

MYSTICAL POETRY AND SPORT: AN EXPERIENCE OF DIDACTIC TRANSPOSITION BASED ON THE STUDENTS' INTEREST

Yailin Martínez-Hierrezuelo, & Betsaida Sedano Muñoz
Faculty of Education, Alfonso X El Sabio University (Spain)

Abstract

The mystical poetry of the Spanish Renaissance is a topic included in the literature curriculum of the third year of compulsory secondary education in Spain. This subject tends to have little connection with the reality, individual interests and prior knowledge of 14-year-old Spanish students. According to interest theories, developing meaningful learning based on an intrinsic interest in this subject can be difficult if there is nothing to link the student to it. Therefore, a process of didactic transposition is necessary to transform academic knowledge into teachable and comprehensible content for students. Based on these foundations, the objective was set of designing an activity that stimulates the situational interest of a group of 25 students towards the mystical poetry of the Spanish Renaissance. Previously, sport was identified as a major interest of the students. It was then linked to mystical poetry through the devotion that some athletes arouse in young people, comparing it with the devotion felt by mystical poets, such as Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Jesus, towards God. The students read, analysed and debated the boundaries between devotion and fanaticism, as well as the risks of the latter for personal and social development. This study presents a quasi-experimental design that analyses the impact of a planned intervention on students' situational interest. During the implementation, data on the activation and maintenance of situational interest was collected through participant observation (teacher) and non-participant observation (external teacher) and a questionnaire for students. This allowed for triangulation of the information. The observation matrix, with five items, used a four-point linear estimation scale. The questionnaire included 10 items and used a four-point Likert scale. The reliability of the questionnaire, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.784. The data obtained by the three means reflect that the students enjoyed the activity, interacted with each other and expressed themselves with initiative. However, while teachers considered the students' performance to be adequate, the students themselves expressed a low perception of their competence. This question raises the prospect of analysing possible factors behind these perceptions and teaching strategies that contribute to the development of self-concept in these students. Nevertheless, it is considered that the didactic transposition was significant in stimulating situational interest in mystical poetry.

Keywords: *Situational interest, mystical poetry, sport, didactic transposition.*

1. Introduction

Mystical poetry is a literary genre that conveys deep spiritual experiences (Choudhary, 2022). This genre reached a remarkable development during the Spanish Renaissance, thanks to figures such as St John of the Cross, St Teresa of Jesus and Friar Luis de León. Hence, its historical-literary relevance and its inclusion in the curriculum of Spanish Language and Literature in the third year of Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) in Spain (Comunidad de Madrid, 2022).

Despite its relevance, mystical poetry is an unattractive content for 14-year-old students. On the one hand, it is a subject matter far removed from the everyday reality and individual interests of young people. On the other hand, its ancient and abstract language, the use of complex metaphors and its deep spirituality represent a great intellectual challenge. Engaging students' interest in this content can be fundamental to learning. However, developing meaningful learning based on an interest in mystical poetry can be difficult if there is nothing to connect the learner to the subject matter (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2018). From a psychological perspective, interest can be triggered by highly stimulating elements of the environment or qualities that a teacher can bestow on a subject, activity or object of learning. This type of interest is called situational interest (SI) (Schiefele, 2009). Stimulation of SI has two phases: activation (caused by novelty, surprise, personal relevance) and maintenance (determined by an optimal experience

of participation and perceptions of autonomy, competence, good social relations and enjoyment) (Renninger & Su, 2012).

Considering these fundamentals, the aim is to design an activity that stimulates the SI of third-year ESO students towards the mystical poetry of the Spanish Renaissance. To this end, it is considered necessary to carry out a process of didactic transposition that transforms academic knowledge about mystical poetry into teachable and comprehensible content for students (Alfaro & Chavarría, 2012).

In a previous exercise of researching interests, sport was identified as one of the themes and activities preferred by the pupils, so it could be a potential stimulator of SI towards mystical poetry. The question then was: How to connect mystical poetry and sport in Language and Literature classes? Nowadays, the fanaticism associated with sport is very significant, both towards football teams and well-known sportsmen. This kind of devotion could be compared to the spiritual fervour represented in the mystical poetry of the Spanish Renaissance and on this comparison, the activity "The spiritual journey of the sports fan" was focused.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Research design

With a quasi-experimental design, this paper presents the results of a didactic experience in the SI of students towards the mystical poetry of the Spanish Renaissance. A group of 25 students (12 girls and 13 boys) from the third year of ESO of a secondary school in the Community of Madrid took part. The activity "The spiritual journey of the sports fanatic" took place in a double session of the subject of Spanish Language and Literature and had a five-part structure (Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of the activity "The spiritual journey of the sports fan".

Parts	Description
Introduction	- Question and joint reflection: Are you a sports fan, do you have a sports idol, and what would you be willing to do to be closer to them?
The spiritual path of the Christian tradition	- Presentation of the concepts of the purgative, illuminative and unitive pathways. - Reading and analysis of poems.
Working in groups	- Identification and analysis of analogies between sports fanaticism and the ways of the mystical path.
Discussion and conclusion	- Presentation of ideas, commonalities and differences. - Risks of uncontrolled fanaticism for personal and social development.
Individual activity	- Short essay on the relationship between Renaissance mystical poetry and sports fanaticism.

2.2. Methods

The research data were collected through participant (teacher) and non-participant (external teacher) observation and an IS student questionnaire. The use of three sources allowed the information to be cross-checked in a process of triangulation.

For observation, a five-item matrix with a four-point linear estimation scale (where 1 is "not observed" and 4 is "observed") was used. One item measured SI activation (curiosity/attention) and the other four items measured SI maintenance (enjoyment, autonomy, competence, social relations). On the other hand, the student questionnaire included 10 items with a four-point Likert-type scale (where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 4 is "strongly agree"). These items provided information on IS activation (attention and personal relevance) and IS maintenance (enjoyment, autonomy, competence, social relationships and readiness to re-engage)¹. The questionnaire obtained a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.784, suggesting that the data collected are reliable for analysis.

¹ As can be seen, there are criteria that do not coincide between the two instruments. This is because some factors of interest, such as personal relevance of the object and willingness to re-engage in a similar task, are unobservable and student perceptions can provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

3. Results and discussion

Group observation and averages of student responses to the questionnaire show similar results for those criteria shared, except for competence (performance efficacy) (Table 2). This suggests a consistency between the perceptions of observers and students on most of the criteria and adds strength to the data analysed below.

Table 2. Observation and Questionnaire Data.

	IS activation		IS maintenance		
	Attention/ Curiosity	Enjoy	Autonomy	Competence	Social relations
Participant observation	3	4	3	4	4
Non-participant observation	3	3	3	4	4
Questionnaire (averages)	3,2	3,12	3,16	2,72	3,5

The indices obtained are positive, indicating that the activity "The spiritual journey of the sports fan" was effective in activating the SI (arousing curiosity and capturing the students' attention). This interpretation becomes more consistent when considering the students' mean ($\bar{x} = 3.16$) on the items of personal relevance to the topic in the questionnaire. Regarding the maintenance of IS, the scores reflect that students enjoyed the session, showed initiative in their participation and very favourable social interaction. This is also confirmed by the mean score on the item about willingness to participate in similar activities ($\bar{x} = 3.32$).

The main discrepancy is in the perception of competence. The students perceived themselves as less competent ($\bar{x} = 2.72$) compared to the observers' assessment (4). This could indicate a lack of confidence in their abilities on the part of the students, even though the observers considered their performance to be effective. This result is consistent with previous research showing that academic self-concept in adolescence is dynamic and usually deteriorates between the ages of 12-13 and 14-16 (Demo, 1992; Barber & Olsen, 2004; García & Musitu, 2009, as cited in Ibarra & Jacobo, 2016).

Although the competence factor is not met, the synthesis of the results reflects the importance of didactic transposition. Specifically, the linking of mystical poetry to sport (a topic of personal relevance to students) and the opportunities to participate, exercising autonomy and interacting with the group, influenced students' SI. Results that confirm previous research on SI (Palmer, 2019; Renninger et al., 2019; Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011).

4. Conclusions

As conclusions to this work, we have obtained an activity, "The spiritual journey of the sports fan", which is the product of a didactic transposition based on the psychological foundations of SI and which links the mystical poetry of the Spanish Renaissance with sport. The results obtained show that the didactic experience was effective in activating and maintaining the students' SI in the in the topic of mystical poetry.

However, the students' perception of competence or academic self-concept presented difficulties, which raises as a prospective the design of strategies that contribute to reinforcing this psychological variable that can have significant influences on student participation and performance.

Another significant aspect is the opportunity this activity provided to reflect and debate in the classroom about the boundaries between devotion and fanaticism, as well as the risks of the latter for personal and social development. Fanaticism in any form limits the ability to understand and respect diversity of thought and culture. The creation of open and reflective learning environments is essential for the formation of critical, respectful citizens with a genuine interest in knowledge.

Acknowledgments

This work is part of a project funded by the XVI Convocatoria de ayudas para el desarrollo de proyectos de investigación Fundación Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio - Santander Universidades. We would like to thank Luis Gustavo Delgado Tejeda for the translation of this article.

References

- Alfaro, C., & Chavarría, J. (2012). La transposición didáctica: un ejemplo en el sistema educativo costarricense. *Uniciencia*, 26(1-2), 153-168. <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/4759/475947764014.pdf>
- Choudhary, S. P. (2022). Concepts of mysticism of the poetry of William Blake. *International Journal of Research in English*, 4(2), 21-23. <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2022.v4.i2a.62>
- Comunidad de Madrid. (2022). Decreto 65/2022, de 20 de julio, del consejo de gobierno, por el que se establecen para la Comunidad de Madrid la ordenación y el currículo de la educación secundaria obligatoria. *Boletín Oficial de La Comunidad De Madrid*, 396-716.
- Ibarra, E., & Jacobo, H. M. (2016). La evolución del autoconcepto académico en adolescentes. *Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa RMIE*, 21(68), 45-70. <https://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/rmie/v21n68/1405-6666-rmie-21-68-00045.pdf>
- Palmer, D. (2019). Situational Interest and Actualized Individual Interest: Two Problematic Constructs. *Journal of Advances in Education Research*, 4(3), 110-112. <https://doi.org/10.22606/jaer.2019.43002>
- Renninger, K. A., Bachrach, J. E., & Hidi, S. E. (2019). Triggering and maintaining interest in early phases of interest development. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2018.11.007>
- Renninger, K. A., & Su, S. (2012). Interest and Its Development. In R. M. Ryan (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Human Motivation*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195399820.013.0011>
- Rotgans, J. I., & Schmidt, H. G. (2011). The role of teachers in facilitating situational interest in an active-learning classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 37-42. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.06.025>
- Rotgans, J. I., & Schmidt, H. G. (2018). How individual interest influences situational interest and how both are related to knowledge acquisition: A microanalytical investigation. *Journal of Educational Research*, 111(5), 530-540. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2017.1310710>
- Schiefele, U. (2009). Situational and Individual Interest. In K. . R. Wentzel, & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation at school* (pp. 197-222). Routledge.