

***Buen regreso*** to our academic readers and welcome to the second year of the Bulletin.

The popularity of Spanish in the UK has again been a talking point in the press this summer, echoing Ignacio Peyró's article in our last edition (which was picked up by *El País*). The range of subject matter covered in the Bulletin over the past year (see Past editions) gives a good indication why. What other language offers such variety and entertainment value – while also being fun to learn?

In this edition we look at events over the summer, including plans to move Franco's remains and our round-up of the other stories that matter in the Spanish-speaking world.

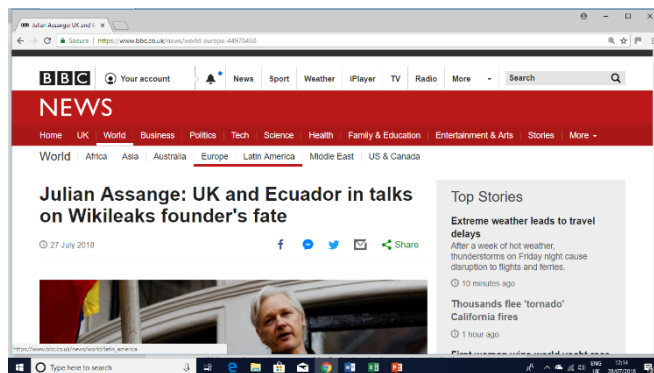
Reflecting back on the exams season, we focus on re-marks, post-results strategies and how to optimise your Pre-U planning and prospects.

On the language front, we hear about innovative methods to stimulate genuine foreign language communication at school level and hear about a seeming contradiction in terms – text books to use for Pre-U.

Our literary focus switches to the new García Márquez Pre-U set text *Del amor y otro demonios*, as seen by GM biographer and Bulletin editor Stephen Hart.

Our country focus is on Mexico: we tour the country with newly graduated hispanist Ellie Dewhurst as she reflects on the future, and we ride the Mexico City metro with Dr. Nathaniel Gardiner, learning what it tells us about Mexico's past.

We also reflect on the continuing influence of the *Transición* on today's Spain.



For those new to the Bulletin, this is a free resource published roughly quarterly that welcomes (nay, depends on) contributions from readers like you. Please send us feedback and get in touch with ideas.

Speaking of which... the Bulletin does not set out to compete with press

agencies, but we couldn't help noticing that our 7 June report on UK/Ecuador talks to resolve the Assange issue came out exactly 50 days before the BBC caught up with the story (see below). Do let us know any other stories you think we should lead on..!

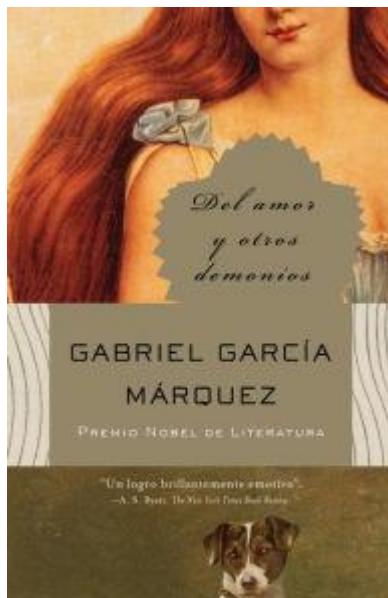
# Faction in García Márquez's *Del amor y otros demonios*

Stephen M. Hart



It is often difficult to separate fact from fiction in Gabriel García Márquez's novels and *Del amor y otros demonios* (1994) is no exception.

However, the prologue offers a clue about how the novel will develop. In it, García Márquez recalls that on 26 October 1949, as he was working as a journalist in



Cartagena de Indias, his editor, Clemente Manuel Zabala, sent him out to cover an exciting local story – the crypts at the Convent of Santa Clara were being exhumed in readiness for its conversion into a luxury hotel. On arrival, he was amazed to find piles of bones on the forecourt with just a piece of paper with a name scrawled on top of each skeleton, and even more amazed to see the skeleton of one Sierva María de Todos los Ángeles, with hair that was 22 metres and 11 cm long, still affixed to her skull. As García Márquez recalled: ‘mi abuela me contaba de niño la leyenda de una marquesita de doce años cuya caballera le arrastraba como una cola de novia, que había muerto del mal de rabia por el mordisco de un perro, y era venerada en los pueblos del Caribe por sus

muchos milagros. La idea de que esa tumba pudiera ser la suya fue mi noticia de aquel día, y el origen de este libro’ (*Del amor*, p. 13).

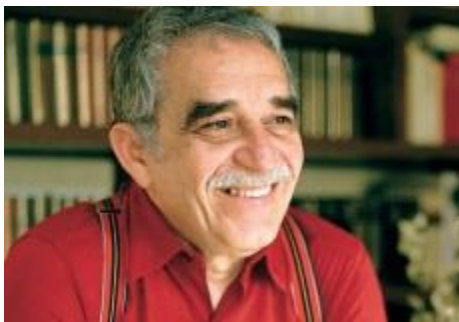
A nice introduction to the novel, one would think. Except that hardly any of it was true.

In 1949 García Márquez was, indeed, a journalist for the Cartagena newspaper, *El Universal* – the title is not mentioned in the prologue – and his editor was Clemente

Manuel Zabala. But the latter did not send his underling to the Convent of Santa Clara that day, although, as we learn in García Márquez's autobiography, he had spoken to Gabo about this legend: 'Durante todo aquel año había insistido en que el maestro Zabala me enseñara los secretos para escribir reportajes. Nunca se decidió, con su índole misteriosa, pero me dejó alborotado con el enigma de una niña de doce años sepultada en el convento de Santa Clara, a la que le creció el cabello después de muerte más de veintidós metros en dos siglos' (*Vivir para contarla*, p. 410).



If we check the articles Gabo wrote for *El Universal* at that time, we find that he wrote on the day before and the day after the date mentioned in the prologue (26 October 1949), but not on that actual date. The two articles Gabo did write – 'Un infanticidio en el Barrio de la Esperanza' (25 October 1949) about a dog called Calavera which had unearthed the dead body of a baby, and a piece about 'La Virgen de Fátima' (27 October 1949) – overlap thematically with the novel (infanticide, death, and religion). But the main reason why Clemente Manuel Zapata could not have sent Gabo to downtown Cartagena in search of a story about Sierva María de Todos los Ángeles is because the demolition and refurbishment of the Convent of Santa Clara happened, not in 1949, but in 1994 (Camacho Delgado, p. 59; Tedio, pp. 211-14).



García Márquez is thus upturning the literary protocol according to which the prologue to a novel is normally true even if the novel is not. Camacho Delgado suggests we should therefore call the prologue a 'chapter zero', but I would prefer to call it an 'anti-prologue' given its audacious mendacity. The government official overseeing the exhumation tells Gabo about Sierva María's 20-metre long hair without a hint of surprise ('El maestro de obra me explicó sin asombro que el cabello humano crecía un centímetro por mes hasta después de la muerte'; *Del amor*, p. 13), indicating that this novel will be written according to the famous formula whereby fantastic events are depicted in a dead-pan manner, namely, magical realism (see Leonard) or, as we might call it in this case, faction, that is, the seamless fusion of fact and fiction.

So, if the prologue is not as ‘true’ as it first seems, what implications does this have for the rest of the novel? When analysing García Márquez’s work, we now – since 2014 – have access to a vast amount of new information about how it came into being. In that year the Harry Ransom Center bought for a reported \$2,000,000, the around 270,000 papers of Gabriel García Márquez’s personal archive which – collected in 79 document boxes, 15 oversize boxes, 3 oversize folders and 67 computer disks – provides a literally inexhaustible archive on his life and work. Manuscript Collection MS-5353 consists of manuscript drafts of published and unpublished works, research material, photograph albums, scrapbooks, correspondence, clippings, notebooks, screenplays, printed material, ephemera, electronic files, thousands of photos, even Gabo’s school reports and his passports. It just so happens that the archive has a number of early drafts of *Del amor y otros demonios*, and these allow us to piece together what sources García Márquez used in order to write his novel.

The first aspect of Gabo’s compositional strategy made clear by this archive is that he worked extremely hard on producing a ‘perfect’ text; thus there were nine original typescript versions and eleven proof versions of *Del amor y otros demonios*, and a number of these can be consulted in the on-line archive made available by the Harry Ransom Center. The most important for our purposes is the first typescript version of the novel, dated June 1993 and consisting of 187 pages, since it shows us clearly how Gabo put the novel together.

Gabo began by introducing us to his main character, Sierva María, drawing her as she walks with the household slaves to market to buy goods for the celebration of her twelfth birthday party, and he mentions her uncut hair (typescript, pp. 9-10). The first and most obvious source for this primary portrayal of Sierva María was the legend mentioned above that Gabo heard from his grandmother, Tranquilina Iguarán, and/or his editor, Clemente Manuel Zabala, about an Afro-Colombian ‘saint’ whose bones performed miracles and whose hair continued to grow after her death.

By chapter 2, however, Gabo began to embellish the character of Sierva María to order to create a composite based on the addition of some biographical details lifted from the life of a real historical individual, often known as the First Witch of the New World, Lorenza de Acereto. Gabo uses a number of details from Lorenza de Acereto’s life in order to explore a number of features and themes that he needed in order to delineate with more vigour the colonial tapestry of his novel – these included



the struggle between the Spanish master and the African slave (Deaver, Penuel and Cussen), the conflict between Catholicism and hybridic African cults such as voodoo, ‘santería’ and ‘mandinga’ (López de Abiada, and Fajardo Valenzuela), witchcraft and unbridled sexuality (Ortega, and Millington, pp. 121-24).

An orphan living in early seventeenth-century Cartagena, Lorenza had been adopted by a local priest, Luis Gómez, who left her in the care of the black servants in his household. This led to her gaining a deep knowledge of African religious beliefs, rites and practices. At the age of fourteen she was married off to a lascivious and violent man, Andrés del Campo.



Though her marriage was not happy, Lorenza was well received by Cartagena’s elite, particularly the ladies, as a result of her expertise in magic, spells and love potions. Lorenza’s activities eventually came to the notice of the Inquisition, and, on 15 January 1613, she was charged with having committed various crimes including witchcraft, divination, conspiracy, adultery, attempted murder, and idolatry. After the trial she was imprisoned by the Inquisition, where she was tortured over a period of two months; though a verdict of burning at the stake seemed likely, it was commuted to a two-year exile and the payment of a fine of 4,000 ducats. Lorenza subsequently disappeared without trace, and thus the legend – including García Márquez’s 1994 version – was born (see Mercedes Peces Ayuso, ‘Lorenza de Acereto’). Some of these details appear in the first version of the novel from the middle of Chapter 2 onwards (typescript, p. 54).



This first version picks up pace from the beginning of chapter 3, when Sierva Maria is sent to the convent (typescript, p. 86; see Kerr). The tension mounts as she is accused of being possessed by the Devil. Cayetano Delaura – the 36-year-old priest who will fall helplessly in love with Sierva María now becomes, as it were, a Colombian version of Humbert Humbert in Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955) – is introduced into the action towards the end of chapter 3 (typescript, p. 106), thereby setting the scene for the third component of the composite, that is, the love affair between the famous seventeenth-century Spanish poet, Garcilaso de la Vega, and his lover, Elisa, which may have been a code-name for the beautiful

Portuguese court lady, Beatriz de Sá, for whom Garcilaso is rumoured to have experienced an intense (and impossible) passion (see Clavo and González).

The poems Garcilaso wrote for Elisa are mouthed and re-experienced by Sierva María and Cayetano Delaura. The first verses mentioned ('Oh dulces prendas por mí mal halladas') appear in Chapter 5 (typescript, p. 169) and thereby constitute the third



level of the composite employed by García Márquez to create his fictional characters. As Bell-Villada points out, Gabo made a number of discreet changes to Garcilaso's original poems (Bell-Villada, pp. 248-49), in order to personalise them and make them more directly relevant to the lovers. This level is important for the development of the plot not only in terms of providing a convenient literary vehicle for the theme of love to take shape, but also because it is highly likely that the love Garcilaso expresses for his beloved Elisa is secretive and impossible – and Delaura's love for Sierva María is nothing if not clandestine and prohibited.

In order to allow all three levels of the composite to come together seamlessly – that is, the legend of Sierva María, the life of Lorenza de Acereto and the love affair in Garcilaso de la Vega's courtly love poetry – García Márquez introduced some compositional glue from a previous novel – *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* (1985) – that is, the metaphoric connection between disease and love. There is a difference, though: whereas the characters of *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* are subjected to the ravages of cholera, which is described on numerous occasions as having the same symptoms as love (light-headedness, disorientation, vomiting, death), in *Del amor y otros demonios* it is rabies that brings on the disorder of love (Hart, *García Márquez*, pp. 153-55; Vázquez-Medina). As we read in the last chapter of the first version of the novel, 'El amor no sabe de votos perpetuos (...) Es una maldición del cielo' (typescript, p. 185).

Though it didn't make the final cut of the novel, this axiomatic statement in some ways epitomises the closing message of *Del amor y otros demonios*.

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## How has the Spanish transition to democracy affected modern Spain?

*Jack Johnson*

The consequences of Spain's transition to democracy can be clearly seen in the present day, allowing us to see the problems that Spain is currently facing in the perspective of the past. These include increased regional nationalism, corruption scandals, and economic problems that go hand in hand with mass unemployment.



Although Franco died in November 1975, he began handing power to his subordinates as early as 1973, when he relinquished his responsibilities as *Presidente del Gobierno* whilst remaining *Jefe del Estado*. Franco wanted his regency to be succeeded by a monarch who could continue his work and preserve the *Movimiento Nacional*. To this end, in 1969 Franco named Juan Carlos, the grandson of Alfonso XIII, as his successor, and, upon his death, the prince was proclaimed Juan Carlos I.

Initially the King followed the expectations of Franco's supporters by swearing allegiance to the principles of the *Movimiento Nacional* and by respecting the precedents put in place by *la Ley Orgánica del Estado*. However, in his speech to the Cortes, the King stressed the need for greater democratisation and decentralisation. Following Juan Carlos' insistence that Spain's political and governmental systems needed to be reformed, a *Ley para la Reforma Política* was adopted in the Cortes, under the direction of the new *Presidente del Gobierno*, Adolfo Suárez. Soon afterwards the Spanish government held free elections and a cross-party committee began drafting a new constitution.

This Constitution of 1978 was approved by 92% of voters in a referendum. It redefined the relationship between Madrid and the regions, with these *autonomías* governing their own affairs under the watchful eye of the Spanish Constitutional Court. In addition to granting the *autonomías* their own powers, the Constitution also recognised the existence of nationalities other than Spanish, effectively accepting the national identity held by many Catalans, Basques, and Galicians as well as others.

The Constitution and the various Statutes of Autonomy accepted by the autonomous communities have undoubtedly been successful. Now only 18% of public spending is used for the central government's areas of responsibility (defence, etc), whereas 38% is used to fund expenditure controlled by the autonomous communities. (13% is allocated to local councils to spend, and the remaining 31% is consumed by the social security budget.) The figures illustrate how much autonomy has been returned to Spain's regions and quasi-nations.

In addition to the major issue of nationalism within Spain's autonomous communities, the Transition has also added to economic uncertainty and instability within Spain. After the Transition Spain entered the European Single Market, yielded the *peseta* in favour of the euro in 1999, became the main European investor in Latin America, with 33% of Spain's foreign investment in 2004 being directed towards Latin America, and survived the rapid globalisation of the world's economy despite the fragile nature of her economy following the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s.

However, whilst Spain's economy certainly improved after Franco's death and after the end of the Francoist policy of isolationism, Spain remains overly dependent on certain areas, such as construction and tourism. This means that, when an economic crisis arises, such as the Great Recession of 2007-08, Spain's economy is often too weak to remain in a strong position, leading to unemployment, especially amongst young people. In June 2018 Spain had a youth unemployment rate of 34% and the anger of young Spaniards is exemplified by the rise of Podemos as well as movements such as 15M, which saw around 8 million Spanish people participating in protests across the country in 2011. Thus, whilst the Transition was able to bring Spain out of its economic isolation, it appears that there has not been enough change

to guarantee Spain's ability to control her national debt and to maintain her economic power in relation to other countries in a more globalised world economy.



During the 15M protests there weren't just protests against unemployment but also against the corruption of political and governmental figures in Spain. In fact, between mid-2015 and the end of 2016, 1,500 people were put on trial for corruption. It could be said that the increase in corruption is not so much of an increase but more of a continuation of the Francoist precedent of corruption at the highest levels of government.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that corruption in government is largely due to the need to pay for costs associated with major political upheavals. Indeed, this was the case during the Gonzalez administration of the 1980s and 1990s, with the ERE case in Andalusia and the supposed financing of GAL, which was set up to combat ETA, an organisation which had become more active after Franco's death. Thus we can clearly see that the political upheaval and sudden change led to an increase in corruption, or rather an increase in the prevalence of identifiable corruption. Essentially, during the rule of the *Movimiento Nacional*, Franco's henchmen in the upper echelons of government were often involved in corruption but were rarely called out for it, whereas now greater accountability and scrutiny means that government and party officials are increasingly under the eye of public opinion and the Spanish judicial system.

In summary, whilst *la Transición* was able to reorganise the relationship between the central Spanish government and the various governments of the autonomous communities, there are some regions, such as Catalonia, where a large sector of the population do not think that the devolution of powers has gone far enough. In addition to this, the Transition to democracy put Spanish corruption in the limelight and, despite a resurgence in the Spanish economy following the isolationism of *el franquismo*, the Transition has not done enough to strengthen and diversify the Spanish economy.



## Out of the Valley

With Franco on the move again, the Madrid-based analyst William Chislett answers BAS editor Robin Wallis' questions about the dictator's legacy and the state of the political right in Spain.

*As an expert observer of Spanish society and politics, do you see the planned removal of Franco's corpse from the Valle de los Caídos as a significant moment in the country's history?*

While there are many more important issues in Spain to the man in the street, such as finding ways to lower the still very high level of unemployment (15%), the exhumation of the remains of Franco from the grandiose Valley of the Fallen is a significant symbolic moment. One should not forget that Franco, the victor of the 1936-39 Civil War and dictator until 1975, died 43 years ago and it has taken that long for this to happen. His removal could not have happened in the first years of the transition to democracy; indeed Felipe González, the Socialist Prime Minister between 1982 and 1996, was given some friendly advice by a liberal general when he took office and told that it would be unwise to remove the bones of those on the losing side of the Civil War, buried in mass graves, as it might rattle the sabres of Francoist officers. Most of the more than 500 generals still serving at that time had fought on Franco's side. A lot has changed since then. Spain has consolidated its democracy, and those who fought in the Civil War or were children at the time account today for a fraction of the population. The current Socialist government's position was epitomised when Carmen Calvo, the Deputy Prime Minister, said that 'Democracy is not compatible with a tomb that honours the memory of Franco.'

*Officially, the planned exhumation is a technocratic decision taken by a commission: can we take that at face value, or is there a political aspect to it?*

Franco's removal is very much a political decision. The previous Socialist Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-11) appointed during the last months



of his second government a commission which drew up a plan proposing the removal of Franco and of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the far-right Falange movement buried on the other side of the altar to Franco and turning the site into a 'place of reconciled memory.' Primo de Rivera was killed by a Republican firing squad at the start of the Civil War. But the conservative Popular Party (PP) shelved the plan as soon as it took office on the grounds that there was no consensus on this



issue. The PP was and still is the only party against removing Franco. Defenders of the Valley of the Fallen, which is run by Benedictine monks who live in an adjacent abbey, say it is a monument to reconciliation. Yet this is hard to square with the fact that it was mainly built with the forced labour of Republican political prisoners over an 18-year period (they were promised reduced sentences), and although the

mass tombs that line the walls of the basilica contain the dead of both sides (33,847 victims), the Republican dead were brought there without consulting their families, and in some cases against the express wishes of relatives. If it really was a monument to all victims then perhaps a Republican leader like Manuel Azaña, the President during the Civil War, should also be buried there and not just Franco. (Azaña died in exile in 1940 and is buried in France). Also, Franco is the only person at the Valley of the Fallen who died in his bed of natural causes.

*Does it reflect the fading of the Franco cult as the older generation dies out?*

I would not say there is a Franco cult, except among the far right, which in Spain counts for nothing. The PP began life as Alianza Popular and was founded by various senior Francoist officials, most notably Manuel Fraga who had been Information and Tourism Minister (1962-69) and Interior Minister in the first post-Franco government. To this extent the PP are the political heirs of Franco. Today it is more or less a mainstream conservative party, with some authoritarian ties. It has always shunned openly condemning Franco on the basis that Spain should concentrate on the future and not rake over the past. Surveys show that most people over the age of 65 vote for the PP.

*Opponents of the PP and Ciudadanos sometimes accuse them of having franquistas in their ranks: is there a valid case for such criticism?*

Both the PP and the more liberal, centrist Ciudadanos abstained in the parliamentary vote on Franco, apparently because they did not like the procedure used (a *procedimiento de urgencia* which bypasses the normal, very slow parliamentary process). In the PP's case this was in my view a convenient excuse; in C's case they are to some extent fighting for the same political ground as the PP and probably did not want to alienate PP votes who have switched to this party. The PP has closeted Francoists in its ranks but not really Ciudadanos (C's), which was only established in 2005 and initially to oppose the burgeoning movement for independence in Catalonia. C's voters are on average much younger than the PP's. The PP's loss of support over recent years is largely due to people switching their allegiance to C's, partly because the party has taken a firm and vociferous stance against Catalan independence and partly because of the wave of corruption scandals that has hit the PP – and which led to the unprecedented censure motion in parliament in July 2018 against the PP government of Mariano Rajoy and its replacement by the Socialists under Pedro Sánchez (with only 85 of the 350 seats).

*Interesting that no far-right party is emerging in Spain, unlike so many other EU states.*

Yes, this is striking. It is to Spain's credit that the influx of several million immigrants over a 20-year period, which sharply reversed the previous trend of net emigration, has not produced any relevant xenophobic, far-right, populist parties. When Franco died there were 165,000 foreigners in Spain; today there are 4.7 million (excluding those who have become naturalised Spaniards). The far-right Vox won a mere 0.2% of the vote in the June 2016 general election. Immigrants have been mainly successfully absorbed: there are no French-style *banlieues* or US-style ghettos in Spain. Spain is the only EU country without an anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic party in the European Parliament.

*There's been a recent tendency in some quarters to regard the Transición as flawed: do you agree, or do you think it was as good as could realistically have been achieved?*

Consensus, after so polarised a past, was very much the watchword during the Transition between the reformist right and the non-violent left. This was epitomised by the *Pacto de Olvido* (literally, the 'Pact of Forgetting'), an unwritten agreement among political elites to let bygones be bygones and look to the future in order to create a blank slate upon which to build democracy. This should not be



equated, however, with political amnesia. The pact was institutionalised by the 1977 Amnesty Law. Unlike the regime of Greece's Colonels, the dictatorship in Portugal and Argentina's military junta, the Franco regime was not subjected to any form of judicial accountability. There were no political trials for those associated with the Franco regime or a Chilean-style truth commission. The new democratic Spain did not even ban individuals from the old regime from participating in the new regime. It is easy to criticise this rather *sui generis* approach—as some on the radical left who did not directly experience the transition do from the comfortable perspective of today—for disregarding the 'transitional justice movement', which promotes coming to terms with the past as part of the process of democratisation. Yet there is no one-size-fits-all for democratic transitions and nor is there a consensus on what coming to terms with the past entails. Spain took a pragmatic approach, and it worked. The proof is that the democratic regime crafted in 1977 is the first to enjoy any significant degree of stability in the country's turbulent history.

The Transition was achieved in the face of considerable adversity. It was not guaranteed from the outset to be successful: the Basque terrorist group ETA killed an average of 50 people a year in the first decade of democracy (and mounted assassination attempts in 1995 on both the King and the Prime Minister, José María



Aznar), and Francoist officers staged a coup in 1981 in an attempt to turn back the clock. Whichever way one looks at it, Spain has been profoundly transformed since the 1978 democratic Constitution that sealed the end of the 1939-75 dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, the victor of the three-year Civil War. Be it economically with

the creation of significant number of multinationals or the world's second-largest tourism industry in terms of visitors, politically with a vibrant democracy that ranks high in classifications, socially with the greatly improved status of women or in foreign policy—where Spain has reclaimed its place on the international stage—the country bears no resemblance to what it was like 40 years ago. Over the period, per capita income at purchasing power parity increased fivefold and life expectancy at birth rose by almost 10 years. The Transition remains widely admired today in Latin America and the former communist Eastern European countries.

*How do you regard calls for a new phase of the Transición?*

Those calling for such a thing have yet to say what they want. The removal of Franco from the Valley of the Fallen can be said to be a second Transition issue.

*What should become of the Valle de los Caídos?*

Turn it into a museum on the Civil War, capable of explaining to adolescent schoolchildren what happened and why. The problem is that there is no common narrative about that conflict and the ensuing dictatorship. This in my view is because a civil war is the worst kind of conflict a country can have and the one that leaves the deepest and longest scars. While Germany has confronted its past successfully – the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* in Berlin even has a section on the bombing of Gernika by the Luftwaffe - Spain's history between 1936 and 1975 is hardly taught in Spain's schools. It is as if Franco did not exist.



**William Chislett** (Oxford, 1951) is an Associate Analyst at the Elcano Royal Institute. He covered Spain's transition to democracy for *The Times* of London between 1975 and 1978. He was then based in Mexico City for the *Financial Times* between 1978 and 1984. He returned to Madrid on a permanent basis in 1986 and since then, among other things, has written 20 books on various countries.

The Elcano Royal Institute published between 2002 and 2016 four books of his on Spain, and OUP published his book *Spain: What Everyone Needs to Know* in 2013. He writes a monthly review of Spain (*Inside Spain*) for the Institute. He has been a visiting scholar at Bilkent University, Ankara, and at New York University and has spoken at the universities of Oxford, Harvard, Princeton, Chicago, Georgetown and the London School of Economics.

He is a member of the Committee of Ambassador Brands and Image of Spain of the Leading Brands of Spain Forum. He writes opinion articles occasionally for *El País* and *ABC*. He curated for The Cervantes Institute the exhibition on the Spanish emigre writer Arturo Barea.



## “Metreando”: a ride through the belly of the Mexican capital

“Metreando”: it is highly unlikely you’ll see this word on your next Spanish vocabulary list, but it is definitely useful if you are visiting Mexico City. It means that you are taking the

metro. I’ve heard it many a time as people talk on their mobile phone while they are riding North America’s second largest subway system (second after New York City’s Metro). With 195 stations and over 1.5 billion rides taken last year in carriages resembling those of the Paris metro, it is an experience shared by many. The Metro isn’t only a great way to get from point A to point B in the largest Spanish-speaking city in the world, it will teach you a lot about Mexico as well.

Fueled by the Mexico Miracle (the two-decade economic boom in Mexico after WWII) and the 1968 Olympic games (the first Latin American city to host them), the Mexican capital’s metro system came later than many other cities when it was inaugurated in 1969. The Buenos Aires Metro system, for example, opened in 1913. When the Mexico City metro was built, it followed classic designs, with the first three lines forming a grid that circles and crosses the centre while carrying its citizens and visitors out into the ever-expanding suburbs. Over the next forty years those three lines would swell to twelve, stretching over 140 miles (226 kilometers).

The metro’s efficiency in helping you to cross the city rapidly means that you will find people from all walks of life taking it. The fact that it avoids the traffic above by going below is a huge bonus. Anyone who has ridden a bus or taxi, or who has dared drive a car across Mexico City will know first-hand that the traffic can be

mind-numbing. But beware, the rainy season during the summer in the *meseta central*, also means that you can get stuck every so often in a sort of metro traffic jam when the metro lines flood with water. While I have witnessed water flowing down the stairs of the metro like a surrealist waterfall during rain storms, I have also seen very simple and practical solutions to keep water out of those stations prone to flooding in the rainy season, including raising the height of the entrance so that you





have to go up a few stairs only to go down again on the other side as you enter the station - one of many examples of Mexican ingenuity.



Mexico City chronicler Carlos Monsiváis called the metro of his home town a “place of collective expression”. But what does that really mean? If it means that you are bound to see just about anything in the metro, he is right. Vendors hawk their wares, youths preform circus tricks, people come from rural communities to ask for donations for their different causes. People read books, romantic couples exchange kisses, and an increasingly

large number of people simply look at their phone. Patrons eat their dinner, go to movies and art exhibitions, and simply go to work.

Monsiváis isn’t the only well-known figure to ride the metro. The President-elect, who will assume office in December, is known for being seen on the Mexico City Metro and has been a strong supporter of keeping the costs of the tickets down via government subsidies (and at only five Mexican Pesos – 20p - for a single journey across any one of the lines, it is one of the cheapest metro rides you can find anywhere). Small but significant details like this explain why Mexico City has been a staunch supporter of López Obrador, who has won the presidency at the third attempt. One of his strongest supporters and champion of the popular classes, Mexican writer and intellectual, Elena Poniatowska, even received the honor of having a Metro train named after her. That should say something about López Obrador and the Metro as well.

The metro contains many a history lesson. Almost every one of the major heroes of the 1910 Mexican Revolution (the first major social movement of the XX century) have a station named after them. Archeological finds have been incorporated into the design. Two examples to visit: when building Pino Suárez station, the workers discovered the remains of an ancient temple. It was simply incorporated into the design. So now, as you go underground into the station, you also get to visit pre-Colombian ruins. Metro Talisman houses the complete remains of a young woolly mammoth found during its construction. A long-time resident and now impressively popular youtuber *Luisito Comunica*, has posted videos about these noteworthy curiosities that make the metro so unique.

On the subject of the metro station Talisman, it is worth mentioning that while every different metro line is coded with a different number and color, each of the almost 200 stations has its own logo. Why? When the metro was being built in the 1960s, literacy was not as high as it was today, so to help the less literate patrons navigate the system, the visual logos were incorporated. They were designed by Lance Wyman, an artist who also helped to design the logo for the 1968 Olympic Games. What do you think the logo is for Talisman station? You guessed it, a woolly mammoth. What about the metro station Coyoacán, the one only a few minutes' walk from Frida Kahlo's house/Museum in the neighborhood of the same name? It is a coyote, because Coyoacán means "the place of the coyotes" in the Aztec language Nahuatl - though you won't find too many coyotes there today.



If you are running for a train in the early morning or late afternoon rush, you will notice an important aspect of the Metro that has developed over the past few years. During these times of relative affluence, the Metro reserves its first few carriages exclusively for women and children. This effort to create a safer and easier public transport environment for women and children points to the positive strides that the capital, and indeed the whole country, are taking to be inclusive and caring towards everyone who decides to ride its rails or participate in the many opportunities Mexico has to offer.

Nathanial Gardner is a lecturer at the University of Glasgow and author of the critical guide to *Como agua para chocolate*.

## Recognising Mexico

When deciding where to travel in the summer of 2018, my eye was caught by the proliferation of articles featuring Mexico as this year's destination of choice. Conversations with fellow twenty-to-thirty-somethings confirmed this shift in perceptions of Mexico. A number of us had chosen to backpack through the country, seeking out the real Mexico rather than heading to Cancún for a beach holiday.

Even if Mexico is not on the radar for your next holiday, you might agree that, at least in the UK, Mexican culture is gaining both recognition and currency. Thomasina Mier's 'Wahaca' restaurant chain, serving up Mexican-style street-food dishes, has gone from strength to strength, and I continue to stumble across ever



more 'tacos-with-a-twist' offerings. Away from food, we saw the last Bond film open with a (contrived) *Día de los muertos* parade in Mexico City, fuelling the trend for *calavera*-inspired face-paint at Halloween. And who could have missed the iconography of, or articles about, Frida Kahlo, whose body of work and philosophy continues to inspire artists and feminists alike.

In spite of these celebratory acknowledgements of Mexican culture, Mexico is not always perceived in positive cultural terms. The signs outside each Wahaca restaurant read "fresh Mexican this way, stereotypes and sombreros that way", a nod to the outdated image of the pistol-bearing and poncho-wearing *bandido*. Of greater concern is Mexico's worsening reputation as a country marred by the violent drug wars. Whilst providing important insights into the Mexican drug trade, the media (and in particular Channel 4's 'Real Narcos' documentary, which aired this summer) have contributed to the notion that drug violence reaches into all parts of the country. Indeed, while some people could not recommend Mexico enough as a place to visit, on other occasions mentioning that I would be travelling through Mexico was met with gasps and raised brows.

I made a point of quizzing the Mexicans I met about the drug wars. Somewhat reassuringly, those I met complained of the media's sensationalism, and were quick

to highlight that the violence is mostly confined to northern territories nearest the US border. It was also explained to me that the cartels generally target each other and rarely involve civilians. However, what was patently clear was their concern over how some civilians, a lot of them youngsters, look up to Mexico's drug lords. As men who have garnered phenomenal amounts of wealth and power, often with little intellectual effort, the drug lords have become idols to those who see no other way out of poverty or their lack of opportunity. Majo, age 25, stressed how many of her fellow Mexicans are becoming parents very young. She told me that most young parents are unable, through lack of time or money, to show their children that, as the next generation, they are *deserving* of a better future. She believes that giving more children a formal education is at least part of the answer, as is increasing both the understanding and availability of contraception.

As I pondered my impressions over the three weeks that I was in Mexico, I began to realise that, while the drug lords themselves could be considered savvy opportunists who with ruthlessness and some luck had managed to make it, those who look up to them do so simply out of hopelessness. If we look at Mexico's recent history, it is easier to understand how this may be the case. From the outside, Mexico might look as though it has benefitted from the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA): foreign investment significantly increased, and Mexico's economy moved away from protectionism and towards open-trade. Now, however,



two out of three Mexicans view NAFTA as having been detrimental to their country. The new jobs that were promised did not materialise, subsidised US agriculture led to rural job losses, and Mexico's dependency on the US economy left it struggling after the 2008 financial crisis.

Put simply, Mexico feels that its vulnerability was exploited. Add to this the Donald Trump effect – his attempt to re-work NAFTA for the US's benefit, and his disparaging, stereotyping discourse about 'drug dealers, criminals [or] rapists' and 'making Mexico pay'. Taking this into account, it is plain to see how some struggling young Mexicans might aspire to the Narco lifestyle.

Of course, it is the Mexican government's responsibility to attempt to resolve these issues. Nonetheless, if we are to stave off what Octavio Paz once called Mexico's '*complejo de inferioridad*' in his canonical work '*El laberinto de la soledad*', small celebrations and the nurturing of Mexican culture internationally may provide a powerful accompaniment to the necessary governmental change. By sharing Mexican cultural traditions, encouraging knowledge of Mexico's rich food culture and identifying Mexico's national figures with meaningful aesthetics and movements, we provide Mexico with much-needed recognition. We might even be contributing to a gradual yet significant shift in its own self-image.

*By Eleanor Dewhurst, who graduated in Modern Languages this summer from Durham University.*

## **Mexico travel tips**

I can't recommend Mexico enough for your future travel plans. Here are some humble tips of mine for getting the most out of your trip:

- If you speak Spanish, this will come in very handy; as you would expect, in some of the more rural parts of Mexico, no or very little English is spoken. If you are not a Spanish-speaker then perhaps give yourself a challenge of learning a few useful phrases – your efforts will most certainly be rewarded!
- Don't be afraid to engage with the person next to you at the taco stall. Firstly, if you like the look of what they're eating, you can find out what it is. It might not exist on the menu per se, and most stall-owners are more than happy to accommodate or recommend certain dishes you might not know about. And secondly, you might end up with your taco-stall-neighbour insisting she write you a list of all the best street food spots as well as some things to do that the guidebooks might have missed!
- In Mexico City get around like a local. This means clutching onto your bag or backpack and braving the metro. Lots of hostels will tell you to avoid the metro, and I would agree that taking it at night is unwise, but during the day,



so long as you are vigilant, and on the look-out for pickpockets, it is a great way to explore the City. See Nathaniel Gardener's article in this edition of the Bulletin for the full metro low-down.

- The bus network across Mexico is wonderful and, in my opinion, better than the UK equivalent. They are inexpensive; they stop for meal breaks; they seem pretty safe; and the overnight buses allow you to cover some big distances and to see more of Mexico!

## **News from the *mundo hispano***

**“So long as Spanish Americans fight faction against faction, so long will they be a little people, a silly people, greedy, barbarous, and cruel.”**

Had Hollywood made a film about Bolívar or San Martín before David Lean made *Lawrence of Arabia*, that might have been the form in which that devastating verdict on fractured societies would have been delivered.

The original quote, from the mouth of T E Lawrence, refers to Arabs rather than Latin Americans and to tribes rather than factions. Nonetheless, looking at the wasteland of today's Venezuela or the killing streets of Nicaragua, the sentiment remains just as valid. Yes, these societies have struggled with a colonial legacy of weak institutions and inadequate respect for the rule of law. But the culture of caudillismo has worsened since independence and needs to be overcome, as it was in Mexico one hundred years ago (albeit at great cost).

Today, millions of Venezuelans live out their lives in oppression, poverty or exile in order to allow an ideological elite to maintain its self-image as the infallible owner of the state. Pig-headed caudillos have intensified their brutal repression, causing a destabilising refugee crisis in other regional states. In Venezuela the president claimed to have been the target of a supposed drone attack that could have come from the pages of a García Márquez novel.

Meanwhile in Mexico a new president took office with a popular mandate to act against corruption and violence. Will he need to use unconstitutional methods – and if so, will that be justifiable, or will it propel Mexico down a dangerous path?

In the summer's other news from the south, Chile the extent of the cover-up of sexual abuse within the Catholic church became exposed. Abortion divided Argentine society over whether to maintain traditional restrictions or legislate for the reality of a 21<sup>st</sup> century urban society. Argentina's experiment with responsible economics was threatened by inherent weaknesses in its economy.

In Spain, the minority government is looking more at ease than its predecessor. Perhaps progressive politics is a better fit with 21<sup>st</sup> century Spain. Or perhaps Pedro Sánchez just looks more relaxed than his beleaguered predecessor. The PP's

response was an attempt to out-*guapo* Sánchez by choosing Pablo Casado as its new leader. Casado was immediately beset by allegations that his Master's degree might have been gifted to him rather than earned – sending the press into an Inquisitorial rummage through politicians' dissertations to check for plagiarism and authenticity, leading to one minister resigning.

While Casado's values were branded a throw-back to a less tolerant era, the Sánchez administration associated itself with the kind of humanitarian immigration policy pioneered by Germany, allowing migrants who had been turned away by other EU states to disembark in Spanish ports. Plans to move Franco's remains out of the Valle de los Caídos gathered pace (see separate article 'Out of the Valley'). The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Constitution was celebrated, but not by the President of Catalonia who at one point called on his supporters to 'atacar al Estado'. *Soberanistas* were accused of using their *lazos amarillos* campaign (affixing yellow ribbons in public spaces in support of independence activists either jailed or awaiting trial) to divide Catalan society. High-profile removals of these ribbons by pro-Constitution politicians tended only to provoke yet more outbreaks of yellow. Mr Sánchez calls for dialogue.

*By BAS editor Robin Wallis*

## Pre-U: where to get help

Not sure that your pupils did as well as they might have in last summer's exams? New(ish) to Pre-U? Taking on a new Topic or Text this year?

In these circumstances it can be helpful to talk to someone in the know. But sometimes you can't find an appropriate training course: perhaps the one you saw advertised last year was cancelled, and you weren't even sure that it was going to answer your questions. Your new Sixth Form teacher seems mystified and you're not confident you can answer all her questions, even if you had time.

Help is available.

Examiners offering inset is *estrictamente prohibido* – but some teach Pre-U and can usefully conduct seminars for students on a visiting basis. There are also consultants well versed in Pre-U who help with ideas for Sixth Form Spanish programmes, if that's what you're after. [Contact us](#) for further information

And don't forget the 'Principal Examiner's Report for Teachers' and 'indicative content' available online.

The extra stretch of Pre-U tends to bring the best out of both students and teachers. Using the available resources can make it all the more fulfilling.

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## **Re-marks: is it worth it?**

Any script you request from the exam board is likely to be a well-thumbed document. Marking is subject to various levels of quality control, which is one reason why relatively few re-mark requests bring about changes. However, if you have any doubts that your student has got the right mark, re-mark!

The most common emotion on results day is delight at the proportion of pupils who score at the very top of their potential. However, there are always a few cases where there were grounds to hope for a better grade than the one received.



Can we identify why this occurs?

The candidate misjudging the required amount of revision is of course a possibility, albeit a difficult one to quantify. Looking at the scripts, other more tangible reasons may become apparent.

One is the student misinterpreting the question: for example, some candidates answered this year's Pre-U Paper 4 q4B (*¿Cómo se representa a los opresores...?*) by writing about forms of oppression depicted in the films – with not a word about the *opresores*. If a student who was typically scoring 80% on practice essays were to make that mistake, it would explain why s/he might have scored only 40% on the day.

The same would be true of a candidate not answering the question – although a low mark in these circumstances is often not a surprise, since the candidate is likely to have made the same mistake in practice essays. 'ATQ' problems generally reflect limited study of the Topic/Text, leading the candidate to write about what s/he does (at least partly) know and hoping that that is good enough, rather than addressing the actual question.

Another (rarer) reason for an untypically low score is that the candidate decides to produce a hifalutin answer for exam day, and so digresses into literary theory, or the author's background, or esoteric criticism, and ends up some distance from the question.



The third reason is that an examiner identifies the flaws while overlooking the merits of an answer. Anyone who's marked bundles of essays at this level will have done that (and the reverse) at some point. There are various ways that individual examiners and the wider team successfully identify and correct such cases, but it is not beyond the bounds of human limitations for an error to slip through. That's why re-marks must always remain an option.

Of course, a candidate must consider where his/her overall result stands in relation to grade boundaries before requesting a re-mark. If s/he has tallied 99 marks and the next grade boundary up is 100, go for it. But if the candidate has 101 and the next grade boundary is 115 then requesting a re-mark may be more likely to lead to a drop in grade than a rise (though of course most re-mark requests lead to no change in the mark at all).

*By BAS editor Robin Wallis*

## **Post-exam forensics**

The end of the summer holiday comes with the publication of exam results and the hope that our candidates' performances have met expectations. After the initial but unavoidable nervousness when one opens the results email, the teacher's mind defaults into a frantic analytical mode that looks for highlights and potential areas for improvement.



Recent school feedback suggests that most candidates performed at the expected level and the Pre-U exams continue to provide a fair assessment of the candidates' capabilities. The Enquiry About Results (aka re-mark) service is used by a number of schools each year, mostly for the Papers involving essays and discussion (Papers 1, 3 and

4) where assessment is more open to subjective judgement. It is worth noting that exam boards tend in any case to devote extra scrutiny to scripts and candidates sitting on a grade boundary.

The Principal Examiner's Report for Teachers (PERT), published on each examination series, is loaded with first-hand information on candidate performance, exam preparation advice and a number of *dos* and *don'ts* that most centres use to prepare their next cohort. The other essential document to dissect in the aftermath of exam results is, no doubt, the Mark Scheme and Indicative Content. Whereas, Mark Schemes are essential when it comes to exam technique, the so-called Indicative Contents are often used by centres as Topics and Texts teaching resources. Indicative Contents must not be interpreted as the only possible approach to the question. However, they contain a number of non-negotiables that should form the core of a good essay.



According to the HMC, most private schools are still uneasy over A-Level grades. Despite a slight increase in A\* results the general perception is that its harsh marking

is deterring candidates from pursuing MFL studies in the Sixth Form. By contrast, the number of candidates and centres taking Pre-U Spanish continues to grow on the back of what centres regard as an exciting syllabus and a grading system that accurately differentiates candidate performance.

When comparing Pre-U with A-Level outcomes, there is a close degree of synchronisation. Over the ten years of Pre-U, candidates considered A grade standard in A level terms have achieved a D3 at Pre-U (the equivalence has been subjected to some nuance recently, with top-end M1 grades also equated to A level A grade). The data suggests, however, that there has been a higher proportion of D2s at Pre-U than A\* at A level. Pre-U also offers the D1 grade to those inspired and inspiring candidates whose linguistic and analytical competence is truly outstanding across papers.

A brief survey amongst both new and established centres has indicated that teachers welcome the syllabus' flexibility. They enjoy exploring diverse topics as they please, focusing on the learner's academic development and putting exam preparation on the back burner. For new centres, the course has been challenging but, at the same time, accessible to their pupils.

*By BAS editor Francisco Compán*

# Text books for Pre-U? *Wirklich?*

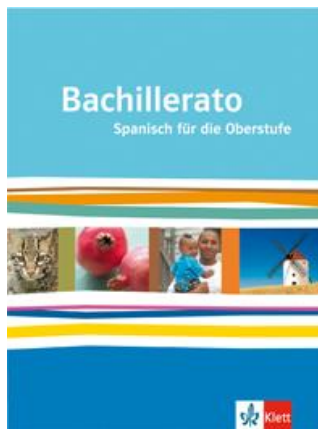
*By Regina Engel-Hart (joint Head of Spanish at Abingdon School)*

At Abingdon School we enjoy teaching the Pre-U due to its non-prescriptive course and the freedom to choose material. However, we know that which sources to use for creating tasks can be very time-consuming.

So, we would like to introduce you to a few Spanish teaching books from the German publishing houses **Klett** and **Cornelsen** that we love to use in our Pre-U teaching. I have used them in my teaching in Bavaria in Germany, but as they are based on the CEFR and all instructions are exclusively in Spanish, they are a great addition to our teaching resources. The following books are not handed out to the pupils, instead we adapt them to our needs to teach topics and grammar.

## **Bachillerato – Klett**

CEFR B2+C1



The book is structured by topics (“Dossiers”) *Jóvenes hoy, Chile - un país de contrastes, Centroamérica y el Caribe, Tendencias globales, Imágenes de España, Andalucía me gusta, País vasco, Impresiones culturales, España desde la II República, Migraciones, Los medios, Lecturas para jóvenes* (click [here](#) for full contents). Within each “Dossier” there is progression (i.e. an increasing level of challenge), so this book is especially suitable for the beginning of the Pre-U course. The range of authentic materials, such as abstracts from literary texts, videos and audio such as TV/radio clips and film sequences is impressive, but we love it especially for its range of additional materials.

### Why we love it:

- The highlight is the digital teaching assistant (“Digitaler Unterrichtsassistent”) which includes all accompanying materials in one interactive ebook (solutions, audio, videos, additional slides).

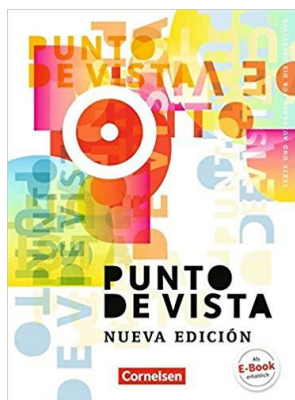
- **Bachillerato** also comes with a *Cuaderno de actividades* for pupils, an app to practise vocabulary and codes to access free additional teaching materials.
- **Sicher in Grammatik** and **Sicher in die Oberstufe** are fantastic additions to practise grammar and skills. They are thematically linked to the topics in the book but can equally be used on their own.

Browse the book and make sure to have a look at the additional FREE materials and to have a taste of the digital teaching assistant.

Pricing: Pupil's book ("Schülerbuch") 25€, Cuaderno de actividades 16€, digital teaching assistant ("Digitaler Unterrichtsassistent"), "Sicher in Grammatik" 13€, "Sicher in die Oberstufe" 17€

## **Punto de vista – Cornelsen**

CEFR B1/B2



This is a text-based book around the topics *Migración, Juventud en movimiento, Andalucía, Dictaduras y democracia, México, Retos para Latinoamérica, La España moderna*.

Every chapter starts with *palabras en contexto*, a text with basic information to introduce and practice topic-specific vocabulary.

Texts are around 350 words long and there is a variety of comprehension tasks and further *expresión escrita, expresión oral* and/or *comprensión auditiva*. Every chapter finishes with a *punto final*, a small or bigger project. Like **Bachillerato**, **Punto de vista** also highlights various *estrategias de aprendizaje*, but we love it for practising grammar in context.

### Why we love it:

One of our favourite features is *gramática en contexto*: a cloze test on one grammatical feature in the pupils' book. The solutions can be found in the additional grammar book **Kompetenztrainer Grammatik**. Pupils can self-correct and are then directed to exercises based on their results. Not only is this differentiation fantastic,

the grammar exercises are also highly informative and linked to the topics in the book.

Browse the [book](#) and [Kompetenztrainer Grammatik](#).

Prices: Pupil's book ("Schülerbuch") 27€, "Kompetenztrainer Grammatik" 16€, Audio CD 21€

## **Palabras en contexto** – Klett

CEFR B1+B2



This book comprises short informative texts on the topics *España: datos útiles, Latinoamérica hoy en día, España y Latinoamérica en el pasado, La diversidad política en Hispanoamérica, Política en España, La economía, El mundo hispanohablante, Movimientos migratorios, Facetas de la sociedad, La ecología, Los medios de comunicación, La vida cultural, La educación*. It is a great resource to learn vocabulary in context as important words are highlighted in the text and can be practised in the accompanying book **Abi Wortschatztrainer**. Sure, the translations into German might have to be ignored, but we love it because all the texts are available as audio online (also via QR code) and are a useful resource to create listening comprehension exercises.

Browse the [book](#) and the accompanying [Abi Wortschatztrainer](#)

Pricing: "Palabras en contexto" 18€, "Abi Wortschatztrainer" 16€





*A park in Lyon, Image by Annie Beckett*

## **Sharing the Experience.**

***The CrossCall and Near Peers projects; undergraduates mentor school students, online.***

The above image, sent to an A-level school student by an undergraduate on her year abroad in France, along with a description of coping with being away from home for the first time, illustrates how sharing experiences could be one way to tackle the serious problem in the UK of the decline in the numbers studying languages. What follows here is a brief account of the journey to that conclusion.

In a previous project, ATLAS (A Taste of Languages at School), [www.ucl.ac.uk/atlas](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/atlas), I surveyed the views of 1,000 year 10 and 11 school students on learning languages. One cause for dissatisfaction they said was the lack of “real” audiences in school, that is, of opportunities to communicate with native or expert speakers of the target language.

Disappointed in their experience of language learning, they “wanted to communicate” but considered they were not given the opportunity. Ironically, although GCSE syllabuses are alleged to be “communicative”, they have a narrow functional orientation. The “topics” in the syllabus are an attempt to trigger a desire

to express meaning and communicate personal information but true communicative competence lies in expressing the speaker's own meanings, i.e. in being able to generate an original, appropriate utterance.

Working on outreach projects in UCL, I had the idea to address this problem through a project called "CrossCall" which linked language classes in a few selected state schools with undergraduates in UCL. We used a Discussion Forum in WebCT to encourage school students to ask questions of undergraduates about their work.

We were presented with what seemed the perfect opportunity. A Year 10 class was preparing to visit Russia. UCL undergrads were, or had been, in Russia on their Year Abroad. However, it was not long before we discovered that the social situation we set up for communication was not enabling.

The questions and responses from the pupils are characterised by their brevity and lack of follow-up. No one really wanted to commit to serious questions. Some were earnest but strained; others were flippant. It is clear that the public nature of the Discussion Board and the remoteness of the student experts was an inhibiting factor leading to low involvement or defensive exhibitionism - a little like answering a question in class!

The content of the communications was still directed by the teachers, who suggested topics and tasks relevant to the exam syllabuses. For example, A- level pupils are expected to know something of current affairs in the country whose language they are studying. So the undergraduates set up a quiz based on the content of on-line news sites which the school students had to explore. Another example was on the topic on the AS level Spanish syllabus, "Food". We set up a telecollaborative task asking the students from both sectors to work in groups to create material for a proposed new webpage for a local tapas bar. Using their photos of its location and the food, they added text, animated graphics and music links to create a web site to promote the Bar. All of this was quite successful but it was still playing a game of pretend audiences and purposes.

Consequently, in a later version of the project, now called "Near Peers" we organised the mentors and mentees in pairs, each pair using a Discussion Board in Moodle to which no-one but the student-mentor, the student-mentee, myself and their schoolteacher had access.

## **The role of the student - a “Near Peer”.**

“Tandem learning” has been used in HE before but in our projects the main difference is the power relationship; tandem students are generally well-motivated learners and equality in the relationship is presupposed. Our cross-sector projects are based on participants of unequal status, in terms of age, expertise and often commitment.

They are also different as the project now encouraged moving beyond the narrow confines of the school syllabus. In many of the exchanges we saw a relationship building from the formal (mentor/pupil) to the informal (older friend). A typical history of communication within a pair, for example, began with questions on subjects studied and plans for the future but then proceeded to more intimate questions and comments about the difficulty of buying gifts for brothers, a problem shared by both participants.

The undergraduate, neither a fellow student nor a teacher, was able often to use this role to collude with the pupil-learner, signalled by features of the language such as *Tell me about it! They want you to do this* or *I like to do it this way*. The right personal tone became critical.

## **Letting go**

We discovered with those earnest mentors, who saw themselves as teachers and tried to use only the target language, that communication was limited and gradually died away. It is very hard to get the right colloquial tone in a language that is being learned.

So mentors were encouraged to establish a friendly relationship using English at first and then slowly introducing the target language when the mentee’s confidence was gained. Mentors who switched codes and registers frequently were able to sustain and develop a deeper relationship. The more that exchanges became school student directed the more successful they were.

The grounds for the project had shifted. It was no longer about teaching the target language; it was now about sharing the experience of learning that language in the context of a university course. True, there was discussion about problems with grammar, or vocabulary, and advice was given on sources of information and methods of presenting oral and written work, but the social side the exchanges was

equally important. The undergrads were able to de-mystify the whole experience of language learning at university.

A development in the last two years has been to invite individual students in to meet their mentor and to sit in on a class. The response has been extremely encouraging. The visit includes an individualised tour of the university campus led by the mentor, giving an opportunity to communicate the authentic experience of being a student.

Undergraduates on the Year Abroad write about their experiences and send images of their stay, addressing the curiosity and sometimes nervousness of school students when thinking of a year away from home.

Young people in this age group have particular, strong developmental needs, for example, to increase their circle of friends and their knowledge of the world, in preparation for “leaving the nest”. Because this project engages them at this deeper level, we have found it contributes substantially to motivation and to improved performance and proves what a great resource our undergraduates are.

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