

# Undergraduate Dissertation

## Trabajo Fin de Grado

Graded readers for teaching English in  
secondary education: practices and proposals  
for enhanced exploitation

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## ABSTRACT

Graded readers are teaching materials used to facilitate students the learning of a second language, but they seem to be underexploited. Therefore, one of the aims of this thesis is to investigate the use, challenges, and benefits of graded readers for teaching English in secondary education. This is achieved through an interview with some teachers from two high schools of Logroño about the way they use graded readers. The second objective is to present a proposal of activities in order to enhance the exploitation of these books by focusing on speaking, a communicative skill that is not usually taught through graded readers.

**Key words:** graded readers - extensive reading – vocabulary – benefits – challenges – speaking activities

## RESUMEN

Las lecturas graduadas son materiales didácticos que se utilizan para facilitar a los alumnos el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua; sin embargo, estos recursos están poco explotados. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este trabajo es investigar el uso, los retos y los beneficios de las lecturas graduadas para la enseñanza del inglés en la educación secundaria. Esto se consigue a través de una entrevista a algunos profesores de dos institutos de Logroño sobre el uso que dan a los lectores graduados. Además, en este trabajo se ha incluido una propuesta de actividades para potenciar la explotación de estos libros que se centran en la expresión oral, ya que es una habilidad de comunicación que no se suele enseñar a través de los lectores graduados.

**Palabras clave:** lectores graduados – lectura extensiva – vocabulario – beneficios – retos – actividades de expresión oral

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## 1. Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign language in schools is part of the educational system of many countries. In Spain, the teaching of a foreign language, such as English, is as important as any other subject taught in primary and secondary school. However, learning a new language involves certain challenges and therefore, teachers try to use resources that improve the efficiency of the teaching process. There are many ways in which students can learn or improve their knowledge of a language and several studies suggest that one efficient way is through reading. As Nuttall (1982) states in her book *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*, “the best way to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it” (as cited in Bamford, 1984, p. 218). Plentiful exposure to language is essential for the students’ development of skills, and an important tenet of CLT (Harmer, 2007). Therefore, many teachers in high schools use graded readers to teach English as a secondary or foreign language in secondary education. Bamford (1984) defines graded readers as “short books of fiction and non-fiction which are graded structurally and lexically and occasionally in other ways” (p. 218).

Graded readers are commonly used in ELT (English language teaching) in secondary education, but they are underexploited. According to Bamford (1984), even though graded readers are also worked on in the classroom, they are most frequently used by the learners in their own homes after the teaching hours. Typically, students read the stories during their free time and once they finish, they complete some related tasks in class (p. 219). Teachers do not usually spend enough time to read or do activities about the graded readers in the classrooms and their reading and comprehension becomes mostly the student’s own responsibility. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to

analyse teaching-learning practices involving graded readers (i.e. how they are actually being used to teach English) and make a proposal for exploiting them as tools for CLT (communicative language teaching), and more specifically as tools to support the development of speaking skills.

## **2. Literature review**

Many definitions have been provided for graded readers. Wan-a-rom (2012) defines them as “books that have been specially written for language learners” (p. 3). These books have been carefully designed for learners of lower and higher levels, also known as beginner and advanced levels. Bamford (1984) explains that for the learners of a lower level, the graded readers are typically unique works that have been specifically created for them. Therefore, these books are original works and have “original titles” (p. 218). However, he adds that for the advanced learners, these books are the condensed and adapted versions of original stories.

These books include appropriate vocabulary and structures according to the corresponding level. This way students will be able to read fluently as they do not run into strange structures or unknown words (Bamford, 1984, p. 218). All these details enable learners to easily understand the story. In order to achieve that, these books include a glossary with the important vocabulary and some comprehension activities at the end of the story (Waring & Takahashi, 2000, p. 9). Moreover, new words and structures are “repeated and recycled” throughout the books for students to get familiar with them (Albay, 2017, p. 178). For example, some graded readers include a set of the 400 most common and relevant English words that appear many times in the book (Waring & Takahashi, 2000, p. 9). Therefore, “graded readers are written to make the

reading easy, motivating, enjoyable and accessible for the learner with a very careful control of different aspects of language” (Wan-a-rom 2012, p. 51). The purpose of these books is to help learners develop their communicative skills, and, more particularly, reading skills.

Graded readers are mostly used in secondary education to teach extensive reading and vocabulary. Graded readers are actually regarded by Bamford (1984) as the best way to teach extensive reading, which he defines as “the reading of large amount of materials for pleasure and information” (p. 219). Through extensive reading students increase their “reading confidence” since they read a wide range of texts that correspond to their specific level and which they choose themselves (Waring & Takahashi, 2000, p. 3). According to Waring and Takahashi (2000), for students to be fluent and feel comfortable while reading, they should read books according to their reading skills or under their level (p. 7). Therefore, as these graded books show a “specific level of difficulty” they allow students to improve their reading skills and the intention of extensive reading is to help students to “read faster” (Waring & Takahashi, 2000, p. 9). All this is achieved because of the simplification of the books.

Teachers also use graded readers to teach vocabulary. The books usually collect all the vocabulary that is considered new or relevant at the end of the story. This makes it easier for learners to understand the story and acquire new vocabulary, which sometimes happens unconsciously due to the repetition of certain words throughout the text. Waring and Takahashi (2000) state that “the average word must be met 15 to 20 times before it is learned” (p. 9). They add that the fact that students cannot remember the new vocabulary that they learn is because they do not usually see the new terms again shortly after studying them, which usually happens in the textbooks. Graded readers facilitate the acquisition of new vocabulary since they include important terms

and language that are appropriate for the students' levels (Nation, 2018, p. 37). Nation (2018) demonstrates through his research that reading an entire book that has not been adapted into a specific vocabulary level is not the best idea but knowing a big amount of words make it easier to read a book (p. 35). Nation carried out a research in which he would compare the vocabulary of five original novels of the same length in order to analyse how challenging it could be for English learners to read them assuming they have a vocabulary range of "3,000 useful word families" (Nation, 2018, p. 33). The findings of the study indicate that the knowledge of this amount of terms is insufficient for the correct reading of the books because, as explained by Nation (2018), even with an approximately 3,000 word family vocabulary, there would be one unfamiliar word for each 20 terms (p. 35). Therefore, for English learners, reading a book that is not designed at their level of vocabulary becomes a waste of time, a complicated task, and an ineffective way to learn new words (Nation, 2018, p. 36). However, as stated before, graded readers are suitable for English learners. These books are "worth reading" from the beginning to the end not just because they include an appropriate vocabulary, but also because their content is engaging (Nation, 2018, p. 37).

Even though the teaching of vocabulary and extensive reading through graded readers are the main uses of these books in secondary education, graded readers have many other uses. Although teachers generally do not use graded readers to teach grammar, some studies show that reading graded readers helps students develop a better level of grammar which can be seen through their writing. Goulart (2020) compared the "lexico-grammar complexity in two levels of graded readers, beginner and intermediate" (p. 83). The conclusion of this research was that there are grammatical differences between the two levels (Goulart, 2020, p. 98). This was analysed through students' writing abilities. The investigation demonstrated that beginner level learners "adopt patterns of

conversation when writing and as they become more experienced move to patterns of upper-level writing” (Goulart, 2020, p. 97).

As it has been shown, the uses and benefits of graded readers have been the subject of several studies. Furthermore, according to Chang and Renandya (2017), several research was done about the views of the students of a second language towards extensive reading (ER). However, they also mention that teachers’ opinions are not usually considered or investigated (p. 40). Claridge (2009) explains that since the teachers choose the appropriate readers for their students, it is important to understand both, their opinion about the books and their selection criteria (p. 14). Therefore, Claridge (2009) did an investigation in which several university teachers from New Zealand participated and had to “discuss what, in their opinion, makes a good graded reader” (p. 15). Claridge (2009) decided to collect these opinions in three categories proposed by Nuttall (1996) “suitability”, “exploitability” and “readability” (as cited in Claridge 2009, p. 15). According to Nuttall (1996), “suitability” is much more crucial than “exploitability” or “readability” as she believes “interest” to be the main criteria for the selection of a book (as cited in Claridge, 2009, pp 15,23). However, the teachers do not agree with Nuttall, and they consider that the most important thing when choosing a book is the reading skills of the students and therefore, they “placed readability as the primary concern followed by exploitability” (Claridge, 2009, p. 23). As a result, Claridge’s (2009) investigation showed that the teachers prioritized linguistic proficiency above the content of the book (p. 23).

Chang and Renandya (2017) conducted a research on the problems that teachers had while integrating ER into their academic program. A significant issue noticed in this study was that teachers working with ER did not probably receive the necessary preparation and help since they were only instructed to comply with the expectations of



their schools and not to adapt to their students 'necessities (Chang & Renandya, 2017, p. 44). Moreover, the teachers had to deal with many other difficulties related to this. Through this study, Chang and Renandya (2017) observed four main challenges that teachers had to deal with: "the students were not interested in reading, it was difficult to monitor whether students actually read, students were not able to read independently, and it was difficult to get students to read materials that were not assessed" (p. 48). Other participants also mentioned their challenges related to ER: mobile phones have made students unable to concentrate for longer than few minutes and "sleepy students", unmotivated to study (Chang & Renandya, 2017, p. 49). The conclusion would be that the primary challenges faced by the teachers are the students' lack of motivation and lack of "interest in reading" (Chang & Renandya, 2017, p. 48).

### **3. Method**

In order to analyse teaching practices regarding graded readers, an interview to several English teachers about the use and benefits of graded readers was conducted in two high schools in Logroño. A total of 11 questions were asked (see table 1) and responses were collected from 5 teachers, teaching the fourth year of high school. There were four teachers from the same high school and the fifth teacher was from a different one. In the first high school the teachers decided to stop using graded readers as they did not find them effective anymore. Therefore, most of the answers collected from them are from their previous experiences with the use of graded readers. However, one of the four teachers continued using them because she finds them necessary. In the second high school graded readers are still used since the English teachers find them important for the improvement of students' communicative skills.

The results of the interviews were used to inform the design of teaching activities to exploit graded readers to develop speaking skills.

Table 1. Questions for the interview

1. Which is the English level you teach?
2. What are the graded readers that students have to read and why did you choose these books?
3. Do students work with graded readers at home or in class?
4. Do you use graded readers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teach/practice reading?</li> <li>- teach/practice listening?</li> <li>- teach/practice writing?</li> <li>- teach/practice speaking?</li> <li>- teach vocabulary?</li> <li>- teach grammar?</li> <li>- others (e.g. teach culture)</li> </ul>
5. Why do you focus on those specific skills and not on others?
6. What activities do you do with graded readers in order to work on these skills?
7. What do you think are the benefits of using graded readers?
8. Do you think they are effective? In which way?
9. What are the challenges or difficulties you find when using these readers?
10. Do you provide any support to make the graded readers easy to understand?
11. Do you examine the students about the books?

## 4. Results

The first question asked in the interview was about the level of English taught in the classes. The answers varied depending on the ages of the students. The minimum level taught would be an A2, for students at the age of 13 and 14 and the highest level would be a B2 for older students between 16 and 17 years old. However, the teachers wanted to emphasize that this is the required level according to their ages but that not everyone would reach this level. Some students end up having lower levels while others are above the level required by the education system.

The second question was about the titles of the books and the reason they choose those specific graded readers. There were many different answers concerning this topic. For the A2 level, some of the books chosen were *Life in Britain*, *Life in USA* and *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. These teachers would focus on the teaching of culture and the mystery genre in order to make reading interesting for their students. For the B2 level students, the teachers would choose books such as *Frankenstein*, *The Boy in Stripped Pyjama* or *The Great Gatsby*. One of the teachers argued that her intention in choosing these books was to familiarize students with some of the classics of literature as well as to make them enjoy the stories. However, they all agreed on the fact that reading is pleasure, so they try to find books which are interesting for the students.

The third question was whether the books are worked in the classroom or at home. Most of the teachers answered that students work with them mostly at home while only two teachers said that the students work with them mostly in class as they do different activities than the ones offered by the book, so it is necessary to do them in class.

The next question asked to the teachers aimed at determining whether they used graded readers to teach communicative skills such as listening, reading, writing, speaking or

elements such as grammar and vocabulary, or to teach other contents, for example, to teach culture. All agreed that they use the books to teach vocabulary and extensive reading, and three of the five teachers affirmed that this was the only reason they used the books for.

The two remaining teachers explained that they wanted to get more benefits from the graded readers and therefore, they spent more class time to also work on speaking, writing and even teaching culture and critical thinking to the students through the books.

When the English teachers were asked about the reason they focused on those specific skills and not on others, the three of them who used the books only for the teaching of vocabulary and extensive reading, argued that it was the easiest thing to do in a class of thirty students and they did not have enough time to work with the books. This answer is consistent with the answers of the teachers in Chang and Renandya's (2017) study since both confirm that they do not adapt to the specific necessities of the students. However, one of the teachers said that she tried to think of the needs of her students, and she realized that focusing only on the textbook was not motivating and learning in a different way was more entertaining for them.

The sixth question was about the activities they did with the graded readers to work on the skills mentioned before. Most of the teachers only worked on the comprehension exercises at the end of the story. Students had to complete the activities at home, and they corrected them next week on class. However, two teachers said they did completely different activities from the ones in the book. One of them provided guided worksheets for students to work on reading, writing and critical thinking and also conducted individual interviews with students to practice speaking. And another teacher said that each Friday of the week she made her students read out loud one paragraph

and summarise it. At the end of the class, she made her students summarise the whole chapter writing three lines, and thus, the students practiced their writing skills as well.

Question number seven was about the benefits of using graded readers. All the teachers agreed that reading always brings benefits. In the case of graded readers, two of the teachers believed that the greatest benefit is the acquisition of new vocabulary. By contrast, others said that the greatest benefit of these books is to improve students' fluidity while reading along with the expansion of cultural knowledge since they adapt the classics of literature at an accessible level for students.

The next topic discussed with the English teachers was the effectiveness of graded readers and there were different opinions regarding this topic. Three teachers of the first high school said that even though the graded readers are beneficial for language learning, they did not find them very effective because children did not read the books. Even though the books provide benefits in terms of reading and learning new vocabulary, they do not see them as an effective method of teaching English in secondary school, since in order to work with them it is necessary for students to read them. But the teachers noticed that the students did not make any effort to read the books in their homes. Therefore, they reached the conclusion that the books were effective for few students and for many others they were not, so they decided to remove them from their education program. However, the other two teachers did find the books effective. One of them argued that students do not like to read and therefore, it is necessary to make them read and motivate them through stories they find interesting. Another teacher said that these books are effective depending on the objectives of their use. She added that not all students have the same English level or the same motivation, but it is important to encourage students to read.

Question number nine was about the challenges they found while working with the graded readers. All the teachers agreed that the biggest difficulty was to motivate students to read the books due to their lack of interest and the little time they had to work with the books in the classrooms. Similar answers were collected by Chang and Renandya (2017) in their study of teacher's perceptions on extensive reading in Asia. Apparently, both, the Spanish and Asian teachers agree on the fact that the biggest problem of the reading activity in schools are the students themselves who are constantly unmotivated and uninterested in reading.

Next question was whether the teachers provide support to make graded readers easier to understand. Some teachers provided support, but others did not. Some teachers argued that they asked their students to bring the books to class and explain their doubts about the story or vocabulary they were not familiar with. Another teacher said that when reading the book in class she used to help the students with the pronunciation, by rephrasing sentences they did not understand and giving them cultural context. There was only one teacher who said that she used to choose the books based on whether there was audiovisual material to provide to the students, such as movies, series, interviews to the actors. Moreover, before reading the story, she would spend a whole class to explain the cultural and social background of the story and to introduce the author's life and his reason to write the book. Therefore, in general it seems that there is little work on pre-reading activities which would facilitate the comprehension of the content and motivate the students.

Finally, the last question was if the teachers examined the students about the books. Some of the teachers said that they did evaluate their students but through guided worksheets they would do at home, not necessarily a written exam during the class hour. However, most of the teachers agreed on the fact that it was necessary to set an

exam, which acted as a “threat” to make sure that they would read the books as they were barely worked in at class.

The main conclusions of the interview are that graded readers are mostly used in high schools for teaching vocabulary and extensive reading and the most important idea is that, although they may be effective if students are engaged, it is difficult to engage students to actually read the books. Therefore, graded readers have to be chosen carefully. And as already mentioned before, according to teachers’ criteria in Claridge’s (2009) study, good readers must be easy to read and easy to work with (readable and exploitable). Moreover, in order to create interest to students, teachers need to design activities which make them read the books.

## **5. Design of speaking activities based on graded reader: proposal**

According to the information collected from the interview to the teachers and from previous studies, it has been shown that the biggest use of the graded readers is to teach vocabulary and to practice extensive reading. Therefore, the books are underexploited since their use is usually very limited and, in general, teachers do not use them to practice the rest of the skills. In addition, it has been possible to prove through the interview that this use of the books, instead of motivating the students who, according to the teachers, are not interested in reading, demotivates them even more. Therefore, this paper proposes a series of activities that have been designed to practice speaking, since it is the skill that is not usually worked through graded readers. Furthermore, these activities have been designed to include current issues along with specific topics from the chosen book in order to engage students in reading while helping them to practice and improve their speaking skills.

The book chosen for the design of the activities is *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith and retold by Anne Collins. It is a book made up of ten chapters and each of them consists of solving a different mystery. Each mystery takes place in Botswana, Africa, and the detective investigating the cases is a woman called Mma Precious Ramotswe. She has her own detective agency in Botswana, where she also lives. It is a pre-intermediate level book (level 3). This book was used by one of the Spanish teachers of the interview for her students with an A2 English level. *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* is a very complete book since it has a glossary of terms in the last pages as well as a series of activities that correspond to two chapters each. These activities are pre-reading, while reading and post-reading activities and there are exercises to work on each of the skills, except listening. Some of these activities focus on speaking but they are very similar since most of them consist of discussing some topics of the chapters in pairs and they include few current topics that could interest the students. Therefore, the activities proposed below present more variety of exercises as well as topics that could be more motivating.

Therefore, since the book has its own activities, the proposal consists in designing a series of activities to practice speaking that complement the exercises in the book. The intention of creating these activities is to motivate students more and get them interested in reading the book.

The activities are designed for three different days. The first day, most of the exercises will be pre-reading activities in order to contextualize the story, introduce the book little by little, and particularly get the students interested in the book and motivate them to read it. Therefore, for these activities, students are not requested to read the book before the lesson.



For the second day, students will work on the first chapter of the book called “The Daddy”. There will be post-reading activities and students are not requested to have previously read the chapter as they will be reading fragments of it throughout the lesson.

For the third day, students will work on the fifth chapter of the book called “The Boyfriend”. There will post-reading activities and the teacher will have previously requested the students to read the chapter.

### **DAY 1: Speaking activities before reading any of the chapters**

#### **Activity 1**

**Type of speaking activity:** narrative

**Type of interaction:** students to whole class

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Procedure:**

1. The teacher will ask the students whether they are familiar with detective stories and which ones they know.
2. The teacher will ask students to think about any mystery that they know that the detectives had to solve and how they solved it. Then, they could be given a worksheet as a scaffolding, where they have to briefly complete the following information: detective- problem/mystery- solution
3. Students will have 5 minutes to prepare the activity.
4. A few students will tell their mysteries to the whole class.

#### **Activity 2**

**Type of speaking activity:** listing, discussing in group

**Type of interaction:** group

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Procedure:**

1. The teacher will divide the class in groups of four and ask students to talk about the fictional detectives they know.

2. Students have to create a list and choose the one they like the most.
3. One student in each group shares their favourite detective and explains why they chose him/her.

### Activity 3

**Type of speaking activity:** ranking, discussing in group

**Type of interaction:** group

**Time:** 25 minutes

**Procedure:**

1. The teacher will tell the students that the book they have to read is about detectives. Then, he/she will explain them that in each chapter, there are different mysteries which happen in Africa and the detective who will solve these mysteries is a woman.
2. The teacher will divide students in groups of four in which they have to discuss about the qualities they think a person must have to be a good detective.
3. The students will be given a worksheet in which they will have to rank the qualities discussed before from 1 to 10.
4. Then, one person of each group will share their results with the rest of the class.

These exercises could work very well as an introduction of the book in a speaking class since they allow students to participate actively doing a wide variety of activities in which they will have to share their personal tastes and their previous knowledge on a subject (in this case on detectives) in groups and with the rest of the class through activities that they could find interesting.

In addition, students could practice speaking through activities that are completely adapted to their language level. Therefore, these exercises are designed to help them improve their speaking skills.

## **DAY 2: Speaking activities after reading some fragments of chapter 1**

### Summary of the chapter

In this first chapter, “The Daddy”, the narrator introduces the setting and tells the story of how *The No.1 Ladies’ Detective Agency* was created. He says that the father of Mma Ramotswe (the protagonist of the book), who was about to die, asks his daughter to sell the cattle and open a business. Then, she tells him that she wants to open a detective agency.

This chapter also introduces the first mystery of the book. One of the agency's first clients, Happy Bapteshi, asks Mma Ramotswe to find out if the man who came to her house claiming to be her father is really her father. She tells the protagonist that her father left home when she was a baby, so she had not seen him until then. Therefore, she did not believe that the man was her father. To solve this mystery, Mma Ramotswe wears a nurse uniform and goes to Happy's house to tell Happy’s father that his daughter had a car accident and needs a lot of blood from a relative. Therefore, she asks him to donate his blood to his daughter. In the end, the man confesses that he is not Happy's real father and Mma Ramotswe asks him to leave Happy's house forever.

### **Activity 1**

**Type of speaking activity:** voting, discussing in group

**Type of interaction:** group

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Procedure:**

1. The teacher asks the students to read the first three pages of the first chapter in which the first mystery appears.
2. The teacher divides the class into groups of four students and asks them to discuss how they would try to find out whether the man who says he is Happy's father is

really her father.

3. Each group shares their possible solutions to the rest of the class.
4. Finally, the teacher asks students to vote for their favourite solution.

## Activity 2

**Type of speaking activity:** whole class debate and discussing in group and in pairs

**Type of interaction:** pairs, group, whole class

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Procedure:**

1. Mma Ramotswe's father dies before giving his opinion on his daughter's idea of starting a detective agency. Therefore, the teacher asks the students to discuss in pairs whether they think the father would agree or disagree with this idea, according to what they read.
2. The teacher divides the class into groups of five students and asks them to think of at least five problems (for example, social or economic ones) that they think Mma Ramotswe would have to deal with when opening her detective agency.
3. One person of each group will share their ideas with the rest of the students.
4. Finally, the teacher asks the whole class to debate whether they believe that Mma Ramotswe's detective agency would be successful in real life or not. Students have to argue their answers.

## Activity 3

**Type of speaking activity:** whole class discussion

**Type of interaction:** students to whole class

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Procedure:**

1. The teacher asks each student to read the last two pages of the first chapter and discuss whether they thought it was a good way to solve the case.
2. Finally, the teacher asks the students whether they think the detective in the story has the qualities they said a person should have to be a good detective and explain why giving examples from the story.

The activities proposed for the second day would be good options since they allow all students to practice their speaking skills through debates, group discussions and activities in pairs. There is a wide variety of activities which are designed for students to work on the chapter as well as to give their opinion on different topics and use their imagination. Moreover, the teacher can make sure that students read the chapter by allowing them to read it during class time. Therefore, reading and working on the first chapter during the lesson could get students interested in the book and make them continue reading the rest of the story.

### **DAY 3: Speaking activities after reading chapter V**

#### Summary of the chapter

In the fifth chapter, “The Boyfriend”, Mma Ramotswe has to solve a new mystery. Mr Paliwalar Patel, one of the richest men in Botswana and of Indian origin, asks Mma Ramotswe for help to find out if his young daughter Nandira has a boyfriend, something he does not agree with. To solve this mystery, Mma Ramotswe decides to follow Nandira to discover if she is seeing any boy. Mr. Patel tells Mma Ramotswe that he thinks her daughter's boyfriend is called Jack as she has received a note from him. Mma Ramotswe goes to the cinema where Nandira is supposed to meet Jack. In the end, Mma Ramotswe is discovered by Nandira, and they both have a conversation in which Nandira confesses that Jack does not exist and that she created him so that her father would let her make her own decisions. However, almost a year later, Mma Ramotswe and Nandira meet again, and she introduces Mma Ramotswe to her friend Jack.

### Activity 1

**Type of speaking activity:** group discussion

**Type of interaction:** group

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Procedure:**

1. The teacher divides the students into three groups and gives each one a different piece of paper with the following words: overcontrolling parent/ modern ideas/ choices.
2. The teacher asks each group to relate these themes to the corresponding characters and to discuss how these topics are dealt with in the chapter, giving examples.
3. One person from each group will share their ideas with the rest of the class.

### Activity 2

**Type of speaking activity:** pair discussion

**Type of interaction:** students to whole class and pairs

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Procedure:**

1. The teacher asks the students if they have ever felt like Nandira during their adolescence.
2. The teacher asks students to discuss in pairs about any moment or situation they remember in which their parents were overprotective of them and did not allow them to make their own decisions.
3. Each pair will share with the rest of the class the experiences discussed before.

### Activity 3

**Type of speaking activity:** group discussion and role play

**Type of interaction:** group

**Time:** 25 minutes

**Procedure:**

1. The teacher asks few students whether they think that the end of the chapter is clear or not. They must argue their answers.
2. The teacher divides the class in groups of three students in which they are asked to change the ending of the story without changing the three characters that appear.

- |  |
|--|
| 3. Each group will present the new ending of the chapter in front of the class through a role play activity. |
|--|

The activities proposed for the third day could be interesting for the students since the topics that appear in the chapter can be related to their own experiences. For this day, the activities designed are more intense since almost all of them consist of group or pair discussions. However, these exercises would be appropriate for this day as students are expected to be able to have more conversations with each other and practice more their speaking skills. Therefore, to finish the lesson, students will do a role play activity that could be more interesting and motivating for them.

## **6. Conclusions**

Apparently, although graded readers seem to be a common tool for teaching a second language (L2), their use is very limited. As has been shown throughout this work, these books are quite underexploited, since their use is especially focused on teaching extensive reading and vocabulary, in most cases, excluding the rest of communicative skills. Therefore, the use of graded readers does not benefit students as much as it could, and several teachers claim that they do not find them very effective. This leads to the elimination of these books as a teaching resource in some schools, as is the case of one of the previously mentioned high schools in Logroño.

However, apparently, the biggest reason for their ineffectiveness turns out to be the students themselves. According to teachers, students' lack of interest and motivation seems to be the primary issue. However, it is not the only problem. According to the research, the three main problems observed when using the graded readers in the classroom are the lack of time to work with them in class, students who are demotivated

as well as uninterested and the little exploitation of these books, which makes it impossible to get the maximum benefit from them.

Therefore, as proposed in this study, a possible solution to motivate students, as well as to fully exploit these books, is to design activities that can engage students in reading by adapting the activities to their language level and their interests. This way, by creating a lesson that is different from what students are used to, more communicative skills as well as additional topics could be covered in a more entertaining way through graded readers.

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