lives. Such as better job opportunities, and if they move to another country they can adapt to their new lives with more ease.

**The Genre of Graphic Novels**

According to Carter (2009) a graphic novel is a narrative work in which the story is conveyed to the reader using sequential art in either an experimental design or in a traditional comic book format. The term is employed in a broad manner, encompassing non-fiction works and thematically linked short stories as well as fictional stories across a number of genres. Graphic novels include fiction or nonfiction works presented in comic book format that require multimodal literacy for understanding. According to the National Council of Teachers of English or NCTE (2008) multi-modal literacies "is the integration of multiple modes of communication

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and expression that can enhance or transform the meaning of the work beyond illustration or decoration. All modes of communication are codependent." The use of multi-modal literacies has expanded the ways we acquire information and understand concepts. Ever since the days of illustrated books and maps; visual elements have been included for the purpose of imparting information. The present-day difference is the ease with which we can combine words, images, sound, color, animation, video, and styles of print in projects so that they are part of our everyday lives and, at least as experienced by our students.

What sparked the interest in this topic for me was that most of the English as a Second Language (ESL) students of whom I had the pleasure to teach did not feel motivated to read in English. While reviewing the literature and based on my own experience, I found certain case studies, which showed that students, specifically reluctant readers and ESL learners, feel motivated to read when graphic novels are integrated into the curriculum. Thus I want to promote a diverse curriculum into which ESL students' interest and popular culture via the comic book or graphic novel are taken into account. Teaching with a wide variety of text structures and images holds possibilities for deepening students' interest, engagement, and comprehension and enhancing their reading skills. The problem that I encountered with the studies was that none of them focused on ESL learners and there are no case studies performed in Puerto Rico. A solution is needed for this problem and hopefully this research will provide the necessary insight to perform a reform of the English curriculum of Puerto Rico by including multi-literacies or graphic novels.

**Research Questions**

There are numerous reasons to read comics and graphic novels and incorporate them in the classroom.  As Krashen (2004) states, "The case for comics is a good one" (p. 109) This statement is also supported by Brenner (2011) when he explains that "the rise and popularity of this multi-faceted form among adults and children, critics and consumers suggest that its literary and artistic qualities hold endless potential for reshaping what and how we read stories" (p.256). Research and real-life experiences of teachers and librarians have proven this.   Probably the most compelling and most frequently mentioned reason for using comics and graphic novels is their ability to motivate students to read.  Not only do they motivate reluctant readers to read more, but comics and graphic novel readers do at least as much reading as non-comic book readers. Since they integrate both words and images so completely that the story cannot be told another way. Graphic novels and comics are a different way of both telling and understanding stories. Research from Brenner (2011) shows that comics and graphic novel readers read more overall than traditional text readers, they also read more books, and have more positive attitudes toward reading. While reviewing the current literature I noticed that there has not been a study that has focused on ESL learners or of integrating graphic novels into the English curriculum in Puerto Rico.

In order to guide and focus my study I developed research questions that guided my study. I wanted to see if by integrating multiliteracies into the ESL curriculum students would feel motivated to read and also if they could respond to the readings. Thus the main research question of this study was: How might graphic novels contribute to promoting student motivation to read in English in an ESL college classroom? To further guide my research I also developed four sub-questions:

1.  How do graphic novels improve student's reading skills when used in an English college classroom?

2.  How do students interpret meaning from or through a graphic novel?

3. Can students understand readings in English better through the medium of the comic book format?

4. Do students consider the issues presented in the graphic novels as serious topics?

To answer these questions, I developed an unit in my syllabus, that implemented graphic novels in the English classroom. The methodology used for this research was an action research in order to carry this out. The reason why I chose an action research format is due to factors that needed to be taken into consideration such as the problems affecting students (lack of motivation to read) and I used different methods in order to reach a solution for this problem.

**Objectives of the Study**

As stated before most ESL students in Puerto Rico do not feel motivated to read in the English classroom. This study attempted to find reasons why students are reluctant to read in the English classroom. The task was accomplished by integrating a diverse curriculum into which students' interest and popular culture were taken into account. A unit was created in which graphic novels were integrated into the curriculum in order to engage and motivate reluctant readers. In doing so I tried to identify what motivated students, and also considered how graphic novels promoted student motivation to read in English in an ESL college classroom. At the end of the unit the students wrote a reflection and answered a questionnaire about their experience of reading graphic novels. This was then used to determine if students were motivated to read and if they enjoyed their experience, but most importantly if their comprehension of the text increased. Thus the following were the objectives of the study:

1.  To examine what happened when teachers integrated graphic novels into the ESL curriculum for a college classroom.

2.  To examine how Graphic Novels contributed to promote student motivation to read English in an ESL college classroom.

**Division of Chapters in the Research**

This thesis was divided into five chapters. The first one being the introduction in order to explain the motivation that led to this research. In the second chapter the literature review is included, and the theoretical perspective that was used in this research project. The third chapter discussed the methodology used to justify my research. As well as the information on the research site and the time that it took to complete the study. This chapter also includes a description of the sampling strategies and participants and the methods used to find an answer to the problem. The fourth chapter discusses the data results of the research and it also includes charts in order to better explain the data. The fifth and final chapter discusses the findings of the research and the pedagogical implications of this study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I review existing literature on English education in Puerto Rico by highlighting the socio-historical context of the study. Which is needed to further illustrate the problem that one faces as an English educator in Puerto Rico, in addition it is also the situation that led to conducting this research.

Why should educators use comics in the classroom, when there are other good instructional materials available? The rationale for using comics rests on principles pulled from three areas: second language acquisition, pedagogy of multiliteracies and multimodal literacies. These will be defined and explained further along in this chapter. After deciding on the type of approach for my study, I decided to investigate other studies that related to my research. In my findings, I discovered that several scholars did prior research associated with my project. To further understand my literature review, I have divided the studies related to my research in three different categories. These are: "The Socio-Historical Context of the Study", "Multimodal Literacies, multiliteracies and Second Language Acquisition for integrating Graphic Novels into the Classroom", "Benefits of integrating Graphic Novels in the Classroom for Struggling or Reluctant readers" and "Graphic Novels and Popular Culture".

## Socio-Historical Context of the Study

In Puerto Rico every student is given a daily English lesson throughout elementary school and high school, most high-school graduates in Puerto Rico read, write, and speak English poorly, if at all (Kerkhof, 2001, p.257). Even those Puerto Ricans who speak English well, may exhibit reluctance, or fear to speak English. Many Puerto Ricans seem to feel that by

expressing themselves in English, they are somehow putting their identity at stake. Edith Algren de Gutiérrez (1987), who analyzed the language policy in public schools during the period 1898-1949, argues that the movement for restoring Spanish as the language of instruction in public education, turned into a movement against the teaching of English in Puerto Rico's schools. Between 1898 and 1949 Puerto Rico had seven different official language policies for the educational system. This created much controversy and most Puerto Ricans were afraid to lose their culture and Puerto Rican identity. This problem also relates to Kerkhof (2001) discussion of how bilingualism became associated with the statehood advocates, and with losing one's "Puerto Rican identity." In contrast, speaking Spanish became a symbol of the heroic struggle of the Puerto Rican people against "Americanization." Originally, English was seen as a vehicle to integrate Puerto Ricans into American culture. As Nickels (2005) stated in her paper "A century later, English is still perceived as such, and thus, learners ascribe to the instrumental purpose for learning the language since doing otherwise would be deemed ''un-Puerto Rican''" (p. 234). Many Puerto Ricans feel that by learning English they are betraying their Hispanic heritage (Kerkhof, 2001). In recent years Puerto Ricans have begun to have a deeper appreciation towards English and they realize the importance of learning the language in order to get better job opportunities and also that due to the extended use of communication devices, like the introduction of cable TV services during the 1980, and then in recent times there has been a widespread use of internet, email, and also the social networks. As Nickels (2005) explained in her chapter titled "English in Puerto Rico" from *World Englishes*, she mentions that English has increased in importance in P.R. since it is used for signs, required for jobs, and especially in media. This allows Puerto Ricans to use English in other meaningful contexts than just in formal education. This was also discussed by Morales, Blau (2009) on their article titled "Identity Issues

in Building an ESL Community: The Puerto Rican Experience" were they mention that in Puerto Rico, people live in between two cultures, the Puerto Rican culture and the American culture. Therefore, the motivation to learn English is mainly instrumental rather than integrative. What this means is that most Puerto Ricans learn English primarily to get jobs that pay well, or if they need to move to the mainland to get better job opportunities. But since English is encountered in textbooks, products, cable TV, magazines, and other media it gives people other reasons to learn English, instead of just learning it to get a better job.

I also agree with Morales and Blau (2009) when they say:

> Puerto Rican students value English with regard to their future professional lives but may not fully appreciate their need for it until later when they get a job that requires English proficiency or when they are transferred to the "mainland" United States (Echevarria, 2007). Motivation to learn the culture of the language is less strong but does extend to consuming popular culture using receptive skills such as listening to music in English, watching English-language TV on cable, and using the Internet (in both Spanish and English). This results in a sort of impersonal integration into North American culture. Many students come to the university with a persistent fear of speaking. English. This fear weakens their motivation. Fear, coupled with resistance to English, makes it especially challenging to build community in ESL classes (p.48).

This is similar to what was said above about Puerto Rican ESL students that after twelve years of school; they entered college and still lacked certain skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English. Identity might play a huge role on this issue, but I also think that the essential part of learning a second language is how motivated the student might feel or for what purpose they see English in their lives be it for instrumental or integrative reasons. In addition I also agree with the notion explained above since in my case I learned English through cable television and not in formal instruction, there are many other Puerto Ricans who share a similar experience like mine. I have arrived at this conclusion since for a class study, we had to

ask people how they learned English, and these people had to have studied in the public school

system, and most of them mentioned that it was by watching television in English, as well that

they had family members who spoke the language. But as it pertains to reading, in my case I did

not feel motivated to read any of the texts that I was assigned in the English class, mainly

because they were dumb downed versions of the real stories, meant for reluctant readers.

However in my eleventh grade class, my teacher made us read Beowulf, we were all hesitant, but

she gave us the graphic novel version and we were amazed and immediately started to read it

enjoying every minute of it, and even though it had less text than the original, one could still

grasp the whole meaning of the story and it was abundant in detail. Due to advances in

technology and multiliteracies, Puerto Ricans have other means through which they could learn

English, which is one of their official languages. Ever since the start of the 90's educators

recognized that students needed motivation to learn English. Thus they used what interested kids

the most, which was media. This made the students feel at ease with the English language and

they felt comfortable learning their second language.

**Multimodal Literacies, Multiliteracies and Second Language Acquisition for Integrating Graphic Novels into the English Classroom**

Chun (2009) advocates the use of graphic novels to aid language pedagogy and learning,

as one way of implementing a multi-literacies approach that deepens reading engagement.

Multiliteracies is defined as "the multiplicity of communication channels and media" and "the

increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity" (p.145). Many students are already

engaged in multimodal practices of meaning making (online role-playing games, text messaging,

etc.). The pedagogy of multiliteracies seeks to incorporate these important resources to construct

knowledge in linguistically diverse classrooms. By foregrounding in the classroom substantive topics that can be related to students' own experiences, multiliteracies pedagogy works to promote learning that recognizes students' own knowledge resources, which in turn affirms students' identities as learners and thinkers.

Student motivation to read is one of the benefits of integrating graphic novels in the classroom. However there are many other benefits of using this genre in educational settings. One of the most comprehensive benefits of graphic novels is their supporting role in theories of multiliteracies. Today, instead of a focus on text-based literacy, additional attention is given to critical and visual literacies (Carter, 2007). Multiple Literacies take information and channel it through different modes. If some students do not understand a concept from direct text, they may understand it through the visual representation in graphic novels, or from critical thinking-based discussions that occur after reading. According to Carter, through the use of graphic novels in the English classroom, educators will move away "from 'one size fits all' literacy instruction" (Carter, 2007).

The use of multi-modal literacies has expanded the ways we acquire information and understand concepts. Ever since the days of illustrated books and maps texts have included visual elements for the purpose of imparting information. The contemporary difference is the ease with which we can combine words, images, sound, color, animation, video, and styles of print in projects so that they are part of our everyday lives and, at least by our youngest generation, often taken for granted. Presently with the implementation of multimodal literacies, students learn in different manners and by taking students motivation into account educators can see the importance that teaching while using multimodal literacies can have in improving student motivation and enhancing their writing and reading skills. If students' interests are taken into

account, teachers could benefit from integrating comics into the ESL curriculum, since it has been proven to increase motivation in students in other countries.

Cary (2004) stated that Second language learner (SLL) usually refers to a student learning English as a second language. In a broader sense a, however, a second language learner is any student who is learning another language beyond his first or primary language. The term multilingual classroom refers to any classroom with at least one or more second language learner students. It usually means a class with non-native speakers learning English as a second language. In Second Language Acquisition- English as a second language (ESL) teaching used to be about where dialogue memorization, pattern drills, overcorrection, and endless grammar explanations reigned supreme. Over the past couple of decades, countless second language teachers have retooled, switching from grammar-based to communication-based programs, from a focus on form to a focus on message. The revolutionary switch to communicative language teaching was driven in large part to the theorist Stephen Krashen. Two Cornerstones of Krashen's theory are the input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. The input hypothesis claims that we acquire a second language by receiving comprehensible input and that students get this type of input when they are involved in activities using language for genuine communication. The hypothesis further asserts that messages are made more understandable "by utilizing context, extra-linguistic information, and our knowledge of the world. (Krashen 1994, p. 54). The affective filter hypothesis points to the impact of emotions on second language acquisition. When learners feel worried the affective filter is high and messages have difficulty getting through to become comprehensive for the student, regardless of how comprehensible those messages may be. Inversely, learners who are comfortable and secure have a lower affective filter. More understandable messages are available for processing, resulting in greater

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and faster language acquisition. Moreover, a student's level of anxiety, or "affective filter," plays a big part in determining the amount and speed of second language development. Comics provide both the needed input and positive affect. Abundant visual clues increase the amount of comprehensible input and consequently boost reading comprehension and L2 acquisition. Increased comprehension, in turn, keeps the affective filter low by eliminating or reducing the anxiety and frustration many students feel when confronting "inconsiderate" text, that is above their current independent reading level. Another reason students may have a lower affective filter while reading comics is because of the inherent entertainment value of comics "the fun factor". Thus these approaches seemed appropriate for this research since it takes students needs into account as well as the different forms of learning.

However while ESL students explore new media technologies outside of school, the English curriculum remains slow to change, even resistant. Students need a new kind of curriculum in the Digital Age, new sites of possibility for learning and creating knowledge. Students' interests and popular culture is usually taken for granted in the English curriculum in Puerto Rico. Thus students do not feel motivated to learn to speak or read in English. Thus graphic novels are beginning to earn a natural place in the classroom, because the comic format has grown to encompass many thought provoking ideas as well as providing powerful storytelling. Given the increasingly complex delivery systems of information in our globalized societies, it follows that the more students are exposed to and grounded in multiple modes of representation, the more they would appear to have a chance to succeed in school and beyond. One such multimodal text that is engaging to students is the graphic novel. Thus the benefits of integrating popular culture will be explored in the next section.

**Benefits of integrating Graphic Novels in the classroom for struggling or reluctant readers**

According to Schwarz (2010) "The graphic novel can drive current traditional curriculum goals, teach new literacies, offer new topics with which teachers and students can engage, and enable new ways of learning." It is also a good way to convey complex ideas, because graphic novels make information more attractive and more easily digested. It entices reluctant and struggling readers as well as good readers. Downey (2009) also shares Schwarz view and adds that graphic novels today are being used increasingly by educators to engage reluctant readers, reach out to visual learners, and to illustrate social and cultural themes or topics. In addition a study conducted by Griffith (2010) showed that graphic novels could benefit English learners, since it provided them with pleasure while reading.

Graphic novels can provide a unique way of interesting at-risk students and ESL students into reading, writing and developing multi-literacies skills. Also when students compose their own texts, often within guided writing instruction, they access important events in their lives and represent diverse interests and cultural experiences while supporting connections to the school curriculum. Risko, Walker & Bridges (2011) performed a study which showed a heightened interest and excitement in writing assignments incorporating reading and creating graphic novels.

**Graphic Novels and Popular Culture**

Popular culture has been given relatively little attention in the field of adult education thus far. Critical media literacy is generally concerned with "helping students experience the pleasures of popular culture while simultaneously uncovering the practices that work to silence or disempower them as readers, viewers, and learners" (Smith, 2008). In essence, it's about

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helping students to learn to read the world as well as the word (Freire, 1971). In the area of media and cultural studies, a number of research pieces focus on how adults construct their identities in light of popular culture.

In addition due to the new information technologies and the complex multiliteracies required by these technologies, literacy is reinventing itself.  Scholars of what is termed "New Literacy Studies" point out a need to expand our concept of literacy and texts to move beyond reading and writing print on a page. The graphic novel presents a unique multiliteracy experience interfacing multiple sites of literate practices (Carter, 2007).  Because they combine print literacy and visual literacy, comics are multimodal texts and reading comics is a form of multimodal literacy. The graphic novel creates a new medium for literacy because it fuses art and text, the visual and the verbal. Although Gorman (2003) suggested that graphic novels "can be considered a reading intermediary from the computer or television screen to the printed page" (p. 9). Chun (2009) differs from this notion and prefers to see them as part of a literacy continuum of multimodal resources with which students need to be conversant in today's world.

Graphic novels are especially important in promoting ideas of visual literacy and accommodating students who might be classified as visual learners. Students begin reading by using picture books and these become a gateway for reading "real books" or text-only books, which are considered more appropriate by teachers and other professionals. When students reach a certain grade reading picture books is unacceptable in some teachers' eyes and they move towards more traditional books or texts. This is when some students become reluctant readers or they are no longer motivated to read. Thus graphic novels provide readers with the opportunity to make a connection back to picture books, while at the same time integrating more text. Gorman (2003) stated that graphic novels could bridge this gap, an essential transition for some students.

Comprehension of the text is increased through the combination of images and words working together. According to Spiegelman, sequential comics allow the reader to gain a great deal of information by just looking at the page (Goldsmith, 2002). It is not being implied that text is unimportant, but for some readers, the visual support offered by graphic novels or comic books is the best way to understand the ideas that the author is presenting. Not only do these images make comprehension easier, they also add depth that might be lost through text alone. In addition to aiding visual learners, graphic novels have been promoted as being a beneficial tool for reluctant or struggling readers. After years of struggling, these students may not be inclined to want to read, however, if they are interested in a text, it will improve the chances they will pick up a book and start reading. Many adults who read graphic novels were once reluctant readers, and graphic novels have been termed a 'gateway' into traditional literature (Goldsmith, 2002).

Graphic novels promote critical thinking by offering diverse and interesting subject matter which can lead to an increase of discussion For example, the graphic novel *Maus* by Art Spiegelman deals with issues of the holocaust, military rule, Nazis, and the aftermath or effect that war has on people. These concepts can be incorporated into in-depth class discussion or research on these topics. Or the Graphic Novel *Blankets* by Craig Thompson that deals with such topics as parental abuse, acceptance or rejection of religion, acceptance, validation, love, agony, insecurity, self-esteem, etc. In this graphic novel Thompson knows takes full advantage of the comics medium, since the art is as much a part of the storytelling as the words. The art is beautiful, detailed, and a great part of what sets the book's emotional tone.

Beyond aiding comprehension and improving interest, graphic novels may be helpful in specific areas of reading instruction. The visual images in graphic novels can support vocabulary

development. Students may see an unfamiliar word, but with the help of visual context clues, be able to decode it. As Krashen (1989) pointed out, the visual narrative that accompanies the text in comic books "can provide clues that shed light on the meaning of an unfamiliar word or grammatical structure" Students can use predicting strategies with graphic novels, trying to determine what would likely be the next scene both through images and text. NCTE supports the use of graphic novel and comic book writing to promote 21st century skills, such as clear and effective thinking and media literacy. Additionally, some research has shown that graphic novels and comics are effective in helping English language learners (Carter, 2007a). These students may be able to understand overall concepts and themes, even if they have not yet mastered all the relevant vocabulary As Carter (2007b) states, "there are many high-quality graphic novels that focus on important issues relative to teens, and teachers need to be aware of them" (p. 49).

In addition to all the benefits previously mentioned it is important to also indicate that graphic novels can be pertinent in academic subject areas beyond the language arts classroom. In fact many historical events have been written about using the graphic novel format. These topics include such events as the World War II, history of the universe, big bang theory, 9/11 etc. A good example of this would be to mention briefly the *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation and The Cartoon History of the Universe* which are series used in classes such as social sciences or American History and the latter on social sciences or science class. *The Cartoon History of the Universe* series (1990-1997), written and illustrated by American cartoonist, professor, and mathematician Larry Gonick, covers all areas of study, from history and science to humanities. Each book in the series explains a period of world history in an unstructured chronological order, however in the in each volume or chapter a one or two panel introduction is given. Then a Professor prepares to travel in his time machine to whatever place or era the chapter is about.

The Professor reads a passage from a historical book, which activates the "time machine". Book 1 covers a lot of ground, from the Big Bang to the Old Testament, and from the dinosaurs and the early hominids to the first civilizations in Egypt. There is also Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón's *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*. They employ the medium of comics in order to illustrate the original 585-page 9/11 Commission Report, which was created by a group of ten distinguished lawyers, academics and politicians back in 2004. As they read the official report they soon noticed that the report was at times confusing and quickly realized that they could use their skills to make the information more accessible to more people. The authors were quick to explain that it was a condensation of the report, not a trivialization or oversimplification of it. Most of the words in it came directly from the original report, which is in the public domain. Therefore as was previously stated graphic novels can be used in many different academic subject areas, since their range of topics extend from non-fiction to fiction, culture, real life situations, and even history.

One of the advantages of using graphic novels to bring critical thinking into the classroom is that they are often shorter and quicker to read than other texts. However they are still full of subjects or topics that could generate a whole class discussion, or even a unit. Some reluctant readers may not be able to detect certain literary elements such as tone, mood, theme and foreshadowing from text alone. However, the images in graphic novels provide these elements at a level easier to reach for many readers. According to novelist Art Spiegelman, young comic book readers may be able to understand 60-70% of a story by just using images alone (Gorman, 2003). Additionally, the text format of many graphic novels using text bubbles and short sentences may be easier to read and less daunting for struggling readers (Little, 2005).

Teaching with graphic novels is one alternative to traditional literacy pedagogy, which

has ignored the dynamic relationships of visual images to the written word (Chun 2009). There has been increasing interest in graphic novels to promote literacy (e.g., Gorman, 2003; Schwarz, 2006); however, there is scarce mention of how several of these multi modal texts can be used for both fostering students' critical literacies and addressing the needs of the many English-language learners (ELLs) or English as a second language (ESL) present in today's classroom.

Based on everything that has been discussed so far, I believe that my study will benefit the community of ESL learners and also educators in Puerto Rico. In the past, researchers have discovered many findings that can facilitate student learning and motivation to read.  This research not only helps create a more positive atmosphere in the classroom, but also provides the students the much-needed motivation to want to read and most of all in English. Which is the language that most consider alien to them or almost impossible to learn. It has been proven that graphic novels provides reluctant readers with a "stress-free" reading zone, were they can actually enjoy reading, even if it is for a class. In the past, researchers have discovered many findings that can facilitate student learning. My research helped me as an educator to find solutions to my students' difficulties by including multimodal literacies into my ESL classroom in order to improve students' reading comprehension skills.  As a result, I believe that my research could also benefit the Department of Education in Puerto Rico and the Universities of Puerto Rico, particularly the English Departments.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

This section discusses and justifies my methodological approach. It provides the research site and time period and includes a description of my sampling strategies and participants. It also details the techniques and method used for data collection. Finally, it explains possible ethical issues and how I addressed them when encountered.

For the purpose of my study I conducted an action research. Cohen (2007) defines action research as "a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world. In addition to a close examination of the effects of such an intervention". The scope of action research as a method is impressive. It can be used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks and procedures cries out for solution, or where some change of feature results in a more desirable outcome. This is pertinent to my study since some features included are ones such as in teaching methods, since it can replace a traditional method by a discovery method; or in learning strategies, by adopting an integrated approach to learning in preference to a single-subject style of teaching and learning; and in attitudes and values, by encouraging a more positive attitude to work. I also adopted the reader response theory; some recent studies have considered reader response to multimodal texts. Here the reader must rely on a combination of modes such as words and images for meaning making. Students use both words and illustrations to make meaning in all five categories of response: 1) analysis – analysis of illustrations; 2) intertextual – stories linked to other books and media; 3) personal – connections to their own lives; 4) transparent – merging of story world and real world; and 5) performative – use of book as a springboard for creative play. Thus as a researcher I also relied on the multiliteracies in order to help students construct meaning from the reading and enjoy themselves as well. Multimodal

literacy is used because it refers to meaning-making that occurs through the reading, viewing, and understanding, responding to and producing and interacting with multimedia texts. The processing of modes, such as image, words, sound and movement within texts can occur simultaneously and is often cohesive and organized. Multiliteracies imply multimodal ways of communication, which include an ability to understand technology and multimedia, symbols, audios, videos, billboards, images, etc. and integrate it an educational setting. All which are present in graphic novels.

The reason for choosing to conduct an action research was because when one has identified a problem, it allows for alternatives to find a solution. As a researcher one looks for other educators or people who have encountered the same or a similar problem, and one studies the ways in which they tackled the problem and found a solution. This in turn helps you to determine which of these solutions would fit best into your setting and then you formulate and develop a plan in order to find that solution. The researcher conducts the study, gathers the data, analyzes it and informs of the outcome and if the study was successful or not. Another reason that I chose to conduct a research project is that when I was doing my teaching practice in the University of Puerto Rico in Aguadilla one of the requirements to earn the bachelor's degree is that one has to conduct an action research by identifying a problem facing students and looking for a solution to that problem as was explained previously. I had a very successful experience while conducting my research and deemed it the perfect approach to find a solution for this research.

**Research site**

The research was carried out in the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez; the time allotted for this study was over a month of classes or rather 14 class periods. The study was performed with second year Basic English sequence (INGL 3202) students, since the class is based on understanding literature, and from previous experience teaching the course I could observe based on their test scores in reading comprehension tests and quizzes, and reader responses that students were indifferent to the readings and unmotivated. Thus this made me worry and I looked for ways in which I could motivate students to read. Since the course description is as follows: This course is designed to improve students' reading, writing, listening and speaking abilities in English concentrating on content found in a variety of literary texts. Attention will be given to increasing grammatical accuracy in the context of academic writing and research and to reader responses. The purpose is for students to build on their current knowledge so they can successfully use English. They were expected to participate in class by talking to the professor and to their classmates, by listening to instructor and classmates, and by completing in-class and out-of-class assignments. I tended to add the following comment to make them feel more at ease or create a more relaxed atmosphere in the class, I informed them that I did not expect for them to use English perfectly. What I did find important is that they tried their best to communicate in English. For this reason, it was of the utmost importance that they had patience with themselves and with their classmates. Thus this class was perfect since adapting graphic novels can be done without affecting the class objectives. . The course is a requirement for graduation for those enrolled in it. As a three-credit course, the students met three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

**Sampling strategies and participants**

The selection of my participants for the proposed study was based on convenience sampling. As stated by Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) "researchers often need to select a convenience sample since it is usually better to do a study assuming, of course, that the sample suits the purpose of the study" (p. 228). It was a convenience sample since it was one of the two sections that I had. I chose to use a class with second year Basic English sequence (INGL 3202) students, because these students might better understand graphic novel conventions and might be able to better express their interest of graphic novels. The participants were one of my sections; it was composed of twenty-nine students. Out of these students twenty were female and nine were male. The section used in this study had students who were at least in their second year or third year of university studies and came from a wide range of different majors.

The students completed a questionnaire in class, after the Unit was implemented and the graphic novels were discussed in detail, the students turned in a reader response, based on the novel of their choosing. In this response they had to narrate their experience reading a graphic novel, what they felt, thought and if they enjoyed the graphic novel. This would provide data that could serve as a reflection of their knowledge of topics or themes expressed in graphic novels.

**Data collection techniques or methods**

In my research I collected data from my participants by using ethnographic methods that included classroom observations, reader responses, and a needs analysis questionnaire (see Appendix A). Observational data helped me understand my students' interests, their interaction and attitude towards reading. The questionnaire was a qualitative method since it is information

about qualities; information that can't actually be measured. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), further illustrate this notion when they stated that open-ended questions are "a very attractive device for similar scale research or for those sections of a questionnaire that invite an honest, personal comment from respondents" (p. 330). Even though some of the questions elicited a yes or no response, the open ended questions was what gave their answers more depth.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine students' reading interests, previous experiences reading graphic novels, what they like or dislike about graphic novels, and the reasons for their responses. Students were given more than enough time to complete the questionnaire and they were turned in as students completed them. After the implementation of the unit I then asked students to write a reader response based on their feelings and experiences of reading a graphic novel.

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) assessed student motivation when reading. Since one of the questions asked the students if they like to read for pleasure. This question will help me determine if they are reluctant readers or if they read for pleasure. I then proceeded to ask students about their knowledge of graphic novels and its format. The other questions focused on student's motivation to read and about their consideration of seriousness in themes present in graphic novels. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), say that open-ended questions are "a very attractive device for similar scale research or for those sections of a questionnaire that invite an honest, personal comment from respondents" (p. 330). The questionnaire has dichotomous questions that "provide a clear, unequivocal response" (2007, p. 322). Along with some of the questions that just elicited a yes or no response, I also added the open-ended questions, as sub questions were they could express themselves more freely and further explain their response.

I then proceeded with the implementation of my unit. I provided students with the titles of the two different graphic novels that we were to read in class, in order to provide them enough time to buy them. Students were expected to read on their own as well as in class. The two graphic novels that were read in class were Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: *A Survivor's Tale My Father Bleeds History* and Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese*. The first graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor's Tale;* is the only comic book ever to have won a Pulitzer Prize. This graphic novel is a biography of the author's father Vladek Spiegelman. Some of the serious topics depicted in this graphic narrative are genocide, racism, starvation, guilt, and resentment, among others. In his critically acclaimed graphic novel, *American Born Chinese*, Gene Yang shares his struggle to reconcile his Chinese heritage with his American homeland. Some of the serious topics depicted in this graphic novel are racial stereotype, resentment, bullying, acceptance, denigration, and antipathy.

As was explained in the preceding section the study adopted a qualitative design. The basic characteristics of the qualitative approach are a study concerned primarily with process with a researcher, interested in meaning, being the primary instrument for data collection.

Because the focus of this study was to identify and consider how graphic novels contribute to promote student motivation to read and write in English in an ESL college classroom; qualitative research was an appropriate choice for the design of the study. Qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world. This was also accomplished because students at the end of the unit were made connections to the readings through the reader response and also included a section in their response based on their experiences of reading a graphic novel and if they enjoyed it or not.

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**Texts used for the study**

**American Born Chinese.**

*American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006), the graphic novel selected for the study, has three plot lines that converge at the end of the book. The first story is the Chinese folk tale of the arrogant Monkey King who, unhappy as a monkey, longs to be a god. After a humbling experience, he becomes an emissary of the creator Tze-Yo-Tzuh. The second story is about Jin Wang, an Asian American middle school student trying to fit in with his classmates. He becomes best friends with Wei-Chen Sun, an immigrant from Tai-wan. The third story chronicles the trials of American teenager Danny who is visited annually by his extremely stereotyped Chinese cousin Chin-Kee. Chin-Kee embarrasses Danny so much that he must switch schools every year. At the climax, when the three stories merge, the reader learns that Danny is actually Jin Wang, Wei Chen is the son of the Monkey King, and Chin-Kee is the Monkey King. The novel includes issues of immigration, culture, racial identity, and stereotyping. It was the first graphic novel to be nominated for a National Book Award. It also won the ALA's 2007 Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in young adult literature. This acclaimed young adult literature is very realistic with its use of language and themes and some people find parts of those books objectionable. The stereotyping of the Chinese in *American Born Chines*e is offensive, but this was the author's intent. The only reservation I had about using this book was that even though it is multi-layered and complex, college students might believe that it was written for a younger audience. This did not turn out to be the case, the students really responded to the reading and expressed that they even preferred it to the other graphic novels that we read in class which were *Blankets* by Craig Thompson and *Maus* by Art Spiegelman.

**Maus: A Survivor's Tale.**

*Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, by Art Spiegelman, is a graphic narrative in which Jews are depicted as mice, while Germans are depicted as cats. In this graphic novel he narrates his father, Vladek Spiegelman's story. His father was a Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor. The story alternates between descriptions of Vladek's life in Poland before and during the Second World War and Vladek's later life in New York City. Art Spiegelman simplified his style of drawing and has actually found a way to make the story that much more horrifying and that much easier to relate to. The cats seem more menacing and the mice seem more like humans so that we can relate, and likewise sympathize, with them more easily. You almost forget that they're not human. It is easier to concentrate on the story without so much artistic detail also. In a way, the pictures seem almost secondary like Spiegelman didn't want the story and words to get overwhelmed.

The three prevailing races in Maus are the Jews, Poles and Nazis who are depicted, as mice, pigs and cats. The predator-prey relationship between the mice and cats is the most obvious facet of this, but there where many others. Spiegelman's decision to depict Jews as mice probably related back to the comparison between Jews and rats. The author takes this idea and twists it, making the Jews seem persecuted and tormented by a fearsome and cruel predator, the Nazis. He uses their own propaganda to make the story more prominent. In turn Spiegelman twisted this stereotype of presenting Jews as rats, by portraying Nazis and other Germans as cats, since cats hunt and kill mice. Cats attack by surprise and often torture their prey before eating it, as did the Nazis when they forced camp prisoners into overwork, torture, and malnourishment before killing them. Other ethnic groups are portrayed with well-known stereotypes. American's soldiers who arrived to liberate the concentration camps are shown as dogs, mainly because their

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mission is to hunt down cats, in this case the Nazis. The representation of the Polish people as pigs is also significant. In a way, the Nazis treated the Poles at the time in very much the same way that farmers treat pigs. They are harvested and kept alive for their usefulness, but may also be killed when needed. This graphic novel deals with very serious topics the main one being The Holocaust, surprisingly most of my students did not know about what happened to the jews during World War II at least not in full detail. So they thought that because the characters were cartoons like mice, cats and dogs, that the topic would not be as serious as they thought, but as they soon discovered it exceeded their expectations.

**Implementation of the Unit**

At the beginning of this research I distributed a needs analysis questionnaire in order to assess student motivation to read and experience with graphic novels. After I analyzed the data collected from the questionnaires, I then looked for graphic novels that were adequate for the purpose of the class. I chose titles that had won prizes and that had been used in some of the case studies discussed in the literature review. The two graphic novels mentioned earlier were chosen out of ten different titles, for the following reasons. *Maus* since it possessed an undisputable seriousness of theme obvious to any reader even if animals represent the characters. *American Born Chinese* since it had themes that most could relate to such as trying to fit in, stereotypes, prejudice, judgment, bullying and acceptance. After having chosen the graphic novel, I then proceeded to give the students a lesson on how to read graphic novels by showing them and giving them two pictures in comic format (see Appendix B) made by Jessica Abel (2002) which provided an overview of what graphic novels are and how to read them. These appeared when I looked for images of graphic novels in Google and then I stumbled upon her page in http://dw-

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wp.com/resources/what-is-a-graphic-novel/ where she provided permission to use the image for educational purposes as long as she was given the proper credit. She also included a PowerPoint presentation of the pictures, which I used in class. Then I proceeded to use another PowerPoint presentation (see appendix D) that was provided by a professor in the University. Then we proceeded to read *American Born Chinese*, and discussed the stereotypes, and themes and the students explained what they thought that happened in the story. After that they continued to read it as an assignment in their houses, to then discuss in class and read aloud together. This pattern continued for the rest of the novel. However when we began to read *Maus* I asked the students to read the first three chapters and to come to class prepared to discuss them. Most of them did their assignment and came to class prepared, some continued to read further, because they wanted to know what happened. After that we discussed the chapters and then proceeded to read it in class and then did as we previously did with the previous graphic novel that was read in class. Though the students did for the most part the reading of the latter in their leisure time.

Students read both of these graphic novels, and enjoyed them both, based on their reader responses, however most of them expressed preference for *American Born Chinese*. Nevertheless Spiegelman presents such a horrible event from his father's perspective in the form of a narrative, which makes it more endearing. At the same time Spiegelman also shows the reader his thoughts toward his relationship with his father. Whereas in *American Born Chinese*, Yang shows us in a comedic form the struggle that people from different ethnic backgrounds suffer due to people perceptions of their culture. This was pertaining to the students' own experiences or some issue that interest or worries them, since they could relate if even to a certain extent to the characters. The students when reading the graphic novels also had to consider the short story

elements such as rising action, climax, falling action and resolution, because the comic book

format combines both dialogue and images to convey a powerful and precise message.

After the completion of the Unit, I asked students to write a reflection, which allowed

them to express their feelings toward the reading of either *Maus* or *American Born Chinese*. I

also asked the students to include in their responses if they enjoyed reading graphic novels in

class and if they considered the issues presented as serious or not. Additionally I asked them if

this experienced motivated them to read a different graphic novel in the future.

## Methods of validation

Cohen et al. (2007) note that "in qualitative data validity might be addressed through the

honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent

of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher" (p. 133). I strived to

validate my research by using convenient samples, being that my students were the ones that I

used to carry out my unit. I also provided the questionnaires, which the students answered

according to their best judgment.

## Ethical issues

I provided students with a consent form, which explained the purpose of the study. It was

also provided in order for the participants to be assured of how the information would be used

and for what purposes. Participants were also provided with the opportunity of not participating

in the study if they did not which to, without it affecting their grade. If they had chosen to I had

more traditional texts assigned to them. Anonymity was assured by the use of pseudonyms for

each participant.

**Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Findings and Results**

In order to better analyze the data collected, a qualitative data approach will be used. The qualitative data consists of the needs assessment questionnaires that I provided the students at the beginning of the lesson. Most of the questions provided were yes or no questions or short answer questions. However several questions requested for the participants to further explain their answer in order to better understand the reasoning behind each participant's initial answer. The qualitative data consists of the reader responses that the students were asked to write at the end of the unit, and the explanations from the open-ended questions provided in the questionnaires. I will also be dividing the analysis between females and males in order to compare their experiences in the class based not only on preferences in the class, but also on gender. I decided to do it this way, because when I mentioned graphic novels in class, the females seemed reluctant at first. Some even said, "Those are books usually read by boys" a statement which in all truthfulness surprised me to hear in this time and age.

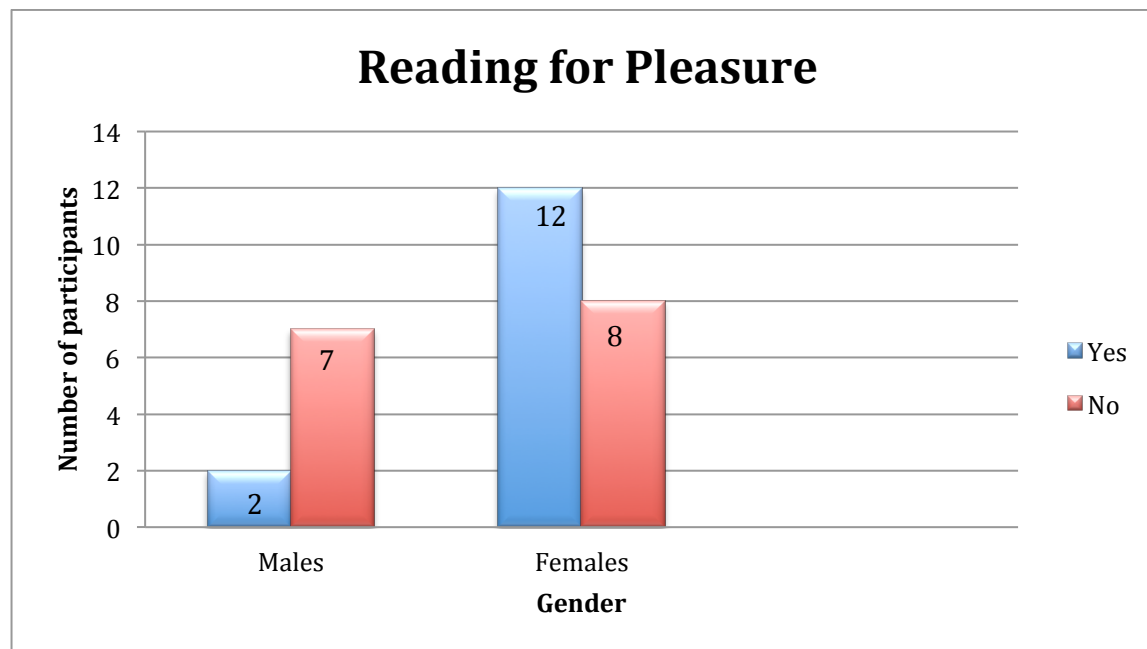**Quantitative Data**

**Needs Analysis Questionnaire.**

I provided a questionnaire with some open-ended questions to the group, the following is the analysis of the questions that the students answered in the questionnaire (see Appendix A). I also chose to read the questions one by one and translating them in Spanish in order for the participants to answer them to the best of their understanding.

**Table #1: Gender and Age Range**

## Gender and Age Range
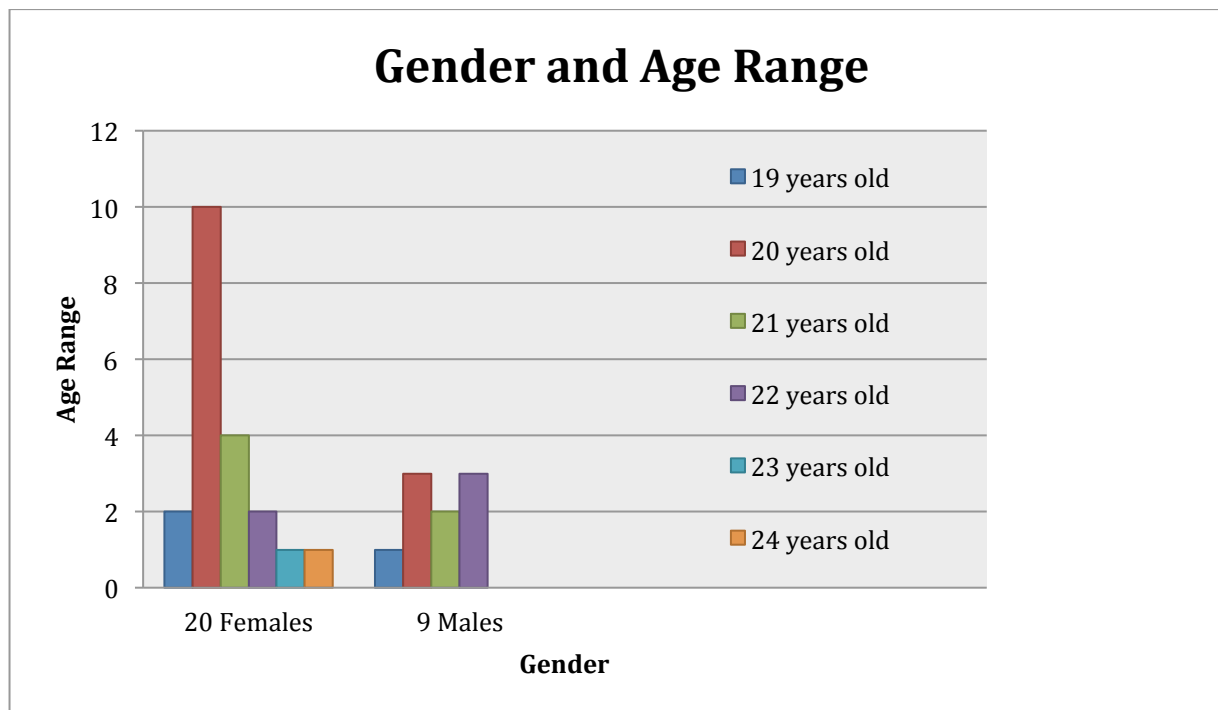


The group had a total of twenty-nine students; twenty of these were females and nine were males. The age-range amongst the females was from 19 to 24 years old. However the majority of the girls a fifty percent of them were twenty years old. The age range in the males was from 19-22 years old. This one was almost even in the age range, 33 percent of the males were 20 years old and 22 years old respectively, which made them more experienced. Some had taken the class before, and were repeating it and others admitted that they waited till their last year, since they were afraid or discouraged to take their last English class. I decided to separate them into females and males in order to evaluate how their decisions, likes and dislikes differ. What motivates one might not motivate the other. But most of all I wanted to see how the comic format is perceived by each gender.
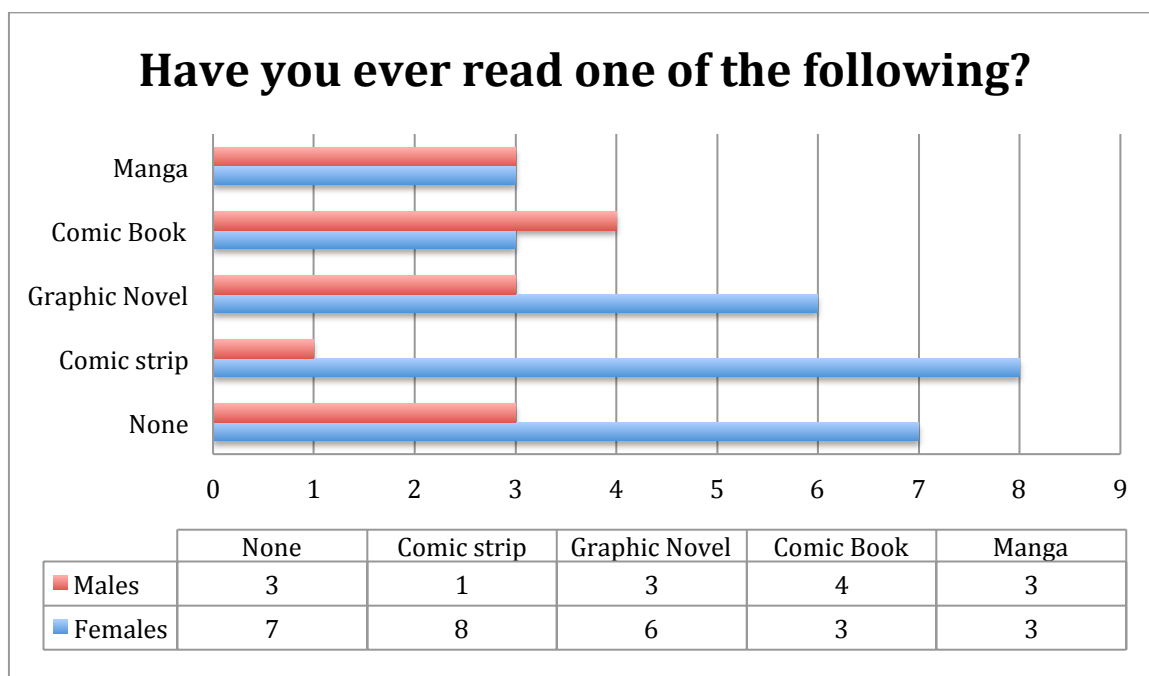
**Table #2: Reading for Pleasure**

## Reading for Pleasure

Number of participants (y-axis): 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14

Males: Yes = 2, No = 7
Females: Yes = 12, No = 8

Gender (x-axis): Males, Females

Legend: Yes (blue), No (red)

This first question was designed in order to assess how many students actually enjoyed reading at all. Be it for entertainment or for academic purposes. The males seemed to be the most reluctant readers in the class, 7 out of 9 said that they did not read for pleasure. They will only read if they have to for a class or for a project. While only 2 of the 9 males in class, admitted to reading for pleasure. The females however were more divided in their answers, 12 of the 20 females in the group acknowledged reading for pleasure. Whilst 8 out of the 20 females in class admitted to not reading for pleasure, they only read short magazine clips. I am sorry to admit that none of these statistics surprised me in the absolute. Since most of my students in my teaching experience so far have always shown reluctance to read in English, especially when you mention the word novel to them, it frights them and they start complaining before even reading it. A 60% of the females did read for pleasure, whereas only 22% of the males read for pleasure, which

meant that 52 percent of the class did not read for pleasure and that meant that I had to look for ways in which to motivate them to read.

**Table #3: Have you ever read a comic strip, comic book, graphic novel or manga?**

## Have you ever read one of the following?

| | None | Comic strip | Graphic Novel | Comic Book | Manga |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Males | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| ■ Females | 7 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 3 |

For the second question I asked the participants if they had ever read a comic, comic book, graphic novel or manga, but I also provided them with the choice of none of the previous answers. However I did ask them that if they had chosen one of the previous answers to explain what their experiences with these readings were like. Thirteen of the twenty female participants had read either a comic or graphic novel; only three had read a comic book and manga. Which meant that only a 65% of them knew the format enough to like it, while 35% did not know it. However 67% of the male participants knew the format and enjoyed reading it, five out of the nine males had read comic books or comics, while three had read a graphic novel and manga.

Whereas 33% of the male participants, had not read any of the comic formats. It was interesting to see that both females and males had read or at least knew the format, and had actually read a comic.

**Participants reading experience of graphic novels, comic strips, comic books or manga.**

I decided to ask them to explain their experiences of reading this format, because I wanted to know if it was a format that they would enjoy reading or that they liked, this way I could measure exactly how many of them would feel more motivated to read in class. The male participants were more direct in their answers and most of them answered similarly. If they did in fact enjoy reading graphic novels or manga they did so for entertainment purposes, because it made them laugh or were interesting. However some admitted to liking comic strips since they were shorter, but they did not like graphic novels because they were longer, but since they did not like to read much they still preferred graphic novels, over "regular books". The female participants gave varied answers. One wrote that she preferred graphic novels because she can visualize the text and made her want to keep reading. Another participant explained that she enjoyed superhero stories, because they have lessons that help in any situation that they might encounter in their daily lives. Others gave similar answers such as that they preferred them over regular texts since they are fun, new and interesting, that they read comic strips online or in the newspaper only, since they are exciting and short. Lastly they will only read if they feel personally identified with the text. This question and the explanations made choosing to give them a graphic novel over a traditional or regular novel, the right choice in order to motivate my class. When I first gave them the syllabus and informed them that they would be reading a novel

for class, not a second later they were complaining saying that they did not like to read and if they could watch a movie instead. This was the precise moment that I decided that this would be the perfect class to conduct my thesis research with. I decided on this group in particular, since they worked hard to complete their work or asked questions in order to understand the assignments, but also needed motivation to read in class and especially in English.

**When reading a comic or graphic novel, what is more important to you, text, images or a combination of both?**

I created this question in order to better understand what the participants thought of the comic book format and also to evaluate what they considered more important when reading these sort of texts, if the images, the text or a combination of both. To my surprise it was almost an undisputed answer, out of the 29 participants, only 1 female wrote that the text was more important since she could imagine or see the pictures in her mind with just the text. However the other 28 participants all agreed that a combination of both is what is most important in order to have a clearer understanding of the reading. One participant a female answered that a combination of both since it gives the complete idea or thoughts of the author. Another female participant answered that both since when she reads it has images that can illustrate what she imagined by the text. Three male participants answered that they learn visually and that images helps them to better understand the text. Some participants refrained from answering and some just wrote that the combination of both helps them to understand the mood of the story and what is happening without having to really understand the text entirely.

When I read the answers I was really pleased, they understood that in order to better understand graphic novels, you need to pay close attention to both the images and the text. The illustrations do so much more than just show you what happened in the story or in the text. The images also help you to grasp the character's feelings, or how she/he reacted to a certain

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situation. Just by watching a shadow in the character's eyes or by having them black you instinctively know that the character is going through depression or is feeling like their whole world shattered right in front of them. These kinds of feelings are conveyed through the images, not only through the text.

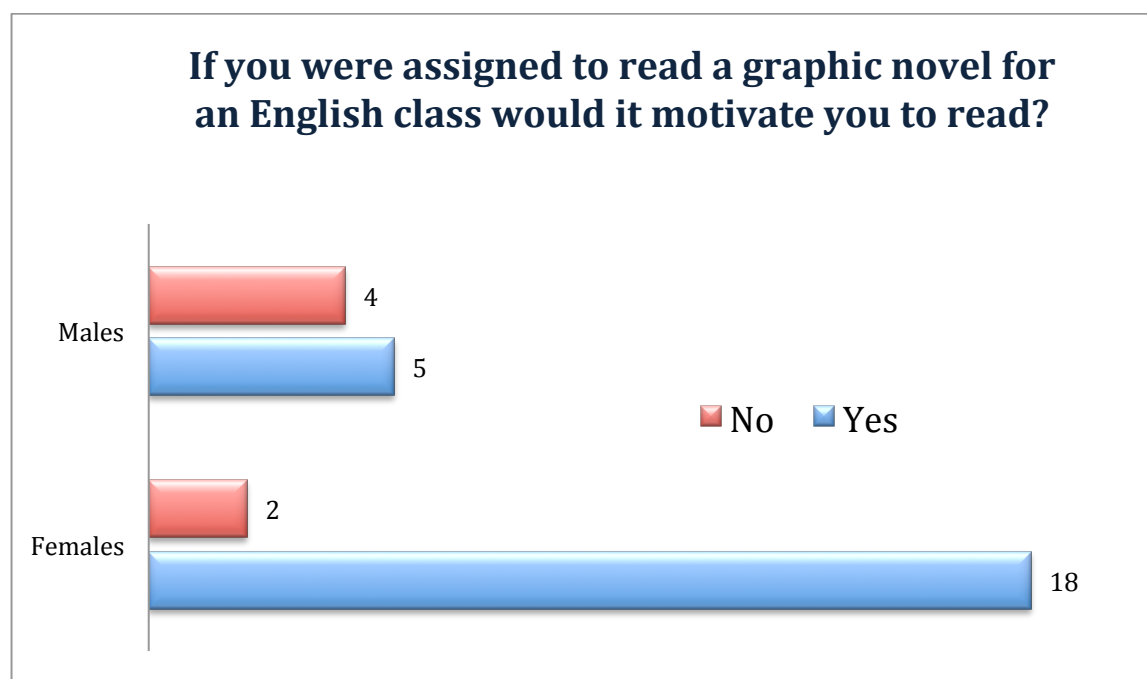**Table #4: Reading a Graphic Novel for Class – Level of interest**
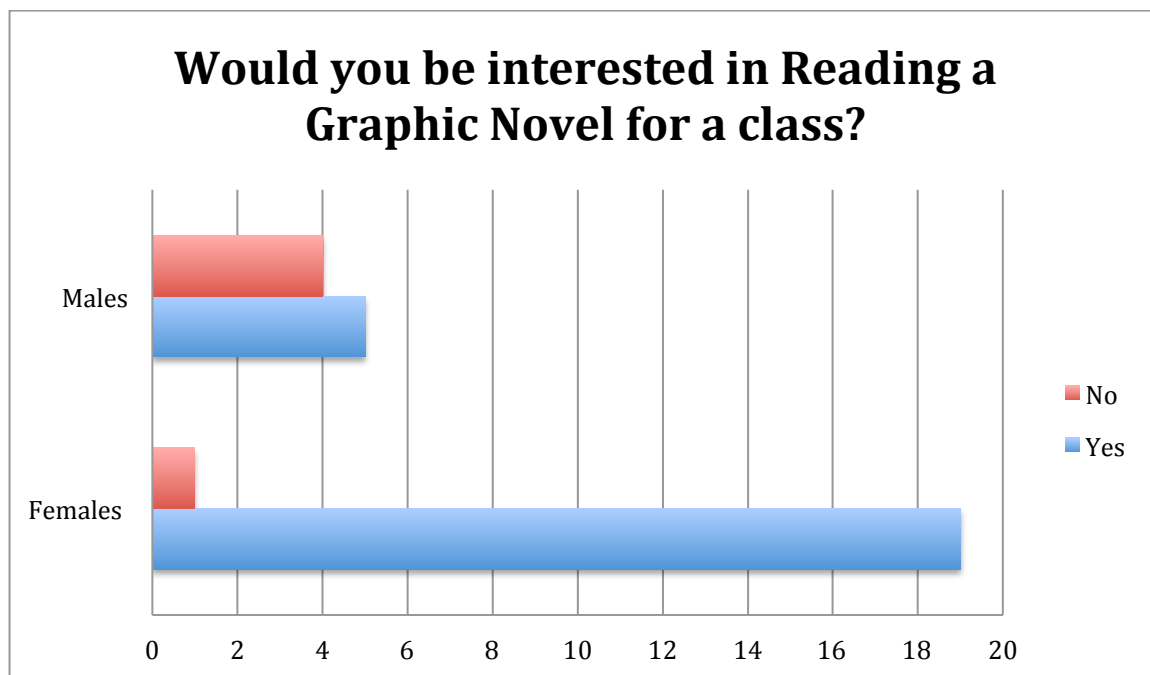


For the fourth question I asked the participants if they would be interested in reading a graphic novel for a class, and the answer of the male participants were varied 5 out of the 9 males marked that they would be interested in reading one, while 4 of them wrote that they would not. The female participants gave almost an unanimous answer the majority 19 out of the 20 females said that they would be interested in reading a graphic novel, while only one said no. For this question I asked the participants to support their answer by explaining it. The one female

that answered no, expressed that since she had never read one before the topic might not be to her liking. The four males that said no explained that they do not have time and that it would still be a lengthy read for them. Out of the 19 females that said that they would enjoy reading a graphic novel for a class, only 2 of them provided an answer. One of the participants mentioned that she prefers them better than "normal and boring novels with only text". The other participant mentioned that she believes that it could be a good experience, since its different. None of the 5 males provided an explication for having answered yes.

I was really surprised at the statistics for this question, I expected the male participants to be more interested in reading a graphic novel than the females. However the results showed a different outcome than what I expected. However I was glad that the females in the class would be interested in reading a graphic novel and that they would give it a chance. Since in most of the readings that I did for this research it mentioned that the males or boys were always more interested in comics than girls, also when I visit different comic stores or the comic section in a store I see that they have it always tailored to suit the needs of the boys or in the "boys section". When I was visiting a popular retail store. I noticed that it had the sections divided, very pink and bright ones with dolls for girls, then superheroes, cars and monsters for boys. In the superhero section I noticed that they were now bringing comics and graphic novels. I was thrilled to see it in the store, however I thought that it would be nice if they could also have different kind of comics so as to please everyone. But much to my surprise the comic section had girls and boys sitting in the corners and my niece grabbed a flash comic and started to read it. I was really proud to see both girls and boys reading in stores and most of all reading comic books, which in the past were mostly marketed towards men or boys. Gender perspective is gaining new grounds and making people more understanding of their surroundings and new generations.

**Table #5: Motivation to Read a Graphic Novel for the English Class**

For the fifth question I asked the participants if they were assigned to read a graphic novel for an English class if it would motivate them to read. Since it is a similar question to the previous one, but now focusing solely on the English class I did not expect the answers to vary. On reality I hoped that they would remain the same or all of the answers to change to an affirmative answer. However this was not the case in the female participants. Take a look at the following chart.

**If you were assigned to read a graphic novel for an English class would it motivate you to read?**

Males: No = 4, Yes = 5

Females: No = 2, Yes = 18

Legend: No (red), Yes (blue)

This time 2 of the 20 females did not feel motivated to read in English; fortunately both of them provided an explanation to their answers. One of the participants stated that she did not have time for lengthy readings. While the other one believed that it would still be "long to read and boring". This time 7 out of the 18 female participants that marked yes, accompanied their answers with a brief explanation. The first one said that it would motivate her "because they are short and easy going". The second and third thought that it would be an "interesting experience", however the latter added that it would also depend on the theme of the graphic novel. The fourth

female explained how she only likes to read short articles or magazines and that she does not enjoy reading books, but that will give it a try. The fifth participant expressed how she recommended them better than "normal books".  The sixth female conveyed that she did not feel stress of reading in English when reading graphic novels. Lastly the seventh participant wrote that it keeps her curious about the images and she has to keep reading to find out what is happening in the story.

The male participants did not vary in their responses from the previous questions, however in this question they provided explanations, 3 out of the 4 that answered that it would not motivate them provided a justification to their answer. The first one expressed in capitalized letters I might add that he "DOES NOT LIKE TO READ ANYTHING". The second one expressed concerned that he "does not understand English", while the third participant voiced a similar concern, but adding that it would be "complicated to read in English". Of the participants that answered that it would motivate them to read only 1 of the 5 males gave an explanation to his answer, and just asserted that reading a graphic novel would make it "easier to understand".

When I read their answers it made me hopeful that they would enjoy reading a graphic novel and that it would instill in them a love of reading. I aspired for them to at the very least to look for or ask for more graphic novels or similar topics to the ones that would be discussed in class, and when I read the reader responses I was not disappointed, but rather elated by their feedback, as I will explain further along in the research findings.

**Table #6: Serious Issues or Topics in Graphic Novels or in Comic Books**

The sixth item from the questionnaire asked the following question: Do you think that graphic novels or comics can portray serious issues or topics such as prejudice, war, racism,

bullying, death, and tolerance? And I also asked if they would take them seriously in this format. On this particular question the answer was identical for each of the nine male participants, they all answered affirmative. They expressed that graphic novels can portray different serious topics not just comical ones. One of the participants also added the following statement "graphic novels can better explain the experiences that the author wants to show."

**Do you think that graphic novels or comics can portray serious issues or topics such as prejudice, war, racism, bullying, death, and tolerance?**
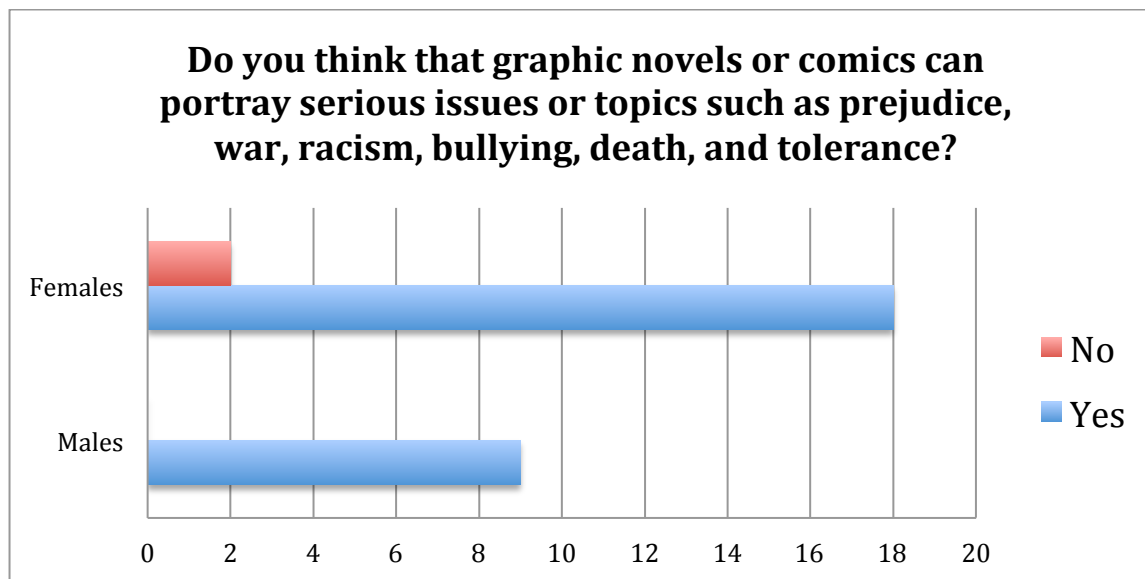


However as evidenced by the chart 2 of the 20 female participants did not agree with the question. One of them gave the following reason in order to justify her answer. She thought that the format is not serious enough to cover such topics. The other participant refrained from giving a justification for her response. From the 18 female participants that gave an affirmative response, only 6 provided an answer. Participants 1-3 answered similarly stating that they would take it seriously, because it discusses things happening in the world. Female 4 and 5 gave similar responses as well that every text should be taken seriously. Lastly the sixth participant wrote, "in order to explain the issues in society, any kind of method should be used to capture people's attention."

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Fortunately most of the students understood the importance and seriousness that graphic novels can have when dealing with issues that most people face on a daily basis. This can relate to what Brenner (2011) stated when writing about stereotypes and misconceptions that readers have when initially introduced to comic or the comic format. As Brenner (2011) stated "Adults in the United States still consider comics as a juvenile medium, unaware that comics have, for the past 30 years, been primarily aimed at adult readers not children or teens. New readers begin reading comics with the idea that all comics are fine for children, however if they venture further into the format they discover content aimed at mature adults without understanding the creator's intended audience. Only the most recent generations of comics readers come to the medium without the "comics are for kids" preconception". This quote sets the precedence in order to justify the next and final inquiry in the questionnaire.

**Table #7: Are Graphic Novels Only for Children?**



Do you think that graphic novels or comics are only for children?
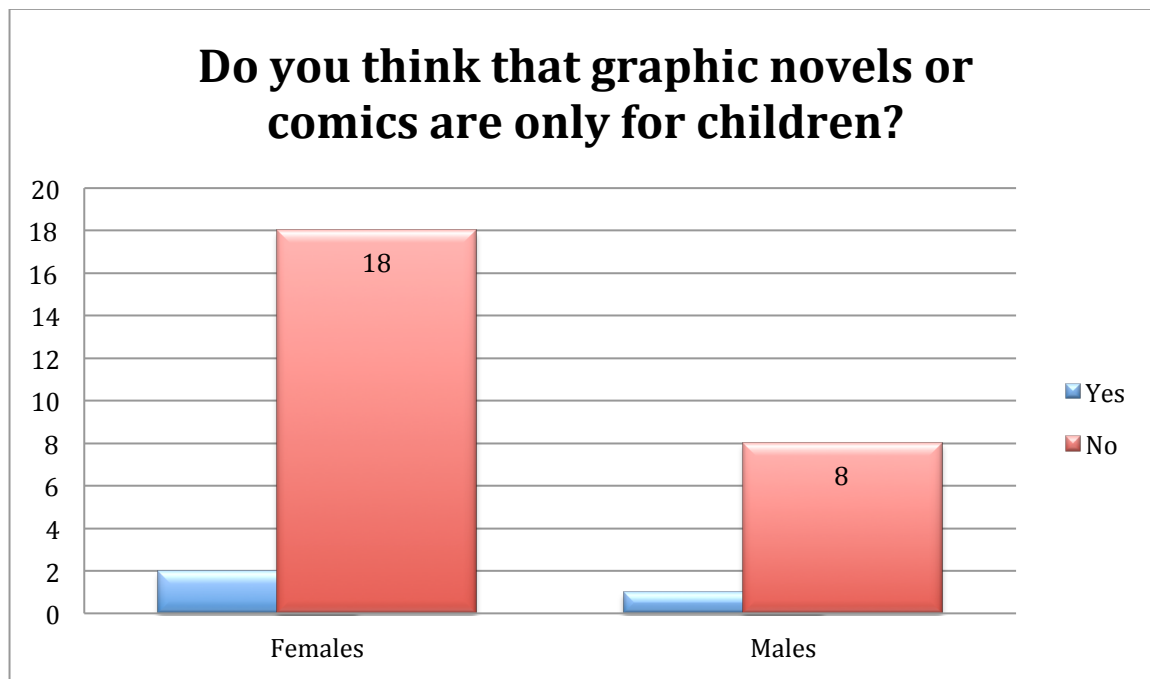
In the seventh and last item of the questionnaire I asked the participants the following question: Do you think that graphic novels or comics are only for children? Then I added the following question in order for them to provide more feedback, Are they for everyone? Explain.

The male participants gave almost similar answers. Eight of the participants agreed that graphic novels are not only for children, but also added that graphic novel are for all ages, because we can learn something new. One added that some graphic novels contain information to be appreciated by adults only. The only male participant to answer affirmative also added that graphic novels were made for children.

Most of the female participants denied that graphic novels are for children; only 2 asserted that they were meant for children. Only one gave a reason, writing that it depends on the context of the reading. While only 1 of the 18 that did not think that graphic novels were for kids provided an answer. She said that sometimes they present adult themes that children cannot or will not understand.

Adults in the United States still consider comics as a juvenile medium; this kind of thinking might have been brought on by the creation of the Comics Code Authority in the 1950s, which intended to ensure appropriate content that were inoffensive and suitable for kids and teens. This can relate to Brenner's (2011) statement in which he explained that as comics continued into the 1950s they narrowed their aim exclusively to children and teens and that "the lingering conviction that these are the only appropriate audiences for comics is still powerful in American culture today" (p.259).

**Reader Responses**

When the unit was finished and the students had read the graphic novels, I asked for them to write a readers response based on the reading of their choice and to also include their experience of reading a graphic novel and if they would feel motivated to read another graphic novel. When I read all of the reader responses I felt really glad that I had decided to incorporate graphic novels into the classroom. One of the participants wrote after she had read *Maus* that she "had never felt such overwhelming emotions when reading before and that she would definitely read more in the future". Another participant expressed that he thought that some of the images were too graphic, especially of the mice hanged by their necks, but that "even though they are mice I know that happened to real life people", but he admitted to liking the experience of reading a graphic novel. One of the participants a female wrote that after reading this graphic novel, she decided to look for other novels dealing with that topic, because she wanted to read the accounts of survivors from the Holocaust. This particular participant was the first one to ask me in class for the second part of the novel, because she had finished reading it in her house and she wanted to know what happened to the characters. She knew that it had a second part since I had mentioned it previously in class, after I loaned her my extra copy, some other students took turns in order to borrow it and read it.

Another participant that read *American Born Chinese* expressed that he loved the novel, because he liked the story of the monkey king and that it reminded him of an anime that he used to watch. A female participant added that while reading the novel mentioned before that she had enjoyed that it used humor with such a serious topic, and that even though one of the stories was of a monkey that she could still take the theme seriously.

The feedbacks from the participants were all positive, they had enjoyed their experiences and even though it was a novel they managed to read it. I would dare to say that most of the participants were highly motivated to read, especially those that asked for recommendations of other titles of graphic novels that I had enjoyed, so that they could read them as well. They even asked me to include them in a group in Google so that I could share graphic novels with them.

# Chapter 5 - Findings and Conclusion

In this chapter I will discuss the significance and implication of the study as well as the limitations of the study. The findings based on the research questions and the pedagogical implications of the study. In order to conclude it will also provide my final remarks. This study has many contributions that can benefit educators and students. In essence, this study can assist educators at the college level and inform them of the different methods and texts that they can implement in their classes in order to promote reading comprehension. Taking into consideration the benefits for the ESL classroom, I would say that it provided motivation techniques that foster student reading and enjoyment.

## Summary of Findings Based on Research Questions

There are numerous reasons to read comics and graphic novels and incorporate them in the classroom. Probably the most compelling and most frequently mentioned reason for using comics and graphic novels is their ability to motivate students to read. Not only do they motivate reluctant readers to read more, but comics and graphic novel readers do at least as much reading as non-comic book readers. Research shows that comics and graphic novel readers read more overall, read more books, and have more positive attitudes toward reading (Krashen, 2004).

## Summary of Findings Based on Research Question

I wanted to see if by integrating multiliteracies into the ESL curriculum if students would feel motivated to read and also if they could respond to the reading. Thus my main research question was: How might graphic novels contribute to promoting student motivation to read in English in an ESL college classroom?

Based on the research and my own findings I can conclude that students were motivated to read in the English class thanks in due part to the integration of graphic novels. This connects to what Krashen (2004) said about graphic novels when he stated that the most compelling reason for using graphic novels in the classroom is their ability to motivate students to read. Based on the reader responses and their reaction and questions I could tell that they felt motivated by this unit. I can also add to this response by adding that even thought they had already finished my class and had gotten their grades, they still wrote to me over the summer to see if I could send them different graphic novels, since they had time now they would enjoy reading some more.

**Sub-question Findings**

In order to further guide my research I developed sub-questions, in order to guide the main research question.

**1. How do graphic novels improve student's reading skills when used in an English college classroom?**

It can do wonders for the students, while we were reading in class, some students mentioned how easy it was for them to understand new vocabulary, thanks in due part to the images and how the characters reacted. This can relate to Brenner's (2011) statement when he mentioned that:

> Discovering an innovative story or comprehending a confusing topic is a key appeal of the graphic format. We learn very early that reading is defined by parsing letters, understanding words, and relishing a well turned phrase, but as picture books too often fade into childhood, we forget that images have just as much power, subtlety, and information packed into them as prose. Graphic novels and

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comics integrate both words and images so completely that the story cannot be told

another way (p.257).

This can also relate to Krashen (1989) statement when he said, "the images in graphic

novels can shed light on the meaning of an unfamiliar word or grammatical structure."

I agree with both statements and believe that the results also validate their statement as well,

since the students informed me that it made reading easier for them and that they looked at the

images to further guide the meaning of the words and they had to use the translator less, than

they would normally do.

**2. How do students interpret meaning from or through a graphic novel?**

Students conveyed meaning through a combination of both images and text. One cannot

make sense without the other, as was explained in the previous question. This statement was

further sustained by Schwarz (2010) when he mentioned that "graphic novels were a good way

to convey complex ideas, because graphic novels make information more attractive and more

easily digested". Thus this provided students with the alternative of self-direction; they chose

what to look at first the text or the images. As Brenner (2011) mentioned graphic novels are

constructed so that the text cannot make sense without the images and vice versa. I agree with

this statement based on my experience as an avid graphic novel reader.

**3. Can students understand readings in English better through the medium of the comic
book format?**

As Brenner (2011) mentioned "Reading comics requires self-direction; the reader

chooses what to look at first, the images or the text, and chooses how much of the page to

concentrate on" (p.258). If the students do not understand a word very well they can get a sense

of it or what is happening in the story through the image. Some read the images first getting a

sense of the sequence, and then add in the dialogue in a second reading of the page. Some do a combination of both techniques reading panel by panel. It is not implied that the text is unimportant, but for some readers, the visual support offered by graphic novels or comic books is the best way to understand the ideas that the author is presenting. Ultimately based on the reader responses I would say that students did in fact understand the story better while using the comic medium. They were also able to answer questions based on the reading, while we discussed the graphic novel in the classroom.

**4. Do students consider the issues presented in the graphic novels as serious topics?**

Certainly, most of the students included that at first they thought that it would not be as serious as a regular text that after having read it, they can see just how diversified graphic novels can be, since they included a myriad of themes and situations that a person can face in their everyday lives. Various participants wrote that the graphic novel that they read was an emotional story, which woke in them all sorts of different feelings. This statement was further elaborated by Carter (2007b) when he mentioned that "there are many high quality graphic novels that focus on important issues relative to teens, and teachers need to be aware of them" (p.49). It all depends of the seriousness of the theme that the graphic novel is presenting.

**Significance and Implications of the Study**

This study will hopefully contribute to the understanding of ESL student's motivation to read in an English class. By taking students motivation into account educators can see the importance that teaching while using multimodal literacies can have in improving student motivation and enhancing their reading skills. Reading graphic novels can be motivating for struggling students and reluctant readers, and can also support the development of multimodal literacy skills needed for school success in the twenty-first century. In Puerto Rico students'

interests and popular culture is usually taken for granted in the English curriculum. The curriculum in Puerto Rico has remained stagnant and unchanging, the Department of Education has added different methods and approaches to teach English, but in my most humble opinion they have not taken into consideration the most important factor in learning which is that students do not feel motivated to learn to speak or read in English. They have now added the curriculum maps, which are supposed to guide teachers and tell them what to do. But these were done based on other states, they did not take into consideration the needs of the Puerto Rican students, the material provided is suitable for English speakers not for ESL learners. Thus this research might contribute to a positive change in the curriculum, taking into consideration the needs of our students. If you approach a subject in new and innovative ways, students might feel motivated to learn. Also due to other researches that have been done in the area as illustrated in the literature review it has been proven as Krashen (2004) stated that the case for graphic novels is a good one.

**Pedagogical Implications of this Study**

Educators can benefit from this study and some of the strategies implemented in study can be incorporated into the English classroom. Through this research I have improved my teaching practice. I take into consideration my students needs and also look for ways in which to motivate them. Based on my research I have made recommendations to other educators and have helped to prove that graphic novels will facilitate reading and motivate students to read in English.

A number of the activities that I used with my students can be very helpful for educators that are teaching ESL students. Educators can browse for different graphic novel titles and use them in class. Not only are they perfect for the English class, but they can also be integrated into

any class be it art, social studies, science, etc.; the possibilities are endless. In order to assess

student's needs educators should first distribute a needs analysis questionnaire, be it an adapted

one or creating one. After that they choose the graphic novel that they believe will motivate their

students to read. It is important to create guide questions or create a word wall in which difficult

vocabulary found in the graphic novel can be defined. Another helpful activity can be the

discussion of the story elements using graphic novels. I have done this activity with my students

and it has been very helpful, since it makes it easier for them to understand them. The

possibilities are endless; it all depends on the purpose that they as educators want to achieve in

class.


**Limitations of the Study**

One of the limitations that I encountered with this study was students' unwillingness to

read anything with the word novel in it. But after I got them involved and showed them that I

would be using the comic medium instead of classic texts, the students seemed to be getting

somewhat excited of the notion of reading a novel. However most of my students did not know

the fundamentals of reading a graphic novel and how Brenner (2011) explained in his article that

graphic novels have elements that are similar to everything from picture books to video games to

traditional prose, but they function differently in what they demand from the reader (p.258)

Graphic novels are constructed so that the text cannot make sense if you do not take into account

the images and vice versa. Since in the images you can find the information that the text does not

give you, for example when a character is feeling sad, depressed, afraid, angry, excited and etc.

The images also provides you with an accurate description of the setting and how the characters

are perceiving their surroundings, the mood of the story can also be explicitly found in the images.

Aside from the most noticeable aspects of comics including text, images, panels and a myriad of smaller elements further distinguish the format and become a code new readers must pause to get the most out of their reading (Brenner, 2011). Symbols of all sorts, many culturally defined take a significance of their own in comics. By taking all of these aspects into consideration I gave the students a presentation on how to read a graphic novel. Showing them that they had to take into consideration the panels; they needed to know that somebody yelling is shown by lettering the text in capital letters. Or that when a character is angry he or she might exhibit a vein or stress mark effect, where lines representing bulging veins will appear on the forehead, a symbol commonly known as cross-popping veins. Aside from the introduction to reading comics, I also gave them a brief history of comics that they seemed to enjoy; in order to get them excited for the readings that they had to complete.

The lesson is time consuming I had to prepare myself for the readings, give them the basics of reading a graphic novel; and for the novel *Maus* I had previously given them a background on the holocaust so that they had an idea of all the struggles and hardships that the Jews endured at the hands of the Nazis. Also one of the biggest limitations was finding the graphic novels, since the university did not have them, I ordered them for the students online and delivered it to them. While others students found them electronically. At the beginning of the unit all of the students had their novels and they were all ready to begin the unit.

**Concluding Remarks**

Graphic novels have also been advertised as a tool in the development of multiple literacies, such as verbal and visual literacy. Numerous articles have reported the high level of

interest that graphic novels hold for many students and the potential this format has to encourage literature appreciation (Young, 2007). Additionally, others have contended that engaging with graphic novels is a more rigorous cognitive activity than reading conventional text-only books. Notable among these reports are those that describe how graphic novels can be used to help improve reading skills among students whose first language is English and students who participate in English as a Second Language programs.

When I was researching this topic, I noticed that most of the studies that were done on this particular subject were only focused on reluctant readers, reading comprehension and the motivation of those students who were native English speakers. None had ever focused on ESL students, nor did they focus on these particular students need for motivation to read in English. I am optimistic that this study will provide educators with an insight into ESL students' needs and also the necessity that there is to modify the curriculum by integrating popular culture. Finally I am hopeful that it will even help librarians restock their shelves with graphic novels or comic books so that students might feel inclined to read for enjoyment and not only for the requirements of a course.

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**Needs Analysis Questionnaire**

**Instructions:** Please answer the following questions. This questionnaire is rapid, anonymous, confidential, and voluntary.

Age: _____          Gender: _____

1. Do you read for pleasure?     _____ Yes  _____ No

2. Have you ever read one of the following?

_____ Comic Strip _____ Comic Book _____ Graphic Novel ___ Manga ___ None of these

a.   If you have read one of these, what was your experience with these books? Explain

_____

_____

3. When reading a comic or graphic novel, what is more important to you, text, images or a combination of both? Please explain _____ text _____ images _____ both

_____

_____

4.  Would you be interested in reading graphic novels for a class?  ____Yes ____No
Explain

_____

_____

5. If you were assigned to read a graphic novel for an English class would it motivate you to read?      ____ Yes ____ No
Explain

_____

_____

6. Do you think that Graphic Novels or comics can portray serious issues or topics such as prejudice, war, racism, bullying, death, and tolerance? ____ Yes ____ No

a) Would you take them seriously? Explain

_____

_____


7. Do you think that graphic novels or comics are only for children? ____Yes ___No

Are they for everyone? Explain

_____

_____

**Appendix B**

"What is a 'Graphic Novel?'" is a strip that Jessica drew in 2002 to explain the basic elements of the graphic novel and how to navigate a page. It is a 2 page introduction to graphic novels and comics. It is a great guide for readers who are just getting into the comics world, helping them understand what graphic novels are.
You can access this on: http://dw-wp.com/resources/what-is-a-graphic-novel/

by Jessica Abel

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**Student Consent Form**

English Department                                          Prof. Melissa Torres Sánchez
Faculty of Arts and Sciences                               (787)
University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez                          (787)
P.O. Box 9265
Mayagüez, Puerto Rico 00681-9265

**Title of Research:**
   Integrating Multiliteracies into the ESL curriculum: Graphic Novels as a Means of Expression
                                    and Motivation

        My name is Melissa Torres Sánchez. I am a master student and also a teaching assistant

in the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. I am currently teaching the course INGL 3202

(Basic English track - fourth English class). I am conducting a research with my students to

discover which texts promote motivation for students to read in English.  As part of my

assignment, I will conduct an anonymous questionnaire, ask you to write a reader response based

on the readings and also write about some of the experiences of class observations with you.

Your permission is required in order for me to conduct any of these things. If you do not wish to

participate, different work will be provided to you in order to compensate for these one.  Thank

you so much for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

_____
Melissa Torres Sánchez

_____
Please choose only one:         _____ I agree to volunteer in this research
                                _____ I do not agree to volunteer in this research

Anonymous Questionnaires:       _____ I agree to fill out the questionnaires
                                _____ I do not agree to fill out the questionnaires


_____          _____
        **Student's Signature**                          **Date**

**Appendix D**

This is the PowerPoint Presentation used in class in order to explain how to read comics. Dr. Cathy Mazak created it and she provided it to me to present in class.
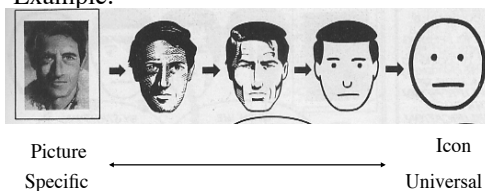
## How to Read Comics

Edited by Prof. M. Torres
INGL 3202
Created by Cathy Mazak

## Definition of Comics

- Pictures and other images (sometimes words) in a particular order created to give information or tell a story

## The Pictures

- In comics, the types of drawings can vary from very realistic to very "iconic"
- Example:



Picture             Icon
Specific            Universal

## The Gutter

- The gutter is the space between the panels (squares containing the pictures and words)



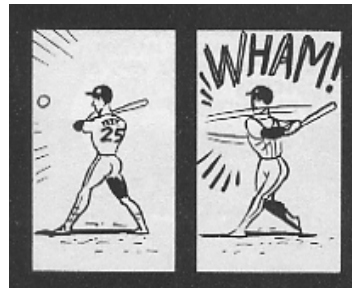gutter          panel

## What happens in the gutter?



## In the gutter you…

- Use your imagination to connect the two panels
- Invent the **transition** between panels in your mind

Types of Transitions: Moment-to moment

Action-to-action

Subject-to-subject

Scene-to-scene

Aspect-to-aspect

No relationship

## The Text

- Some comics use a lot of text, some use very little
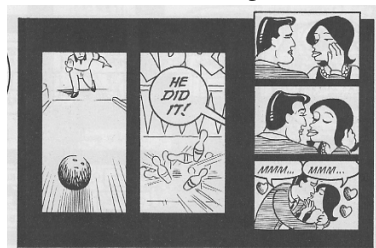- The **relationship** between text and image is very important in comics

## Word Specific

- Pictures illustrate but don't add meaning



## Picture specific

- Words are a soundtrack to pictures



## Duo-specific

- Pictures and words send the same message



## Additive

- Pictures add meaning to the text or the text adds meaning to the pictures



## Parallel

- Words and pictures do not intersect in meaning

Most common: Interdependent

- Words and pictures work together to say something that neither could say alone



# Practice Analyzing Comics

- Are the pictures very realistic or very iconic?  In the middle?
- Find an example of one type of transition between panels that we discussed.
- What is the relationship between text and pictures?  Find an example of one type of relationship that we discussed.

# Appendix E

## IRB Approval

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**Comité para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación**
**CPSHI/IRB 00002053**
Universidad de Puerto Rico – Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez
Decanato de Asuntos Académicos
Call Box 9000
Mayagüez, PR 00681-9000

18 de diciembre de 2012

Sra. Melissa Torres Sánchez

Estimada Sra. Torres Sánchez

El Comité para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación (CPSHI) consideró la documentación sometida para el proyecto titulado *Integrating Multiliteracies into the ESL curriculum: Graphic Novels as a means of motivation and expression* y ha determinado que, como su estudio se limita a prácticas educativas normales a realizarse dentro del ámbito educativo, está exento bajo 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1) de todos los requisitos de la parte 46, incluso del requisito de consentimiento informado. Esto significa que no requiere de nuestra aprobación para proceder.

Le acordamos, sin embargo, que cualquier cambio al protocolo deberá ser revisado y aprobado por el CPSHI antes de su implantación. El CPSHI deberá ser informado de inmediato de cualquier efecto adverso o problema inesperado que surja con relación al riesgo de los seres humanos, de cualquier queja sobre esta investigación y de cualquier violación a la confidencialidad de los participantes.

Agradecemos su compromiso con los más altos estándares de protección de los seres humanos y le deseamos éxito en su investigación.

Atentamente,

Rosa F. Martínez Cruzado, Ph.D.
Presidente
CPSHI/IRB – RUM

**Teléfono**: (787) 832 - 4040 x 3196, 3807, 3808 – **Fax**: (787) 831-2085 – **Página Web**: www.uprm.edu/cpshi
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