



Universidad de Jaén

Centro de Estudios de Postgrado

Trabajo Fin de Máster

**COMICS TO BOND: DIDACTIC
USE OF GRAPHIC LITERATURE
IN THE EFL CLASSROOM**

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Septiembre, 2023

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ABSTRACT

This master's degree final project has been designed with the purpose of granting value to graphic literature within the Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL). The importance of communicative skills in the acquisition of a foreign language must be emphasized, yet it is also essential to promote the literary values by means of related resources, in order to create more meaningful and real-life learning situations. In addition to providing multimodal (visual and textual) input, which promotes learning outcomes, students of Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE) will hopefully increase their motivation in a favourable atmosphere with materials that do not necessarily belong to the educational world, yet they conform authentic material in the foreign language, in this way adapting to the needs of the students. Consequently, the graphic novel *Heartstopper* has been considered here as suitable for a learning-based scenario. The author addresses topics that are familiar to the teenage students, while promoting values such as respect and acceptance of diversity.

Key words: **graphic literature, English as Foreign Language, communicative skills, multimodality, authentic material, diversity, *Heartstopper*, Alice Oseman**

RESUMEN

Este Trabajo Fin de Máster ha sido diseñado con el propósito de valorar la literatura gráfica dentro de la enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE). Hay que subrayar la importancia de las habilidades comunicativas en la adquisición de una lengua extranjera. Sin embargo, es necesario también promover los recursos literarios para crear situaciones de aprendizaje significativas y adaptadas a la realidad presente. Además de aportar información multimodal (visual y textual), que facilita el rendimiento del alumnado, esta situación de aprendizaje puede incrementar la motivación de los estudiantes de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO), utilizando materiales que no pertenecen necesariamente al mundo educativo, pero que conforman material auténtico en la lengua extranjera, adaptándose así a las necesidades de dichos estudiantes. En consecuencia, la novela gráfica *Heartstopper* ha sido aquí considerada como adecuada para una situación de aprendizaje. En este trabajo se abordan temas que son familiares a los estudiantes adolescentes, al mismo tiempo que se promueven valores como el respeto y la aceptación de la diversidad.

Palabras clave: **literatura gráfica, inglés lengua extranjera, habilidades comunicativas, multimodalidad, material auténtico, diversidad, *Heartstopper*, Alice Oseman**

1. Introduction

First of all, this project intends to implement literature as authentic material for the English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, in the form of comics, in order to develop the abilities of students in the foreign language. Despite the fact that literature is included in the syllabus, the role that plays in English lessons is barely existent in Andalusian high schools. The aim of this research will be to address certain didactic perspectives that agree with using literature in the classroom since teaching a foreign language is not accompanied with a perfect formula. In these modern times, it is essential to be communicative, yet the methods are infinite for Foreign Language learners. Academic necessities will vary according to the specific group of students in a particular context.

I believe in using authentic materials to encourage students to develop their proficiency thanks to the interest created by stories that are familiar to them, besides the naturality of the language presented in those stories. According to the study carried out by Romo-Mayor and Pellicer-Ortín (2022), working with literary texts offer students a variety of contexts and registers in which language can be used (Albaladejo, 2007; González-Rodríguez and Borham-Puyal, 2012).

The most intricate task would be to choose the actual literary text, considering all the parts involved in the process: level of proficiency, topics, or if it is appropriate for the stage that the lesson requires. A significant percentage of students will enjoy light plots regarding compulsory readings, yet teachers should consider the ones that appreciate a more profound narrative or topics related to their everyday lives. In reference to their article, Frey and Fisher (2004) commented on using the work of Will Eisner, an American cartoonist, and students were favourably disposed to engage with it since the topics were familiar to them, besides being easy to read due to their short length. Considering this information, it would be reasonable to choose a story such as *Heartstopper* that deals with young love and self-discovery worries. The author, Alice Oseman, might fit with the interests of a group of teenagers, who are full of questions.

Furthermore, several researchers have discussed about the advantages and disadvantages of using literary material in EFL classrooms (Bobkina and Dominguez, 2014; Divsar and Tahriri, 2009; Oğuz and Bahar, 2008). My purpose is to observe the premises proposed by these authors, besides summarizing them and supporting my thesis. Thus, I will elaborate a didactic unit for a EFL classroom taking into account all these perspectives. The lesson plan would be based on a detailed analysis of the webcomic by Alice Oseman, *Heartstopper*, accompanied with diverse activities, resources and materials.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. A close depiction of graphic literature

The origins of graphic literature can be traced back to the 18th century when caricatures and political cartoons began appearing in newspapers and journals. The prosecutor of comic books, *Funnies on Parade*, was published in 1933 and featured a collection of reprinted newspaper comics. Since then, the medium has evolved significantly and has been used in a variety of settings, including education. Graphic literature can be defined as a genre that combines illustrations and text, where the visual elements are equal to or sometimes even more important than the written ones. This medium has a unique set of characteristics that make it an effective tool for teaching English as a foreign language. It is mandatory to analyse the structure of a comic, a piece of art which belongs to the graphic literature. The first concept that should be kept in mind is the way in which communication is displayed: comics contain images, as well as words, and they jointly form a sequence (Kukkonen, 2013, p. 4). The author further discusses the formats in which comics might be presented, giving remarkable importance to printed comics. Kukkonen published her book in 2013, yet she mentions the rise of web comics due to digitalization. Ten years later, apps and online sites that encourage the creation of web comics are increasing exponentially in popularity (for example, *Webtoon*, *Tumblr*, *Tapas*, etc). That is the case of the author and illustrator Alice Oseman: she firstly published the web series *Heartstopper* on *Tumblr* and on *Tapas* back in 2016.

Since comics are often considered a medium, Jensen (2008) states three requirements for its definition: "(i) it is a mode of communication, (ii) it relies on a particular set of technologies, and (iii) it is anchored in society through a number of institutions" (as cited in Kukkonen, 2013, p. 4). I am interested in the first one, in how this particular type of art communicates. It is noticeable the visual aspect that comics display; Cohn (2007) affirms that "drawing images joins the vocal creation of sound and gesticulation to form the only three channels of expressing propositional concepts available to the human animal" (p. 35). He further proceeded to mention that any time those procedures get in contact with grammar, it creates a "language," hence visual language is derived from images arranged in a sequence. This concept is helpful to comprehend how language is presented in comics: the drawings are identified as panels, and they can be accompanied with text.

As a result, we are able to acknowledge the multimodality of this type of art. The communicative process is occurring through both textual and visual input. Certain people might dismiss the diligence of these creators, who are trying to express and narrate a story with drawings. However, they are allowing the readers to play an active

role in their plot. Their minds have the necessity to fill in the gaps that authors deliberately leave unresolved or incomplete.

Cohn (2007) declares that “[a]s the primary components of the sequence, panels are the essential unit of *syntax* in this visual language” (p. 36). He then proceeded to contemplate on the definition of syntax, which would be the set of norms that affects the interactions between units. Due to the fact that we are dealing with comics, the existence of a visual component in this specific type of grammar and how it is assembled could be questioned. Yet, this outlook simply considers the semantic aspect of words, leaving syntactics aside. Notwithstanding the complexity of defining grammar in itself, it seems adequate to classify the grammar on comics as part of the writing system, a channel that visualizes the verbal language.

All things considered, I am fond of comics since they offer a highly visual and engaging medium for students to learn. Students may find it easier to connect with the material while primarily improving their reading comprehension and, consequently, their language proficiency level. Conversely, the use of comics may also be a challenge for students who are not accustomed to this medium. It does not mean that other types of literature should be dismissed, but I believe in promoting a broader spectrum of contexts in which the language appears. The combination of visual and textual aspects can be used to the advantage of students, whose comprehension of the story is supported by the images. Ultimately, the effectiveness of graphic literature in the EFL classroom will depend on the specific context and goals of the educator and their students.

2.2. Implementing graphic literature in EFL classroom

As I mentioned in the introduction, each group of students combines a huge range of academic necessities. The first step would be to identify those needs, and then accordingly prepare the lesson sequence with the adequate materials, graphic literature in this case. This issue has been discussed by numerous scholars (Albaladejo, 2007; Alonso et al., 2022; Bobkina and Dominguez, 2014; Jennings et al., 2014; Lazar, 1993; Ospino, 2022) and I will mention several points in order to provide a general view of those inquiries.

A benefit of using graphic literature in the EFL classroom is its capacity to appeal to different learning styles. There are many of studies regarding this topic about the ways in which people acquire information. For instance, Pashler et al. (2008) developed their learning-styles theory, which has influenced the educational field. They observed that companies benefited from this theory by creating tests and guidebooks, even seminars for educators. The goal is to provide materials for teachers adapted to diverse learning styles; their instruction would be shaped according to the

styles of the students. In addition, individual students are also part of the target audience since these companies assure they can assess and determine learning styles with some questionnaires. Pashler et al. (2008) based their research on Kolb's (1984, 1985) Learning Styles Inventory, which had a remarkable impact on the United States. Kolb was able to distinguish between four types of learning styles: *divergers*, *assimilators*, *convergers*, and *accommodators*. Further learning models have been developed in the literature, for example, Fernández-Agüero et al. (2020) pointed out that "one of the most influential proposals is the VAK model" (p. 53). The acronym stands for Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic. In general, learning styles theories assume that students will learn more thoroughly if the materials are presented in their preferred form. In our work, the visual aspect of comics has a very important role.

The significance of the learning styles for this project resides in the attempt of covering the necessities of the majority of students. Typically, the lessons as well as activities tend to be mechanic, which only benefits a certain type of student. That being the case, the exploitation of a resourceful material such as comics might reinforce the motivation of the more creative type of students. Both of those profiles will find a common ground for their language and personal development. Concerning performed research on this field, graphic literature can also present challenging and complex language structures and vocabulary in a more accessible and contextualized way than traditional textbooks or literary works, facilitating comprehension and retention. It can be argued that this type of literature is a more attractive medium for students. For instance, Jennings et al. (2014) did a research on fifth-grade students and compared their level of engagement with graphic novels, in contrast with highly illustrated and traditional novels. The use of colours, images, and innovative layouts make reading more engaging and stimulating. Secondly, graphic literature can convey complex cultural, historical, and social issues in a way that is easy to understand. As a result, this medium can help students to develop their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, as well as their critical thinking and cultural awareness. In addition, graphic literature can provide a stimulus for creative and collaborative tasks, such as creating comic strips, storyboards, or sequels, promoting interaction and diversity in the classroom. González-Rodríguez and Borham-Puyal (2012) mentioned: "It is widely acknowledged that literary texts may offer learners opportunities to develop critical reading skills that help them understand other cultures, thus acquiring new cultural frames of reference and a transformed world view" (p. 105).

Following this perspective, Frey and Fisher (2004) underlined the relevance of this type of literature to grant students numerous examples of dialogue, tone, and moods displayed by characters in certain situations. Also, it provides them with writing styles and techniques, and additionally, it allows students to immerse in popular culture and media (p. 24). Finally, graphic literature appeals to the multiple

intelligences of students, combining visual and verbal stimulation to enhance their learning experience. Through the use of graphic literature in the classroom, teachers can promote student-centred learning, improve reading comprehension, and increase student motivation. Likewise, Peacock (1997) insisted on the idea of using authentic materials in the EFL classroom since “they may increase their learners' levels of on-task behaviour, concentration, and involvement in the target activity more than artificial materials” (p. 152).

In order to introduce and integrate graphic literature in EFL education, there are a few approaches that can be employed. Firstly, it is essential to select appropriate graphic works that are relevant to the level and interests of the learners, as well as to the learning objectives. Though it is obligatory to ensure that the visual elements do not overshadow the linguistic content, whilst highlighting the benefits for language learning, cultural understanding, and motivation.

It is essential that we as teachers expect students to face a challenge whenever they are presented with a piece of reading, especially a literary one. One of the complications with literary language is the complexity. The intention behind the words is to communicate the feelings of the author, yet the way it is delivered presents difficulties for teenagers. Consequently, it is advisable to help students understand the meaning of the story before moving on to the events or characters. Working with graphic literature implies that teachers should divide the lessons in several parts, including activities which deal with language itself. A student might not be able to complete a true or false activity if the message was not understood in the first place. In addition, understanding the use of language in the literary context would provide students with other contexts for uses of the foreign language. This would improve their abilities to communicate in English.

Once the comprehension of language is addressed, it is appropriate to analyse the story itself. Graphic literature, in this case comics, is not centred in the entire structure of introduction, development and ending. As a general rule, comics would introduce characters in the middle of an action because authors are not interested in the narrative aspect of storytelling. The teacher has to make sure that students are aware of their role as readers, in which their minds must cooperate. The artists might draw a sad or worried expression on a character, yet it is essential that the reader identifies the feeling. This is the only way to verify that communication has been successful.

For instance, activities can be designed to assess the understanding of the general plot or to analyse the type of language used. In any case, students must work in class in order to verify that they have read the story. The teacher is expected to prepare lessons keeping in mind those aspects of the literary text. Even though

debates are encouraged, students should practice the four skills, besides developing critical thinking. This equilibrium is necessary to effectively introduce literature in the EFL classroom. Activities based on grammatical aspects and a discussion about issues such as mental health can be achieved in the same lesson.

Notwithstanding the spectrum of practical activities, several researchers (Albaladejo, 2007; Fernández-Agüero et al. 2020; González-Rodríguez and Borham-Puyal, 2012; Romo-Mayor and Pellicer-Ortín, 2022) tend to defend a more communicative centred approach in the use of graphic literature. This point of view might be agreeable since we live in a globalized world, and it is mandatory to be practical when communicating. “The goal of quality L2 teaching should be to help students learn a series of skills and strategies that allow them to communicate in the target language” (Fernández-Agüero et al., 2020, p. 62).

Despite the potential benefits, graphic literature has not been always taken seriously as a teaching tool and has faced criticism from some educators and parents. Divsar and Tahriri (2009) pointed out that EFL learners may not have enough language proficiency, which may complicate their approach to literature (p. 108). They may often feel discouraged to read authentic materials without a constant linguistic support. As a result, the guided exposure to the authentic materials in the classroom should be consistent in order to stimulate their minds and to develop their socio-cultural abilities, as well as their language skills. Nonetheless, a revalorization of literature in the EFL context has occurred in the last years because academics (Boudreault, 2010; Eagleton, 2004; Sabouri et al., 2015; Shrestha, 2007; Van, 2009) made efforts to defend and to study the possibilities of literature and how it can enhance the communicative skills of students. Those efforts are still present nowadays for the advocacy and popularization of the academic uses of literature.

2.3. How to properly read and analyse comics

Due to the variety of artists, there is a wide range of comics indeed. One specific comic might not contain many drawings, yet it is full of descriptions and speech bubbles. This should give us the hint that it is intended to be thoroughly read, assimilating every detail about the plot. However, there is another type of comic that contains a reduced amount of text. In this case, the plot is more based on the imagery: the reader is able to connect with the inner world of the author. It does not mean that less text equals more feelings, yet the engagement with the plot derives from the capacity of the reader to interpret the panels. Nevertheless, the tendency for comics is to include frames with minimal or no dialogue, which allows readers to infer meaning from the visuals. This requires readers to closely examine the illustrations and make connections between images, rather than relying solely on text.

Nowadays, teenage students have had the experience of reading a comic book or a manga, due to the globalization of culture. They should know the proper way to read a comic, still the teacher might provide a brief introduction. Panels are meant to be read from left to right, as we usually do. Regardless, if there are captions, they are supposed to be read first; then, the speech bubbles and finally, the onomatopoeias. Overall, comics are not highly demanding to follow the progression of events, though leaps in time are frequent indeed. This technique of shortening time helps to develop the plot successfully, otherwise it would be fathomless to devote a drawing for every detail.

All in all, the analysis of the comic in question should be carried out considering the style of the creators. Therefore, readers ought to examine the methods and techniques of the artists involved in the creating process. The reason is related to the composition: as a reader, I need to focus more on the images of the panels since there is a scant amount of text (or vice versa). Students should be aware that every peculiarity plays a role in the development of the story; panels are arranged in a way that is relevant to the plot, as well as the placement of characters within them. The results are not a coincidence, there is a reason for the display that the comic has.

2.4. Techniques for using comics

The use of comics as a teaching tool has been gaining critical attention for its potential to enhance literary analysis and interpretation, besides increasing their knowledge on other topics such as science or history (Burger, 2018; Ospino, 2022; Ravelo, 2013). Comics offer a unique perspective on cultural literacy, allowing students to explore and appreciate diverse genres, narratives, and artistic styles from numerous creators. For that reason, education has explored the variety of ways to implement them in the classroom. Burger (2018) edited a compilation of testimonies disclosing how comics are implemented on a higher level of education, considering them as a teaching tool that can be used in varied contexts. Teachers from different educational levels used comics to encourage students to debate on rhetoric or stylistic issues. For instance, graphic literature might be the basis of the lesson or simply a contextualized work to develop a critical response.

As illustrated by Ravelo (2013), activities may be designed to incite the critical thinking of students, instead of focusing on the language itself. In order to awaken interest, students will be given brief information about the comic, so they have to guess the answers to several questions, based on their suppositions. This way of introducing the graphic novel allows students to discuss about their own expectations. Additionally, they focus on their observation skills to predict what the title is about or how the characters are portrayed in the cover, for example.

The project presented by Ospino (2022) is devoted to the creation of a website called *Coming for Comics*¹ that provides ideas for role-plays, besides examples of activities dealing with the four learning skills. Teachers and students are able to download materials and resources to work with the comics. One demonstration of activity would be using the already existing comics as inspiration to create other stories. The students will let their imagination flourish at the same time they are working on their writing and narrative skills. Furthermore, Ospino included a section where teachers can explore possible activities that are centred on comics: using them as prompt to practice their oral skills, as reading tasks, to teach vocabulary, etc. The website is a well-elaborated guide for teachers and students, who would enrich those examples with their own ideas. Students might create characters by following instructions or prepare a role-play in class, and then, those ideas would be performed in front of other groups as a play.

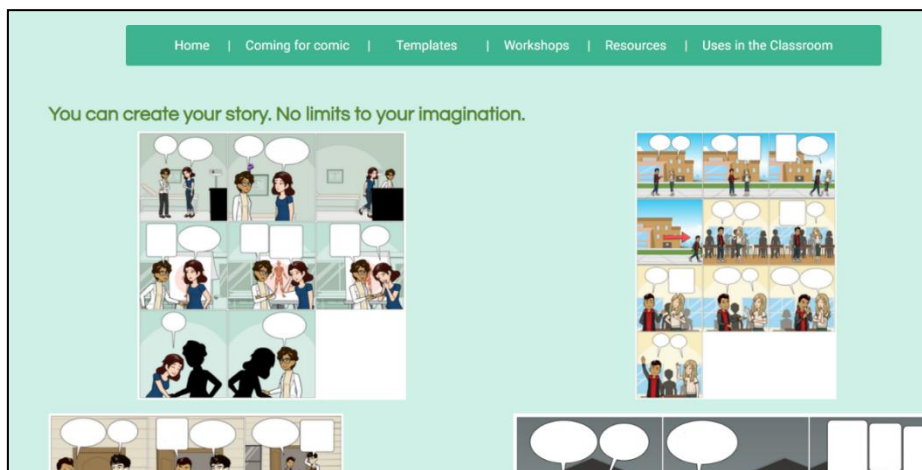


Image 1. Screenshot from website Coming for comics.



Image 2. Screenshot from website Coming for comics.

¹ Link to the web: <https://comingforcomics.webador.es/>.

To illustrate it, these two screenshots demonstrate how Ospino designed the website. On the first image, we are able to see the different subcategories at the top, which are divided according to their purpose: resources, examples, workshops, etc. The author provides templates to complete (we can see the empty speech bubbles), but several links to create comics from scratch are shared, as we can see on the second image. The idea of the webpage is clear: materials are offered without limiting the imagination of teachers and students.

To sum up, it would be helpful to include in a table all the techniques mentioned in the section as a way of summarizing the whole section.

	<i>Technique used to improve...</i>
<i>Critical thinking</i>	The introduction to the comic deals with questions that should be answered previously to the reading. Also, questions about expectations on the plot based on what has been read.
<i>Observation</i>	Students are expected to discuss about the reasons of a decision made by the author (i.e., not colouring a specific panel), or about the portray of characters in relation with their features.
<i>Creative initiative</i>	If students are more artistic, they can draw imaginary scenarios with the already existing characters, or even create new characters to include in the story. Also, they can design comic strips with missing parts, so it follows the development of a part of the plot.
<i>Writing</i>	Choosing an extract or a panel from the comic that students must re-interpret by writing it differently or by changing an important event.
<i>Speaking and listening</i>	Role-plays. Students can plan the acting of a comic strip following their own ideas (related to the plot) or by using the templates on the website <i>Coming for Comics</i> .
<i>Reading</i>	Prepare (by the teacher or students themselves) comprehension questions or true/false statements to complete their reading of the comic.

Table 1. Techniques for applying comics in the EFL classroom.

2.5. Contemporary literature: Alice Oseman's *Heartstopper*

This graphic novel was created by Alice Oseman, a British author, in 2019 and it started as a webcomic on online platforms. Given the overwhelming support, the original creator was capable of raising money for a printed edition; Netflix also made an adaptation for a TV series that expanded its reputation even more. Regarding the plot,

the personal webpage of the author states: “Heartstopper follows two teenage boys, Nick and Charlie, as they meet at a British grammar school, quickly become friends and fall in love” (Oseman, 2022). Discussions about the comic will be generated in class given the diverse topics considered, for example, mental health, individual experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer (LGBTQ) youth and first relationships.

2.5.1. Characteristics of the comic and other adaptations

Analysing in more detail Heartstopper, this comic is drawn in black and white in its original digital version. The panels follow a vertical arrangement, which is designed for the apps of Webtoon² and Tapas³. Normally, those apps would be installed on a mobile phone, so the vertical distribution coincides with the width of the phone screen. It is also a detail for the author to bear in mind while designing the story.

Regarding the individual panels, they are not always delimited with borders. As we can appreciate in the screenshots below, there are parts where the drawings flow in “space” and the white background has not any lines delimiting the end of it (only the small numbers, which are situated on the corners, mark the individual panels). The speech bubbles can move freely across the limits of the panels as well; the characters seem to start talking before the reader is able to see their faces.



Images 3 & 4. Screenshots of Heartstopper from Webtoon.

² Link to the web: <https://www.webtoons.com/es/>.

³ Link to the web: <https://tapas.io/>.

Each part of the story is illustrated in a certain way. If the character is filled with doubts, overthinking and feeling anxious, then the panels will look sharp or blurry to portray that emotion. The choices that the illustrator made are not a coincidence, as they always serve a purpose within the narrative process. For instance, some of the speech bubbles in the image below are left empty, therefore what they are saying is either irrelevant or the character that is looking at them is not hearing their words.

Another characteristic of Alice Oseman is the inclusion of small leaves along the panels of her story (on the first image, there is one at the bottom; on the second image, they are at the top). It has become a trademark of her drawing style and they appear multiple times during the story, even on the cover for the printed version. The TV series adaptation by Netflix included those leaves and other animations in the episodes. For the production of the series, Oseman had an active role and the viewers who had read the comic are able to notice her perspective in the series. It is interesting to recreate a live action show, yet the moment that the creator is directly included, the final product will be benefited to a greater extent. The original vision and ideas are maintained throughout the transformation from webcomic to TV series, thus viewers will identify it as the work of Alice Oseman, giving her proper credit for it.

Overall, the style of Alice Oseman is clearly displayed in her story, which makes the reader even more invested in what is happening. The drawings devoted to moments of anxiety or love are well depicted and she is able to transmit to her readers what the characters are feeling in that circumstance. Another positive aspect I would like to mention is that she also addresses whenever there would be a delicate situation with a trigger warning. This gesture made me realize that she keeps the focus on the reader, trying to tell her story faithfully, but without forgetting that certain people cannot deal with sensitive subjects unprepared.

3. Didactic Unit

3.1. Introduction

In regard to the previous research about the didactic use of literature, I designed a lesson plan that incorporates a webcomic as the main topic to work on the four skills. The title is “**Next stop: The inner world**” and it will be divided into eight sessions in which students are expected to have previously read the corresponding chapters of the comic, according to the topic covered that day. Due to the long extension of the comic, the teacher will select which chapters are going to be incorporated. For the purpose of this lesson plan, I will deal with the first three chapters of the story (corresponding with volumes one and two of the printed version). In addition, the TV series adaptation may be used in class as audiovisual material.

3.2. Contextualization

Firstly, the high school in which the lesson plan will take place is a public institution from a town settled in the province of Seville, Andalusia. In regard to the key characteristics about the environment, the families living in the area have one kid on average; the social-economic background is similar for all the students, middle working class. The students belong to the same area and age group, 15 to 16 years old. This lesson plan will consist of 8 sessions at the beginning of the second term, since students are able to acquire the comic during the yearly Book Fair, organized by the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) of the school. Also, either online or printed, there is enough time for students to read it due to its briefness. Each of the sessions to be developed will last from 50 to 55 minutes.

This lesson plan is conceived for students in the fourth year of Compulsory Secondary Education. The approximate level of English in the class is B1 according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). This class has worked excellently during other school years due to their noticeable interest in English, giving them an advantage in comparison to other groups. There are 30 students in the class (17 girls and 13 boys). Among the students, there are 2 slow learners (1 girl and 1 boy) and a highly gifted boy. These students will receive special attention, with more exhaustive activities for the highly gifted student and several reinforcement activities for the slow learners, as well as extra time for the completion of the proposed activities.

3.3. Justification

The purpose of this investigation is applying comics in EFL classroom and taking advantage of this resource for the development of students. For instance, certain materials that are written by English-speaking authors or deal with stories in English will be used, specifically *Heartstopper*. The goal is to obtain the maximum potential of literary texts and to create a context which can be an ice breaker for the lesson. Thus, comics are chosen as a suitable option since they incorporate visual input as well as textual input. The themes might vary from whimsical stories to political critiques. On that account, this range may adjust perfectly in a high school class due to the heterogeneity of students. When applied to teenagers, literature may become a tool in their process of self-discovery, since they are still shaping their own personalities.

In the first instance, the lesson plan is intended for the fourth course of CSE in a public high school in Andalusia. Teenagers around the age of fifteen, sixteen years-old, are slowly coming closer to adulthood and they might feel ostracized in their experiences, especially LGBTQ teenagers. The story of *Heartstopper* could enlighten the students in order to raise awareness of their power to support a marginalized

group. Besides, the comic serves its purpose if any student relates to any of the main characters, therefore they may find a way to express their inner self through this fictional world.

Notwithstanding the possibility of an initial rejection, this type of content is always necessary for the development of not only teenagers, but for the growth of any member of the educational community that they may interact with. LGBTQ youth becomes very vulnerable in these contexts where the school is not a safe space, and they feel isolated. As educators, we must provide then with the tools for creating good connections and relationships, thus it is compulsory to create a curriculum based on tolerance, respect and appreciation of marginalized groups. This lesson plan is designed to reinforce the idea that students are part of a diverse society, in which daily interactions occur between people from multiple backgrounds and cultures. Students must be aware that the identities of these people do not present a threat to their own. On the contrary, it should be an enriching experience and they should possess those tools for a successful socialization. Ultimately, enjoying a comic about LGBTQ teens is simply a small step in the right direction towards the perfect school environment.

This topic was selected considering the laws existing in Andalusia, specifically regarding the objectives a, b, d, e, g, i, j from the Royal Decree 217/2022 and the Organic Law 3/2020, known as LOMLOE, of December 29th, which modifies Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3rd, on Spanish Education. To begin with, this educational stage should be devoted to “practice tolerance, cooperation and solidarity among individuals and groups, to exercise dialogue by strengthening human rights and equal treatment [...] as common values of a plural society, and to prepare for the exercise of democratic citizenship” (p. 8). In this decree is also mentioned that this stage is planned “to strengthen their emotional capacities in all areas of personality and in their relationships with others, as well as rejecting violence, prejudice of any kind, gender-based behaviour and to peacefully resolve conflicts” (p. 8). Consequently, the comic *Heartstopper* alongside with the debates and activities are reasonable for cultivating this open-minded and sensible attitude on the students, at the same time they work on the acquisition of the foreign language and culture. It is worth noting that other skills will also be improved, such as independent and individual work, discipline habits, cooperation and critical thinking. The intention behind the selection of this specific graphic novel is contextual because it is more relevant the effort (made by students) and the acquired knowledge surrounding the accomplishment of the lesson plan.

3.4. Timing and Sequencing

Session 1	<i>Introduction</i>	General view of comics. Preface of <i>Heartstopper</i> + revision Pr. Perf.
Session 2	<i>I might know the answer</i>	Writing a letter, worksheets; flipped classroom (modals).
Session 3	<i>Offering a hand</i>	Giving advice; short films. Also, introduction to final project.
Session 4	<i>If I can, we can</i>	Grammar point (modals of ability), role-play and homework.
Session 5	<i>Do you remember...?</i>	Correction, modal verbs and Q&A.
Session 6	<i>Revision</i>	Brainstorming for f. pr.; revision of grammar, comic. Fl. classroom.
Session 7	Final project: <i>Illustrator for a day</i>	Production of a comic strip; Kahoot to practice modals of permission.
Session 8	Conclusion: <i>fictional vs real world</i>	TV series comparison; discussion for wrapping up.

Table 2. Breakdown of sessions, with the titles and the main purpose.

The table above displays the titles and a general view of what will be done for the lesson plan. Each of the sessions have a duration of 50 to 55 minutes, approximately, because there should be some spare time to deal with any possible delay. In terms of planification, this didactic unit will be carried out at the beginning of the second term. The English lessons for this group are divided into three sessions per week. Thus, the first week will be devoted to cover the first three sessions. Then, we will go through sessions 4 to 6 on the second week. Finally, a spare day will be secured in case any of the last two sessions takes longer than expected in the first place.

3.5. Key competences

Regarding the key competences established by the Royal Decree 217/2022, I will mention the ones that ought to be achieved at the end of this lesson plan. Students will need to communicate in the foreign language to carry out the activities, so their performance will consolidate their Competence in Linguistic Communication (CLC) and the Plurilingual Competence (PC). Certain activities also require the cooperation of the group to carry out debates and cooperative activities, digital or traditional, based on their own ideas and opinions. Thus, the Social and Civic Competence (SCC) and Digital

Competence (DC) are present in the lesson plan. Since we are dealing with a literary text, the Cultural Awareness and Expression Competence (CAEC) will be also enhanced in this didactic unit. Ultimately, students are expected to accomplish a Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship (SIE) by using their imagination and exploring their creativity.

If we consider the specific activities, the CLC and the PC are present at all times in this lesson plan since students should be able to share their knowledge and to interact with each other, using English and Spanish (if necessary for communication). The CAEC will be addressed during all the sessions since the presence of the comic as class material is constant. The SCC will be achieved on activities such as “Pen Pals” on session 2, where they will communicate with teenagers from other cultures and learn from their lifestyle on a foreign country, and “Looking for your help” on session 3, where they would empathize to give advice for individual problems. Regarding the DC, nowadays it is more frequent to use computers or interactive boards in the classroom, therefore they are in contact (directly or indirectly) with technology by using *Quizizz*⁴, *Genially*⁵ or any other platform for additional resources. For instance, students will use the school laptops on session 1 for the guided reading of the comic. Also on session 4, they will work with *Quizizz* to revise the vocabulary of *Heartstopper* from previous sessions. Lastly, the SIE will be developed on their final project (sessions 7 and 8) since they have to work in groups to outline and be original to create a comic strip. Besides, they will be asked to provide ideas for exhibiting their creations in the high school.

3.6. Didactic and stage objectives

Didactic Objectives	Stage Objectives	Key Competences
• To be able to communicate their different opinions, ideas, assumptions of the feelings of characters and issues related to the plot, in both oral and written discourses. • To express their thoughts making a correct use of grammar, especially modal verbs and the revision of	a, b, d, e, g, i, j RD 217/2022 a. To assume responsibility on their duties, to know and exercise their rights in respecting each other, to practise tolerance, cooperation and solidarity between people and groups, to exercise in the dialogue	CLC PC SCC DC CAEC SIE

⁴ Link to the web: <https://quizizz.com/?lng=en>.

⁵ Link to the web: <https://genial.ly/>.

Present Perfect tense. • To transfer the acquired contents and attitudes learnt through previous experience and knowledge to the acquisition of a foreign language in order to improve other autonomous learning processes in a progressive way. • To respect the right to speak of their classmates as well as attentively listen to them in order to have a successful conversation about their impressions of the comic.	reinforcing the human rights, gender equality and common principles of a plural society preparing themselves for a democratic citizenship. b. To develop and to consolidate habits of discipline, individual study, and teamwork as a necessary condition for an effective implementation of learning tasks and as a means of personal development. d. To strengthen their emotional capacities in all areas of personality and in their relationships with others, as well as rejecting violence, prejudice of any kind, gender-based behaviour and to peacefully resolve conflicts. e. To develop basic skills in the use of information sources to acquire new knowledge, operating with critical thinking. To develop the basic technological competences and to increase ethical reflection on their application and use. g. To develop entrepreneurship spirit, self-confidence, participation, critical thinking, initiative and learning to learn competence, to plan, make decisions and take responsibilities. i. To convey and interpret messages appropriately in at least	
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	one foreign language. j. To recognize, to value and to respect the basic aspects of their own and other people's culture and history, as well as the artistic and cultural heritage.	
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Table 3. Linear checklist of the objectives and the competences, expected to be achieved by students, included in the current law.

3.7. Specific competences and core knowledge

This section includes a table with the specific competences and the core knowledge that students must acquire according to the Royal Decree 217/2022 (p. 130-140), with the corresponding evaluation criteria and operational descriptors.

Specific Competences	Evaluation Criteria	Core Knowledge	Operational descriptors
1. To understand and to interpret the general meaning and the most relevant details of texts expressed clearly and in standard language, searching for reliable sources and using strategies such as inference of meaning, to respond to specific communication needs.	1.1. To extract and to analyse the overall meaning and main ideas, and to select relevant information from oral, written and multimodal texts on everyday topics, of personal relevance or public interest close to the learner's experience, expressed clearly and in standard language through a variety of media. 1.2. To interpret and evaluate the content and discursive features of progressively more complex texts from the fields of interpersonal relations, social media	A. Communication - Self-confidence and initiative. Error as an intrinsic part of the learning process. - Widespread strategies for planning, executing, monitoring and repairing the comprehension, the production and the co-production of oral, written and multimodal texts. - Widely used contextual models and discursive genres in the comprehension, production and co-production of oral, written and multimodal texts,	CCL2, CCL3, CP1, CP2, STEM1, CD1, CPSAA5, CCEC2

	and learning, as well as literary texts appropriate to the level of maturity of the students.	brief and simple, literary and non-literary: characteristics and realization of the context (participants and situation), expectations generated by the context; organisation and structuring according to genre and textual function. - Specific vocabulary of daily use and of interest to learners related to self-identification, interpersonal relationships, places and environments, leisure and free time, health and physical activity, daily life, residence and home, climate and natural environment, information and communication technologies, school system and education. - Universal analogue and digital tools for oral, written and multimodal for the comprehension, production and co-production; and virtual platforms for interaction, cooperation and educational collaboration (virtual classrooms,	
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		videoconferencing, collaborative digital tools, etc.) for learning, communication and the development of projects with speakers or learners of the foreign language.	
2. To produce original, medium-length, simple and clearly organized texts, using strategies such as planning, compensation or self-repair, in order to express relevant messages in a creative, appropriate, and coherent way and to respond to specific communicative purposes.	2.1. To orally express simple, structured, comprehensible, coherent and coherent texts that are suitable according to the communicative situation, on everyday matters, of personal relevance or public interest close to the student's experience, in order to describe, narrate, argue and inform, in different formats, using verbal and non-verbal resources, as well as strategies that deal with planning, control, compensation and cooperation. 2.3. To select, to organise and to apply knowledge and strategies to plan, produce, revise and cooperate in the elaboration of coherent, cohesive and appropriate texts according to communicative intentions, contextual characteristics, socio-	B. Plurilingualism - Strategies and techniques for responding effectively and with increasing levels of fluency, accuracy, and correction to a specific communicative need despite the limitations due to the level of competence in the foreign language and in the other languages of one's individual linguistic repertoire. - Global strategies for identifying, organizing, retaining, retrieving, and creatively using linguistic units (lexis, morphosyntax, sound patterns, etc.) on the basis of a comparison of the languages and varieties that constitute one's personal linguistic repertoire. - Widely used strategies and tools for peers' and self-	CCL1, CP1, CP2, STEM1, CD2, CPSAA5, CE1, CCEC3

	cultural aspects and textual typology, using the most appropriate physical or digital resources depending on the task and the needs of the potential interlocutor to whom the text is addressed.	assessment, and self-repair, with either analogue and digital resources, individual and cooperative.	
3. To interact with other people with increasing autonomy, while using cooperative strategies and employing analogue and digital resources, in pursuance of responding to specific communicative purposes in exchanges that are respectful with the rules of politeness.	3.1. To design, to participate and to actively collaborate, through different means, in interactive situations dealing with everyday topics of personal relevance or public interest close to the learner's experience, showing initiative, empathy and respect for linguistic courtesy and digital etiquette, as well as for the different needs, ideas, concerns, initiatives and motivations of the interlocutors.	A. Communication - General conversational conventions and strategies, in a synchronous or asynchronous format, for initiating, maintaining and concluding communication, taking and giving the floor, asking for and giving clarifications and explanations, rephrasing, comparing and contrasting, summarizing, collaborating, debating, etc.	CCL5, CP1, CP2, STEM1, CPSAA3, CC3
5. To expand and to use the personal linguistic repertoires between different languages, reflecting critically on how they work and becoming aware of the personal strategies and knowledge, in order to improve the response to specific communicative needs.	5.2. To use, in a creative way, strategies and knowledge to improve the ability to communicate and to learn the foreign language with the support of other participants including analogue and digital support.	C. Interculturality - The foreign language as a means of interpersonal and international communication, as a source of information and as a tool for personal enrichment. - General sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects of everyday life, living	CP2, STEM1, CPSAA1, CPSAA5, CD2

		conditions and interpersonal relationships; widespread social conventions; non-verbal language, linguistic politeness and digital etiquette; culture, norms, attitudes, customs and values particular to the countries where the foreign language is spoken.	
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Table 4. Linear listing of the specific competences and the core knowledge, with the corresponding evaluation criteria and operational descriptors following the Organic Law 3/2020, 29th December.

3.8. Contents

COMPREHENSION / PRODUCTION STRATEGIES	
❖ Block 1: Oral texts comprehension - Listening and understanding of oral texts related to mental health, LGBTQ youth and school life issues.	❖ Block 3: Written texts comprehension - Understanding texts by analysing the topic and meaning in order to obtain relevant information.
❖ Block 2: Production of oral texts (expression and interaction) - Producing utterances related to the plot and characters, stating their opinions and impressions.	❖ Block 4: Production of written texts (expression and interaction) - Writing about events in the present perfect, using modal verbs and answering topic-related questions.
COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS	
▪ Petition and offering of opinions and point of views on life and school matters in contrast with their own personal experiences, besides the ones in relation to the comic.	
SYNTACTIC-DISCURSIVE STRUCTURES	
▪ Expression of correct sentences using modal verbs and the Present Perfect Simple tense.	
SOCIOCULTURAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTICS ASPECTS	
▪ The experience of minorities and the impact on their mental health.	

Table 5. Outline of the contents covered in the lesson plan.

3.9. Assessable learning standards

Considering the corresponding legislation, which is the Order of January 15th, 2021, I will mention the assessable learning standards related with this learning situation:

Block 1. Comprehension of oral texts

1. To understand the main points and relevant details of clearly articulated messages, either recorded or orally, containing instructions, orders or other information, including the technical type (e.g., given by voicemails, or on how to carry out an experiment in class or how to use a machine or device in the occupational environment).
3. To identify the main ideas and applicable details of a formal or informal conversation of a specific duration between two or more interlocutors that takes place in their [students] presence, and deals with familiar, general or everyday topics, when the speech is clearly articulated and delivered in a standard variety of the language.
4. To comprehend, when participating in an informal conversation or discussion, explanations or justifications of opinions and points of view on various subjects of personal interest, from everyday life or less ordinary, as well as the formulation of hypotheses, the expression of feelings and the description of abstract aspects such as music, cinema, literature or present-day topics.
7. To recognize the fundamental idea and significant matters of clearly articulated news broadcast when there is visual support that complements the speech, as well as the essence of coherent advertisements, series and films, in a standard variety of language, and when the images facilitate the understanding.

Block 2. Production of oral texts (expression and interaction)

3. To appropriately participate in informal conversations, either face-to-face, on the phone or other technical means, dealing with common or unusual matters, in which they exchange information as well as they briefly express and support opinions and perspectives; to narrate and describe past events or future plans, whether real or invented, in a coherent manner; to elaborate hypotheses; to make suggestions; to give and to ask for instructions or orders in some detail; to disclose and to justify feelings, and lastly, to outline concrete and abstract concepts about topics such as music, cinema, literature or current issues.
4. To participate in formal discussions, interviews and meetings of academic or occupational nature, regarding frequent topics in these contexts, besides exchanging relevant information on concrete facts, asking and giving instructions or solutions to practical problems, presenting their views in a

simple and concise manner, and reasoning their actions, opinions and plans in a coherent manner.

Block 3. Comprehension of written texts.

7. To discern the general tone and the most relevant details of brief, concise contemporary fictional and literary texts, written in a standard variant of the language, in which the argument is linear and can be followed without difficulty; the characters and their relationships are described in a clear and simple way.

Block 4. Production of written texts (expression and interaction)

6. To write personal correspondence and to participate in forums, blogs and chats in which they describe experiences, impressions and feelings; in a linear and coherent manner, they narrate facts related to their area of interest, activities and past experiences (e.g. about a trip, their best holidays, an important event, a book, a movie), or imaginary facts; and they exchange information and ideas on specific topics, pointing out the aspects they find important and briefly justifying their views on them.

3.10. Transversality

Concerning the current Decree 102/2023, of May 9th, the Andalusian government emphasized the pertinence of “the civic literacy, the conscious adoption of the values of a democratic culture founded on respect for human rights, the critical reflection on the great ethical problems of our time and the development of a sustainable lifestyle” (p. 33). Following this remark, the Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29th (LOMLOE), also asserts the importance of advocating for the “respect for affective-sexual diversity, introducing in secondary education the educational and professional orientation of students with an inclusive and non-sexist perspective” (p. 6). The activities about discussions of the comic are oriented to encourage the oral production among students, at the same time they consider the adequate techniques for a successful communication. They are not expected to be extraordinary speakers, yet they should be able to follow and intervene in the debates. These cooperative tasks will also enrich their civic education as they work on their social skills and overall, on how to be a member of society.

By introducing the webcomic *Heartstopper*, students are challenged to question their possible prejudices about the LGBTQ+ community, besides learning how to communicate with mutual respect. It is mandatory for the educational administrations to promote “affective-sexual health, [...] mutual respect and the cooperation between peers” (Royal Decree 217/2022, p. 8). Students should be

familiarized with the diverse identities and realities that coexist in a globalized society. By simply addressing characters as “bisexual” or “gay”, it could erase the rejection to those sexualities that are ostracized by the misinformed public.

Furthermore, the Andalusian government has advocated for the acknowledgement and valorisation “of the human dimension of sexuality in all its whole diversity” (Royal Decree 217/2022, p. 9). In the present moment, there is a huge amount of hatred towards LGBTQ people, especially on social media where they spend great amounts of time, hence the emphasis on the respectful education of teenagers. They should understand that mutual acceptance is the basis not only for the school, but also for their life outside of it.

3.11. Interdisciplinarity

The present lesson plan (learning situation) enhances the connection with other subjects since it encourages the development of their individual critical thinking, also stimulating their willingness to read outside the school environment. The invitation to participate in the class debates, conversations, will provide them with the techniques and the motivation to share their ideas in other subjects. In addition, students will develop the social skills to participate on their communities in a respectful manner, understanding that everyone deserves to live their truth and not to be scared of doing so. Furthermore, dealing with these topics in class would provide confidence in their own journey of self-discovery. It is essential that they are aware of other realities (i.e., LGBTQ youth) in order to define their own. Confusion occurs when they only face one type of lifestyle or one way to express themselves, thus it is reasonable to provide a safe space for their development as human beings living in society.

The Royal Decree 217/2022 has established the educational principles for the Compulsory Secondary Education stage. In the article 6, it is mentioned that: “health education, including affective-sexual, shall be encouraged in a transversal manner” (p. 8). Therefore, the webcomic of *Heartstopper* broadens their perspective by presenting other gender and sexual identities. It is also a pretext to discuss the issue during the lesson; they will not be uncomfortable if sex and love are depicted as normal for people of their age. Besides, we are promoting and encouraging a reading habit along with the preestablished reading time that schools should determine for the students in CSE.

In terms of other school subjects, the creation of a comic strip as the final project is a manner of implementing Art in the English classroom. The students will be required to use the techniques and the form of graphic literature, as well as make sure

that the design is attractive; they can use coloured pencils, markers and any other material to draw. They have freedom, but the final product should be engaging for the audience, which will be the rest of the class and the teacher.

3.12. Attention to diversity

In the design of this lesson plan, we have taken into account the attention to diversity with the following measures:

Extension activities for the highly gifted students – activities that imply a more exhaustive practice of the grammatical items seen in class, more lexical items and extra information on the topic for further exploration. For example:

- Online interviews of the cast for *Heartstopper* (TV series) are an appropriate practice for listening; they can even do questionnaires to see how much they understand. There are several interviews of the cast with subtitles, but if they are not available, the teacher can provide the students with a transcript for better listening. Regarding the questionnaire, students are able to do it while listening and once the video is over.

[Video 1 - British GQ w/ Kit Connor and Joe Locke](#)

[Video 2 - Teen Vogue w/ Kit Connor and Joe Locke](#)

Example of comprehension questions

1. What was the first audition that Kit Connor did in his life?
2. Can you describe how Kit Connor talks about William Gao?
3. Is the opinion of Joe Locke about the cast positive or negative? Justify.
4. Do the actors think it is difficult to break character? Justify.

Example of questions while listening

Complete these sentences with the missing information:

1. It's only just after watching about _____ I can stop myself crying.
 2. Honestly, being able _____ with Olivia Colman was an honour.
 3. A fan reaching out and saying that they used this scene _____.
 4. And they were saying that "Heartstopper" _____ feel more confident.
- To expand their imagination, they might be eager to illustrate their own stories. Students have the opportunity to imitate the drawing techniques of the author (there is a [video](#) where she teaches the cast to draw the main characters). Also, they can create new comic strips following the plot of the comic. For instance, this image is done by the author herself and it is a self-portrait in her style.



Image 5. Downloaded from the [personal website](#) of Alice Oseman.

- They can write an essay as a summary of the different opinions expressed on the debate about LGBTQ youth and the struggles they face, about mental health, any topic discussed as a group. Either they express their own point of view at the end, or they just go through the points made in the debate.

Prompts:

- Describe a daily issue that LGBTQ students face and propose an idea for helping them (100 words).
- Do you think is there more acceptance of the LGBTQ community online or in real life? Give examples to support your opinion (100 words).
- Should there be a supporting group in high schools for LGBTQ students? How would you organize the group: place, time, people involved...? (100 words).

Reinforcement activities for slow learners – learners who might find more difficulties in the development of the activities will be provided with extra activities so that their understanding of the topic and the different contents being taught will improve. For instance:

- They are able to do the reading with the help of a dictionary or asking a partner. One idea would be to create a visual glossary on a notebook or online, where they will create an entry in order to keep track of new vocabulary seen on the comic. Having this material available permits an easier reading for them.

Picture:	Xx
Word:	Tracing practice:

[illegible]

Images 6 & 7. Document downloaded from [Twinkl](#).

These are templates for two types of entry in the notebook. On the first one, the student has the possibility to add a picture for a visual representation of the word. On the second one, there is a table to complete with the specific word, the location inside the speech, the definition and an example. Additionally, it gives the option to tick whenever the student is able to use that word correctly.

- The activities about grammar can be done in pairs during the sessions. At home they can prepare a dialogue expressing their thoughts on a specific event, both as revision and as practice for the oral debates in class. For instance:

Imagine you are a script writer who is working in a new TV series about a group of four queer teenagers. You need to write one dialogue in which they are talking about their impressions and opinions on the series of Heartstopper. All the teenagers must talk to express their opinions (1 page long).

For further practice, activities and worksheets will be shared through Google Classroom⁶ as homework. The screenshot below is taken from the website [Useful English](https://www.usefulex.com/), which has a category for each language aspect (phonetics, grammar, vocabulary...), including this quiz. Since most students have access to the internet at home, it can be viewed as a resourceful material that could help them at any time. It was created by teachers of English in Russia. Though it is intended for people who speak Russian, the wording of all the activities is in English. The second screenshot shows a worksheet of modal verbs (can/can't).



Image 8. Screenshot of [modal verbs quiz](https://www.usefulex.com/quiz/modal-verbs/) from Useful English.

⁶ Link to the web: <https://classroom.google.com/>.

Can - Can't

Exercise 1. Put the words in the correct order to make sentences. _____

very | play | my | can | brother | football | well

.....

homework | with | you | I | can | help | your

.....

in | Sue | English | can't | read

.....

you | it | I | about | cannot | tell

.....

make | can | your | mum | cakes | good

.....

go | you | tonight | can | out

.....

dad | cannot | a | horse | ride | my

.....

morning | come | I | tomorrow | can't

.....

again | Bill | drive | his | can | car

.....

you | my | can't | mobile | use | new | phone

.....

Key with answers:

www.e-grammar.org/can-cannot/

Image 9. Screenshot of worksheet downloaded from [e-Grammar](http://www.e-grammar.org/).

- Homework should be designed to their needs, encouraging the use of their materials while doing it. In addition, there are online resources such as Quizizz to revise grammar aspects. Using the browser, you will find infinite materials on any topic you would like to practice. These are two examples:

[Modal verbs](#) / [Present Perfect Simple](#)

3.13. Resources

The materials that will be required for this lesson plan are the following:

- Either printed or digital version of *Heartstopper*.
- Notebooks.
- Coloured pencils, markers.

- Worksheets (handed out by the teacher).
- Blackboard and interactive board (or a head projector).
- Speakers.
- Computers for students.
- Internet connection.
- Tables and chairs.

3.14. Methodology

Considering the communicative nature, contemporary classrooms are motivated by this methodology. Activities must always be designed keeping in mind the Communicative methodology. In extension, I propose using the Information-Based and Language-Based approaches. These terms are broad and complex; thus, it would be convenient to illustrate the main ideas behind those perspectives. In the book *Literature and Language Teaching*, Lazar (1993) argued that a language-based approach contemplates “a closer integration of language and literature in the classroom, since this will help the students in achieving their main aim – which is to improve their knowledge of, and proficiency in, English” (p. 27). It is not unusual for researchers to have discrepancies in their goals. Lazar further explains whereas some of them (Duff and Maley, 1990) consider literature a resource for language practice, others are far more interested in studying the literary text itself, following what is known as the stylistic approach (Maley, 1989; Abarchah, 2022).

In my case, the graphic novel is a resource for practicing English and developing activities, yet the story itself has relevance for the classroom. The casual, colloquial way of speaking is not difficult for students, still they are not familiar with it, and they can learn about registers in English according to the person whom you are talking. However, the teacher will also take into consideration that they are able to understand the story, discuss about events in the lives of teenagers, just like them, and how characters are portrayed, even with flaws and insecurities. Moreover, those topics will be present in the lessons, in the form of quizzes, videos or any other type of activity.

All in all, I consider the methodology is more aligned with the Language Approach since there is not a special interest in the quality of the literary text. The intention is not to choose a classic comic to study the characteristics of the genre, but students will be encouraged to participate in class if the story reflects their daily life.

3.15. Evaluation

3.15.1. Marking criteria

During the sessions, the readings and/or writings that they produced will be taken into consideration for a positive or negative aspect on their individual marks, as well as the observations made by the teacher are also considered in the evaluation process.

Aspects	Criteria	Instrument of Evaluation	Weight
Daily work	Homework is completed on a regular basis	Positive or negative marks	20 %
Participation	Active role during lessons (esp., on class debates). Volunteering	Notes taken by the teacher, system of points (1-10)	20 %
Tests	Comprehension and understanding of both comic and grammar aspects	Quizzes done in class, either through online platform or printed	30 %
Final project	The creation of a comic strip	It concerns a topic discussed in class and every member was involved in the process	30 %

Table 6. Breakdown of the criteria planned to evaluate the students.

3.15.2. Evaluation criteria

The students will be graded with those percentages once they have completed several points according to this evaluation criteria (which follows the didactic objectives for the lesson plan):

- To be able to communicate their different opinions, ideas, assumptions of the feelings of characters and issues related to the plot, in both oral and written discourses. (1.1)
- To deliver discourses, in both written and oral forms, about their opinions and perspectives regarding the comic. (1.2)
- To express their thoughts making a correct use of grammar, especially modal verbs and the revision of Present Perfect tense. (2.2)

- To transfer the acquired contents and attitudes learnt through previous experience and knowledge to the acquisition of a foreign language in order to improve other autonomous learning processes in a progressive way. (2.3)
- To respect the right to speak of their classmates as well as attentively listen to them in order to have a successful conversation about their impressions of the comic. (3.2)

3.15.3. Evaluation materials

A rubric is one of the mostly chosen materials to evaluate the performance of students. For this didactic unit, I used the webpage [Quick Rubric](#) to create one for participation (20%). These specific points are the result of daily notes with their level of commitment observed by the teacher.

Excellent	Outstanding
20 Points (✖ ➡)	13 Points (⬅ ✖ ➡)
The student is eager to volunteer on a regular basis, and the participation in debates is indeed notable.	The participation may include some mistakes, but the student makes the actual effort to participate.

Image 10.1. From website Quick Rubric.

Adequate	Insufficient
7 Points (⬅ ✖ ➡)	0 Points (⬅ ✖)
The student does intervene, yet mistakes are very common and there is a lack of interest in improving.	There is no interest whatsoever in participating and paying attention during the lesson.

Image 10.2. From website Quick Rubric.

For the percentage of daily work, the descriptors will be accommodated, but the division of points will stay the same.

Excellent	Outstanding
20 Points (✖ ➡)	13 Points (⬅ ✖ ➡)
The student only has positive marks, meaning homework is completed every day.	Except a few times, the student is rather constant in getting the homework finished.

Image 10.3. From website Quick Rubric.

Adequate	Insufficient
7 Points (⬅ ✖ ➡)	0 Points (⬅ ✖)
Homework is usually forgotten or unfinished. However, there is effort to correct it in class.	The student neither presents the homework nor is willing to participate to correct it.

Image 10.4. From website Quick Rubric.

In the case of tests and quizzes, the marking is based on right or wrong answers, creating a final score that will add up to their general marks. However, the final project will be marked differently:

Topic accordingly related to material seen in the sessions.	1 – no connection 2 – quite related 3 – clear relation
It contains the work of the whole group.	1 – no cooperation 2 – well-balanced
Extra points for outstanding design.	1 point

Table 7. Breakdown of scoring for final project.

3.16. Lesson plan

SESSION 1: <i>Introduction</i>				
Activities	Timing	Skills practised	Materials and resources	Key Competences
1. Warm-up	5'	Speaking	Blackboard, computer	CLC, PC
2. Guided reading	20'	Reading, speaking	Comic, worksheet	SCC, CLC, PC, CAEC
3. Intro Heartstopper	10'	Writing, listening	Notebook or sheet, blackboard	CLC, PC
4. Revision	15'	Writing	Notebook	CLC, PC
5. Game	5'	Speaking	Blackboard, computer	SCC, CLC
6. Flipped classroom	Videos: 7'	Listening	Computer, speakers	CLC, PC, DC

For this first session, it is not necessary for students to have read the comic in advance, since it is an introduction, and we will be working with the intuition of students.

1. **Warm-up (5').** This first part will be devoted to familiarizing students with graphic literature and its characteristics. Several photos will be shown, and the group together will be expected to use their observation skills and identify the similarities and differences between a novel, a poem, a comic and a play.

A Guest

I am now going to tell you something so strange that it will require all your faith in my veracity to believe my story. It is not only true, nevertheless, but truth of which I have been an eyewitness.

It was a sweet summer evening, and my father asked me, as he sometimes did, to take a little ramble with him along that beautiful forest vista which I have mentioned as lying in front of the schloss.

"General Spielsdorf cannot come to us so soon as I had hoped," said my father, as we pursued our walk.

He was to have paid us a visit of some weeks, and we had expected his arrival next day. He was to have brought with him a young lady, his niece and ward, Mademoiselle Rheinfeldt, whom I had never seen, but whom I had heard described as a very charming girl, and in whose society I had promised myself many happy days. I was more disappointed than a young lady living in a town, or a bustling neighborhood can possibly imagine. This visit, and the new acquaintance it promised, had furnished my day dream for many weeks.

"And how soon does he come?" I asked.

"Not till autumn. Not for two months, I dare say," he answered. "And I am very glad now, dear, that you never knew Mademoiselle Rheinfeldt."

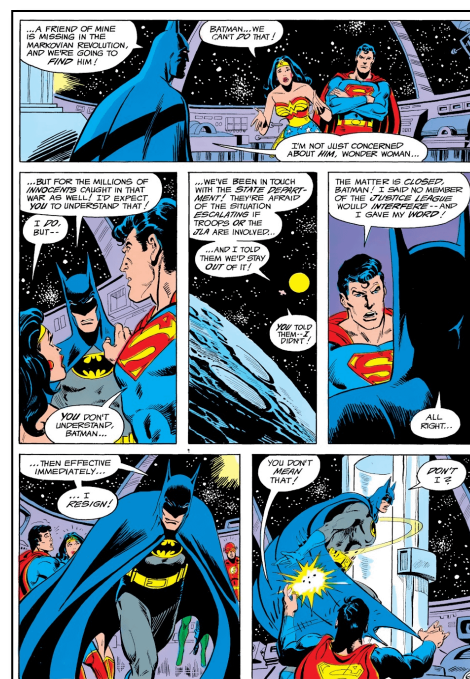
"And why?" I asked, both mortified and curious.

"Because the poor young lady is dead," he replied. "I quite forgot I had not told you, but you were not in the room when I received the General's letter this evening."

I was very much shocked. General Spielsdorf had mentioned in his first letter, six or seven weeks before, that she was not so well as he would wish her, but there was nothing to suggest the remotest suspicion of danger.

"Here is the General's letter," he said, handing it to me. "I am afraid he is in great affliction; the letter appears to me to have been written very nearly in distraction."

We sat down on a rude bench, under a group of magnificent lime trees. The sun was setting with all its melancholy splendor behind the sylvan horizon, and the



Extract from [Carmilla](#) by Sheridan Le Fanu.

Panels from [Batman and The Outsiders](#) Vol. 1 (published on [Reddit](#)).

Before I got my eye put out –
I liked as well to see
As other creatures, that have eyes –
And know no other way –

But were it told to me, Today,
That I might have the Sky
For mine, I tell you that my Heart
Would split, for size of me –

The Meadows – mine –
The Mountains – mine –
All Forests – Stintless stars –
As much of noon, as I could take –
Between my finite eyes –

Extract from poem “[Before I got my eye put out](#)” by Emily Dickinson.

ACT I .

ENTER DAVUS AS FROM THE PIAZZA, A PURSE IN HIS HAND.

Davus // My great friend and countryman Geta came to me yesterday. He had against me a trifling balance on a piddling account. He asked me to make it up, I have done so, and here it is. I hear his master's son has taken a wife: it's for her, I suppose, this money is scraping together. // What an unfair system it is that the poorer man always has to give his mite to swell the richer man's store! What my friend has struggled to save, farthing by farthing, from his rations, robbing himself of his pleasures, she'll swallow down at a bite with never a thought for the toil it cost him. Then again Geta will be hit for another present when a child is born and another on its birthday, and another at the initiation ceremony. The mother will pocket it all, the child will be the pretext for the gift. Ah, is that Geta?

ENTER Geta FROM Demipho's HOUSE.

Geta (speaking to a servant within) If a red-headed fellow asks for me—

Davus (interrupting) All right: here he is.

Geta (turning round) You've saved me going to look for you, Davus.

Davus (handing him the purse) Here you are, take it, no clipped coin, the sum just what I owed.

Geta Thank you, thank you; very good of you not to overlook it.

11

Extract from [Phormio](#) by Terence.

2. Guided reading (20'). As a pre-reading activity, students will fill up a chart with their guesses (they just know the title of the comic up to this point). The idea is to let them set their own expectations for the reading*. At the end, they will compare what they have read to their previous knowledge. In addition, this activity gives them an incentive to pay attention while reading, so they can gather the information and compare the results.

Things I know	Things I am not sure of	Things I would like to know

Table 8. Chart for listing their ideas during the reading.

*They will be reading twenty panels from [chapter one](#) (parts 1, 2 and 3 on the digital version). It can be done in pairs, keeping in mind the discussion of results will be shared with the whole group. I saw this example of activity in *The Practice of English Language Teaching* by Harmer (2015).

3. Getting to know *Heartstopper* (10'). Now it is time to create an outline of the main characters that will appear on the chapters covered. The teacher will

present a PowerPoint or similar with pictures and a brief summary of the connections between characters. The goal is to involve students in the story as if they were talking about some classmates, so they can take notes on how these characters are portrayed by the author.

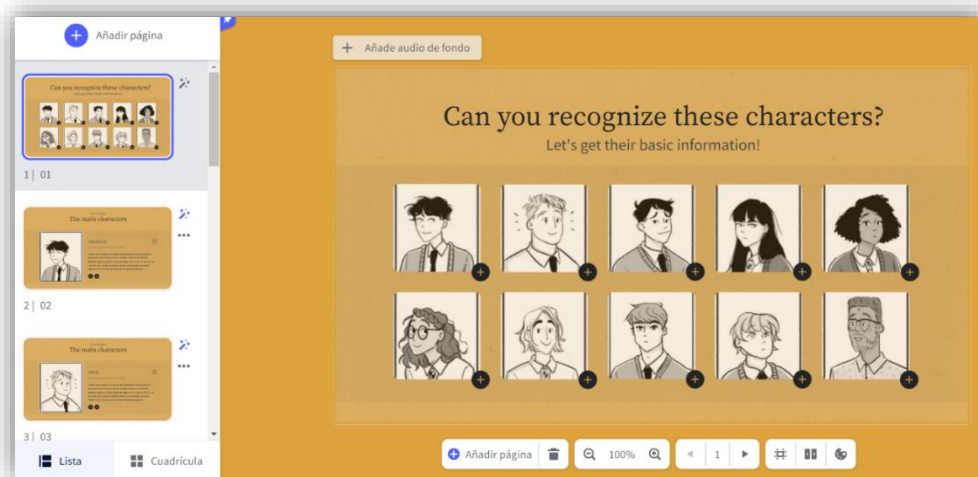


Image 11. Screenshot of possible presentation, done with Genially.

4. Revision of Present Perfect (15'). Since this verb tense was introduced in previous lessons, this activity is dedicated to recall what they remember. Revision can be carried out in multiple ways, but I prefer to write sentences on the blackboard and then, students correct the mistakes. It is beneficial for them to develop their observation skills in order to avoid the mechanical answers.

a. Margaret has wrote two letters to her mother.

b. Did you have seen this horror film before?

c. My family has lived in Portugal since three years.

d. Sarah started swimming lessons recently.

e. We've been knowing each other since high school.

f. Have you experienced anything like this before?

5. Game to finish: WORDWALL (5'). There are infinite websites to play games. The first screenshot belongs to the webpage [Wordwall](https://www.wordwall.net/). It functions as a toolbox for

teachers since it offers templates to create interactive tasks and games. For instance, this is an example round of Hangman about jobs. Following this template, students will play with vocabulary from the comic *Heartstopper*:

This person has a dog named Nellie. _ _ _ _

This person has an older sister who has long black hair. _ _ _ _ _

Darcy and Tara are a _ _ _ _ _.

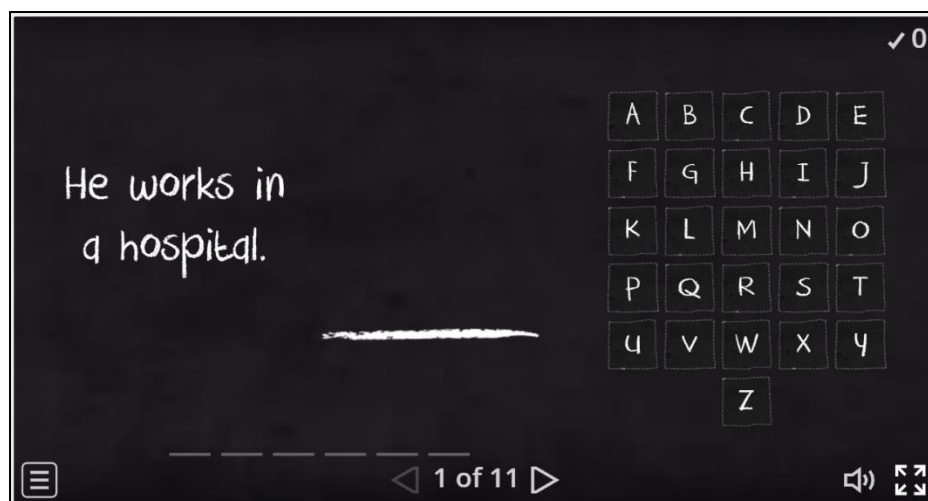


Image 12. Screenshot from the hangman template of Wordwall.net.

6. **Flipped classroom.** For homework, students will need to watch two videos regarding modal verbs of deduction. It is compulsory for them to watch the videos, therefore it will be carried out through [Nearpod](#). The first one (1') is a brief explanation on how to use them, and the second one (6') has a task for them to do while seeing it. They have to pay attention to the modal verbs mentioned while several people are talking to each other. Both videos have subtitles available in case they get lost. On the next session, we will complete a worksheet following this grammatical point. [Nearpod - explanation](#) / [2nd video](#)

SESSION 2: <i>Daily school life</i>				
Activities	Timing	Skills practised	Materials and resources	Key Competences
1. Warm-up	5'	Speaking	Blackboard	CLC, PC, SCC
2. Worksheets of flipped cl.	15'	Writing, listening	Photocopy, computers	CLC, DC, PC
3. Pen Pals	15'	Writing	Notebooks	CLC, PC

4. Only wrong answers	15'	Speaking, writing	Blackboard, notebook	CLC, SCC, PC
5. Game	5'	Writing	Sheet	CLC, PC
6. Flipped classroom	4'	Listening	Computer	CLC, PC, DC

1. **Warm-up (5').** The A-to-Z contest. Considering the topic of school, students will play this game that consists of finding an object starting with a specific letter. The most important part is that the object can be found in the panels of the comic *Heartstopper*: Bags, Mobile phones, Pen, Rugby ball, Uniforms, etc. It can be played either on the board, where the whole class is involved, or in small groups. Here is an example of how it might be carried out:

A	Banker	Chef
D	E	F
Gardener	H	I
J	K	L
M	N	O
Pilot	Q	Rockstar
S	T	U
V	Waiter	X
Y	Z	

Image 13. Downloaded from [ESLGames.com](https://www.eslgames.com), where this game is explained.

2. **Worksheets about flipped classroom (15').** This part of the lesson is intended to work with modal verbs, taking into consideration the two videos assigned as homework. After a brief summary of the content they watched, students will complete this worksheet that deals with modals of deduction. On the website, there is a video linked (and the corresponding transcript) in order to do the activities.



Watch the video on our website and read the conversation between Sophie and Nur. Then do these exercises to check your understanding of modals of deduction.



Grammar Snacks

1. Check your grammar: matching

Draw a line to match the sentences that have the same meaning.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. I'm sure that's Katie. | ☐ | ☐ | a. That must have been Katie. |
| 2. I'm sure that isn't Katie. | ☐ | ☐ | b. That girl must be Katie. |
| 3. It's possible that it's Katie. | ☐ | ☐ | c. It might not be Katie. |
| 4. Maybe that isn't Katie. | ☐ | ☐ | d. That girl can't be Katie. |
| 5. I'm certain that wasn't Katie. | ☐ | ☐ | e. It may be Katie. |
| 6. Perhaps that was Katie. | ☐ | ☐ | f. It can't have been Katie. |
| 7. It was definitely Katie. | ☐ | ☐ | g. It could have been Katie. |

2. Check your grammar: gap fill

Write a modal verb to fill the gaps.

- She's won prizes for her research. She _____ be really intelligent.
- I'd take an umbrella if I were you. It looks like it _____ rain.
- It _____ be him. He's on holiday until next week.
- Hey guess what?! I _____ be getting a car for my birthday! It's not completely definite yet though.
- I can't believe you've been waiting all this time! You _____ be really bored.
- His car's not here. He _____ have gone out.
- Look how much sugar and salt it's got in it! It _____ be good for you.
- Have you looked next to your computer? I think you _____ have left your keys there.

Image 14. Screenshot of the printable worksheets from the [British Council](http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish teens).

3. Check your grammar: error correction

Correct and write these sentences on the line below.

1. It may be him. He's about that height.

.....

2. You could to be right. Let's check on the internet.

.....

3. It's six o'clock. She must have leave work by now.

.....

4. That can't being them. Their car's yellow.

.....

5. Joe might be to play football at the moment.

.....

6. That virus may of come from an app.

.....

7. This writing is terrible. That can be an 'e', but I'm not sure.

.....

8. I don't believe it! You can't had failed your exam!

.....

Discussion

What might you have for supper tonight?

Do you think you may visit the UK one day?

Image 15. Screenshot of the printable worksheets from the [British Council](https://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish teens).

- 3. Pen Pals (15').** This activity is suitable to practice the modals of deduction. Each student will write to an imaginary pen pal, and they are required to make assumptions or guesses about them. The importance of the activity is to be coherent in the text since they are creating a false identity while practicing the grammar. For instance, they can say: "you must have a younger sister because you are talking about kindergarten in your previous letter". The extension will be two to three paragraphs (around 100 words).

	P.O. Box 10
	Webster City, IA 50595
	Today's date
Dear _____,	
Introduce yourself by giving a few details. Don't make the details too personal. Just give general information that you think they will find interesting. You could share: your first name and any nicknames you have, where you go to school, what you look like, general information about your family, any chores you have at home, what you are learning in school, books that you like to read, what you like to do for fun, any hobbies or activities that you are involved in. The first letter you send doesn't need to be too long. You don't need to tell your life story. Instead, just focus on introducing yourself and giving your new pen pal something to talk about in the next letter. Let your personality show! In the second paragraph, you could ask a few questions, but don't make them too personal either. General questions about their hobbies or interests are good. Asking questions gives them something to talk about in their reply. You should limit your questions to three. Conclude the letter in a way that leaves things open and invites a reply. For example, you could say, "I look forward to getting to know you better and I hope to hear from you soon."	
	Your pen pal,
	First name

Image 16. Downloaded from [Weebly](https://www.weebly.com).

- 4. Only wrong answers! (15').** Students will take turns to try to guess the meanings of the vocabulary that appears on the comic *Heartstopper*.

For instance, the word can be written on the board (e.g., “lad”) and students try to guess, even if they say a random answer, such as “it might be a type of food”. The point of the activity is to be as creative as possible, but they must answer with full sentences and use a modal of deduction. At the end, the teacher will state the correct answers and students must write them down in order to increase their vocabulary (also they are internalising the definitions by writing them on their notebooks). In a relaxed and amusing context, they would be learning numerous expressions of colloquial English, present in the comic.

This activity is based on a game that is popular on social media, in which a well-known picture is posted along with a question, and people sarcastically reply with their guesses (it is implied that everybody knows the obvious answer). For example: we see a picture of Elmo with the question is: “who is it?”, and one response might be: the Cookie Monster.

- 5. Game: Stop the bus (5').** They will be given a letter and they have to find words starting with that specific letter; the point is to fill all the categories. The words must be mentioned at some point in the comic *Heartstopper*, starting with the name of a character, a hobby, a type of sport, a colour and a piece of clothing. The first person to finish it must say: **stop the bus!** Then, if your answer does not match with anyone else’s, you get 10 points. If two people or more have the same word in a category, they get half the points.

The interesting detail about this game is that the categories can be changed, therefore anytime you play is different.

	Character	Hobbie	Sport	Colour	Clothing	SCORE
Letter						
Letter						
Letter						

Table 9. Chart with the possible categories to play the game.

- 6. Flipped classroom.** For homework, students will need to watch a video regarding modals of advice (must, ought to, had better and should). On the next session, they will work with this type of modals in a writing activity.

[Nearpod - Modals of advice](#) (4')

SESSION 3: <i>Is this real or not?</i>				
Activities	Timing	Skills practised	Materials and resources	Key Competences
1. Warm-up	5'	Listening, speaking		CLC, SCC, PC
2. Looking for your help	20'	Listening, writing	Computer, notebook	CLC, PC, SCC, SIE
3. Mentimeter	10'	Writing, listening, speaking	Computer, blackboard, mobile phones	CLC, PC, DC, CAEC
4. Intro final project	5'	Listening	Notebook	CLC, PC
5. Short films	10'	Listening	Computer	CLC, PC, CAEC

- 1. Warm-up (5'). Lie detector.** Taking turns in small groups (2-3 people), students will think about a fact or an event that happened in the comic; their teammates need to decide together whether that statement is true or not. Apart from working on their listening/speaking skills, their memory will be tested.

“Nick talked to Charlie about joining the rugby team” > True (they were missing a player).

“The name of one of Charlie’s friends is Mao Lu.” > False, his name is Tao Xu.

- 2. Looking for your help (20').** Students will listen to young people disclosing their experiences of bullying due to being LGBTQ. Even though we are dealing with videos, students will only listen to the audio. Consequently, they are expected to write pieces of advice as if those teenagers were going to read it. In groups of 4, students need to analyse the individual situations and find the safest solution for each of the people involved. In this section, students will use the modal verbs (seen on the video from flipped classroom) to give advice to these teenagers.

If there is time, we can compare these situations with the ones depicted on the comic. These are possible audios to use:

[LGBT High School Students Share Their Experiences](#)

[LGBTQ - How You See Me](#)

The students might get stuck during the activity; hence, the chart below displays several expressions for giving pieces of advice:

WOULD	If I were you, I would consider the first option.
HAD BETTER	He'd better call now or the shop will close. = consequence
Questions	How about taking some time to reflect on your actions? Why don't you try changing the arrangement of your room?

Table 10. Chart/flashcard for further help in the activity of modals of advice.

3. Mentimeter (10'). Through this [platform](#), the teacher is able to create an interactive presentation for the group. In this case, the intention is to discuss now about their own concerns, whether they have questions about gender identities, LGBTQ relationships, impact of harassment on the mental health, etc. One of the advantages of Mentimeter is the anonymity: the questions or comments will be shown on the blackboard, but we do not know who exactly wrote it. Moreover, students are encouraged to participate in the discussion by sharing their ideas or solutions. If they are not talkative, these are questions that can be used as an icebreaker:

- Would you say there is enough representation of the LGBTQ community on the media? Name any book or film, apart from Heartstopper.
- Does having visibility impact the life of queer people? How so?
- Even inside the community, is there a preference for some identities regarding visibility on films, books, TV series...? For example, gay men appearing more on the screen than transgender women.

4. Introduction to final project (5'). Before leading to the next part of the lesson, the teacher will introduce the requirements for the final project. The task will consist of creating a comic strip: students will have all the freedom to carry it out, as long as the topic is related to the material worked on class. They have the comic *Heartstopper* and the following short films as inspiration for the comic strip, which is not necessary to be long (5 panels, up to a maximum of 9). This rubric will be handed out to the students, so they are aware of the requirements.

	Excellent	Acceptable	Insufficient
Design, general appearance	The drawings are made by all the people involved; coloured and pleasant to look at.	Not everybody participated in the drawing process. The style is rather simple.	The drawings are not even finished, and the general view is messy.

Content (mental health, LGBTQ relationships...)	The idea is well related to the discussed topics and to the composition itself.	The idea is connected to the issues seen in class, yet there is a lack of coherence.	The topic is completely unrelated to the matters discussed in class.
Grammar used	The grammar seen in class is used correctly and on several occasions.	The use of grammar has some minor mistakes.	There are plenty of mistakes or the grammar is not present at all.

Table 11. Breakdown of what is expected from students and how it will be assessed.

5. Short films about LGBTQ+ experience (10'). Apart from the graphic novel, there are many manifestations of non-heteronormative realities and how they navigate the world. These videos are short films, which are fictional but based on true situations. Students will be provided with these materials as inspiration for the realization of the final project.

[HEADSPACE. Transgender daily struggles.](#)

[Lovestruck - Animated Short Film](#)

[QUINCE - LGBTQ+ Cortometraje](#)

[Piece of Cake - Animated Short Film](#)

SESSION 4: <i>Building a better future</i>				
Activities	Timing	Skills practised	Materials and resources	Key Competences
1. Warm-up	5'	Listening, speaking	Any soft object to throw	CLC, PC, CAEC
2. Grammar point	10'	Listening, writing	Notebook, blackboard	CLC, PC
3. Plickers	10'	Reading	Computer, mobile phones	CLC, PC, DC
4. Role-play	20'	Speaking, writing	Notebook	CLC, PC, CAEC
5. Quizizz live	10'	Reading	Computer, mobile phones	CLC, PC, DC
6. Homework	-	Reading, writing	Worksheet (digital)	CLC, PC, DC

1. **Warm-up: Where do I put this? (5')** This activity consists in giving the students pieces of paper with panels of a comic with empty speech bubbles (it can be *Heartstopper*, another one or a mixture of both). Then, they will have a pile of pieces of paper with dialogue that they should match with the corresponding picture.



Image 17. Screenshot of *Heartstopper*.

2. **New grammar point (10')** This session will be devoted to modal verbs of ability. Instead of doing a tedious explanation, the teacher will introduce this type of modal verbs and the corresponding examples. The structure will be written on the blackboard (using different coloured markers), so students can copy and have a visual outline on their notebooks.
Moreover, the blackboard can be used to ask students for their own examples and help them visualize the new content. This picture below is simply a visual representation of how the structure might be written on the blackboard, plus the different uses and how they are writing according to the tense.
Apart from the examples, the modals are explained according to the verbal tense used in the sentence. Having the structure clear, giving examples becomes an easier task for the students.

MODALS OF ABILITY			
MODAL	USAGE	PRESENT	EXAMPLE
CAN	General or specific ability	CAN/CAN'T	Richard can speak French fluently.
BE ABLE TO	General or specific ability	AM/ARE/IS (NOT) ABLE TO	Max was able to swim.
MODAL	USAGE	PAST	EXAMPLE
COULD	Could - general ability	COULD	My sister could swim when I was six.
	Couldn't - general or specific	COULDN'T	I couldn't play the piano when she was five.
BE ABLE TO	General or specific ability	WAS/WERE (NOT) ABLE TO	Jennifer was not able to dance when she was eight.
MANAGED TO	Specific ability	MANAGED TO	Police finally managed to catch the culprit.
MODAL	USAGE	FUTURE	EXAMPLE
CAN	General or specific ability	CAN/CAN'T	I can help you tomorrow.
BE ABLE TO	General ability.	WILL / WON'T BE ABLE TO	Journalists will be able to preview the exhibition tomorrow.

Image 18. Downloaded from [TESL](https://www.tesl.com).

3. **Plickers (10')**. Before moving on to the practice, students will be tested so they are familiar with the concepts before doing it on their own. This app allows the teacher to assign each of the students a number (from the list of our particular digital classroom) and a personal QR code. The question will appear on the digital blackboard, and students will show their QR code in the corresponding position to determine if they think is A, B, C or D. The teacher is in charge of scanning the codes and the results will be shown also in the blackboard.

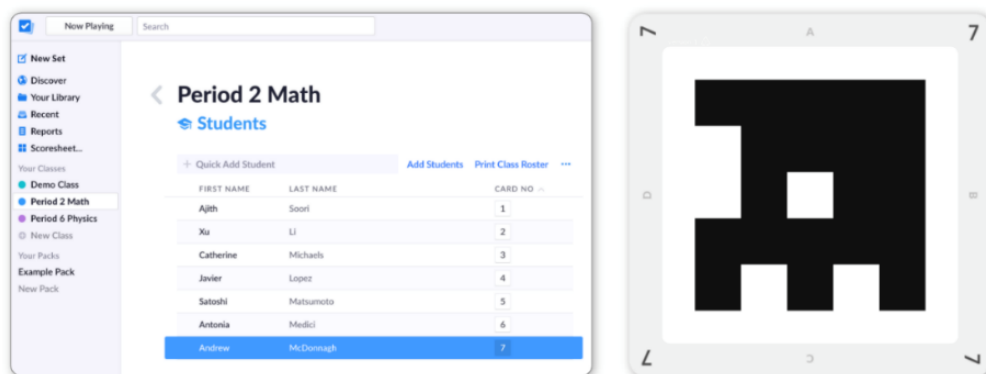


Image 19. Downloaded from the website [Plickers](https://plickers.com).

- 4. Role-play (20').** Right after the explanation, students will get into groups of 3 and following the instructions on the picture, they will do a role-play. For the first part, they are going to imagine what Nick, Charlie and Ben will respond about their feelings, emotions, worries, etc. For the second part, they must recreate a conversation through text messages (the 'Messenger App' mentioned is simply a drawing of the speech bubbles that we see on the phone). The activity also has an extension task in case there is extra time to cover it. However, it can be saved for another session.

In groups of 3, you are going to consider the behaviour and perspectives of Charlie, Nick, and Ben. In your groups, spend a few minutes taking it in turns to hotseat each of the characters, asking them questions surrounding the following themes:

FEELINGS EMOTIONS BEHAVIOUR MOTIVATIONS REGRETS
WORRIES SEXUALITY RELATIONSHIPS TRUST

Then, with the idea of discussing difficult feelings in mind, use the 'Messenger App' worksheet below to fill in the bubbles of messages that between 2 and 3 of the characters might send to each other after Charlie's long message to Nick. You can use your role play and the key words above to help you. Here are some other ideas to give you inspiration:

- Nick is supportive towards Charlie
- Nick or Charlie sending Ben a message challenging his behaviour
- Ben sends Charlie an apology for his behaviour explaining his actions
- Charlie goes into more detail about how he is feeling and how best to move forward

Extension: Think about the role of social media in *Heartstoppers* – Volume 1. How is it used both positively and negatively by the characters? Can you pick out examples to back up your points? Think about the wider implications of how social media is used and the impact of this on LGBTQ+ communities.

Image 20. Heartstopper: Teacher's resource downloaded from [Hachette](#).

- 5. Quizizz live (10').** This [platform](#) is commonly known for sharing quizzes about pre-established topics or any matter that you wish. One of the features is doing a live quiz with scoring and a ranking. It is up to the teacher to decide which topic will be covered: it can be about *Heartstopper*, any grammatical point seen on previous sessions or as a way to introduce a concept that needs certain reinforcement, such as proper behaviour inside the classroom.

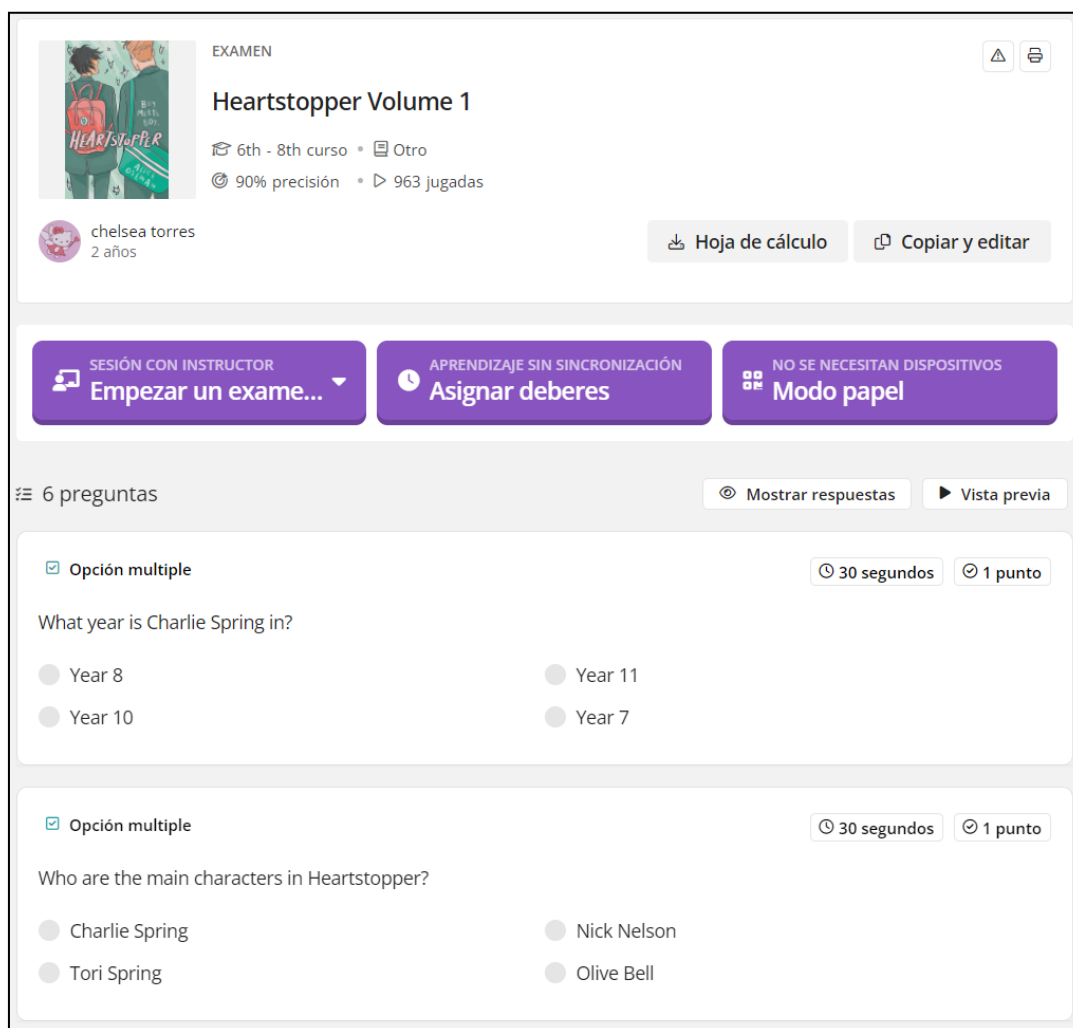


Image 21. Screenshot of a [Quizizz](#) about Volume 1 of Heartstopper.

6. **Homework.** For doing at home, a [worksheet](#) would be uploaded to Google Classroom that has a linked video about a conversation between a boy and a girl that are talking in the kitchen. In addition to the subtitles, there is a transcript below the video, making it accessible for any student. They must watch it and then complete the exercises, which consist of matching, filling the gaps and writing words in the correct order.



Watch the video and read the conversation between Sophie and Mei. Then do these exercises to check your understanding of modal verbs.

You can watch the video at: <http://bit.ly/VvnnQA>



**Grammar
Snacks**

1. Check your grammar: matching – invitations, offers and requests

Match the two sentence halves and write a – h next to the number 1 – 8.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1..... Would you like to come for lunch this weekend? | a. Oh. Yes please! Could you? |
| 2..... Can you help me with this table a moment? | b. Well, actually, my mum's not feeling well. Maybe another time. |
| 3..... Could you tell me where the nearest bank is, please? | c. I suppose so. But I need it back before Friday. |
| 4..... Would you like me to ask my brother? | d. Yes, of course. Here you go. |
| 5..... Can I come round to your house later? | e. Yes, sure. Where do you want to put it? |
| 6..... Could you lend me 20, please? | f. I'm sorry, I'm not from around here. |
| 7..... Can I get you a cup of tea? | g. No, I'm OK, thanks, I've just had one. |
| 8..... Would you mind passing me that menu, please? | h. Oh, I'd love to, thank you. |

2. Check your grammar: gap fill - invitations, offers and requests

Write the word to fill the gaps.

- Can I _____ you something to drink?
- Would you _____ if I closed the window?
- Would you like _____ come skating with us?
- Can I _____ you a hand?
- _____ you possibly lend me a pen, please?

Image 22. Screenshot of the first part of worksheet from [British Council](http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish teens).

6. Dad says we _____ borrow his bicycle if we're careful.
7. You _____ carry this, could you?
8. _____ you be free for lunch on Saturday?

3. Check your grammar: word 2 word - invitations, offers and requests

Write the words in the correct order to make sentences.

1. have some I Can water ?
.....
2. coffee Would like ? you a
.....
3. How ? I help can you
.....
4. do Could a favour me ? you
.....
5. giving a you me mind Would hand?
.....
6. up please? me Can pick you later,
.....
7. explain you Could this, please ?
.....
8. come for you round to like Would dinner?
.....

Image 23. Screenshot of the second and third activities.

SESSION 5: <i>I can't work alone</i>				
Activities	Timing	Skills practised	Materials and resources	Key Competences
1. Warm-up	5'	Speaking	Small objects	CLC, PC, CAEC
2. Homework correction	10'	Writing, listening	Worksheet, computer	CLC, DC, PC
3. Q&A	20'	Reading	Comic, notebook	CLC, SCC, PC, CAEC
4. Spot the details	5'	Speaking	Comic, computer	CLC, PC, CAEC
5. Who, who and what	15'	Speaking, listening	Notebook	CLC, PC

1. **Warm-up (5').** To refresh their memory, students will observe several panels of the comic that are in the wrong order on the blackboard (or printed out). The goal will be to set them in chronological order as they occur on the story. These are 4 screenshots used as examples (important: not to show the number of panel in the picture, because it will give away the answer).



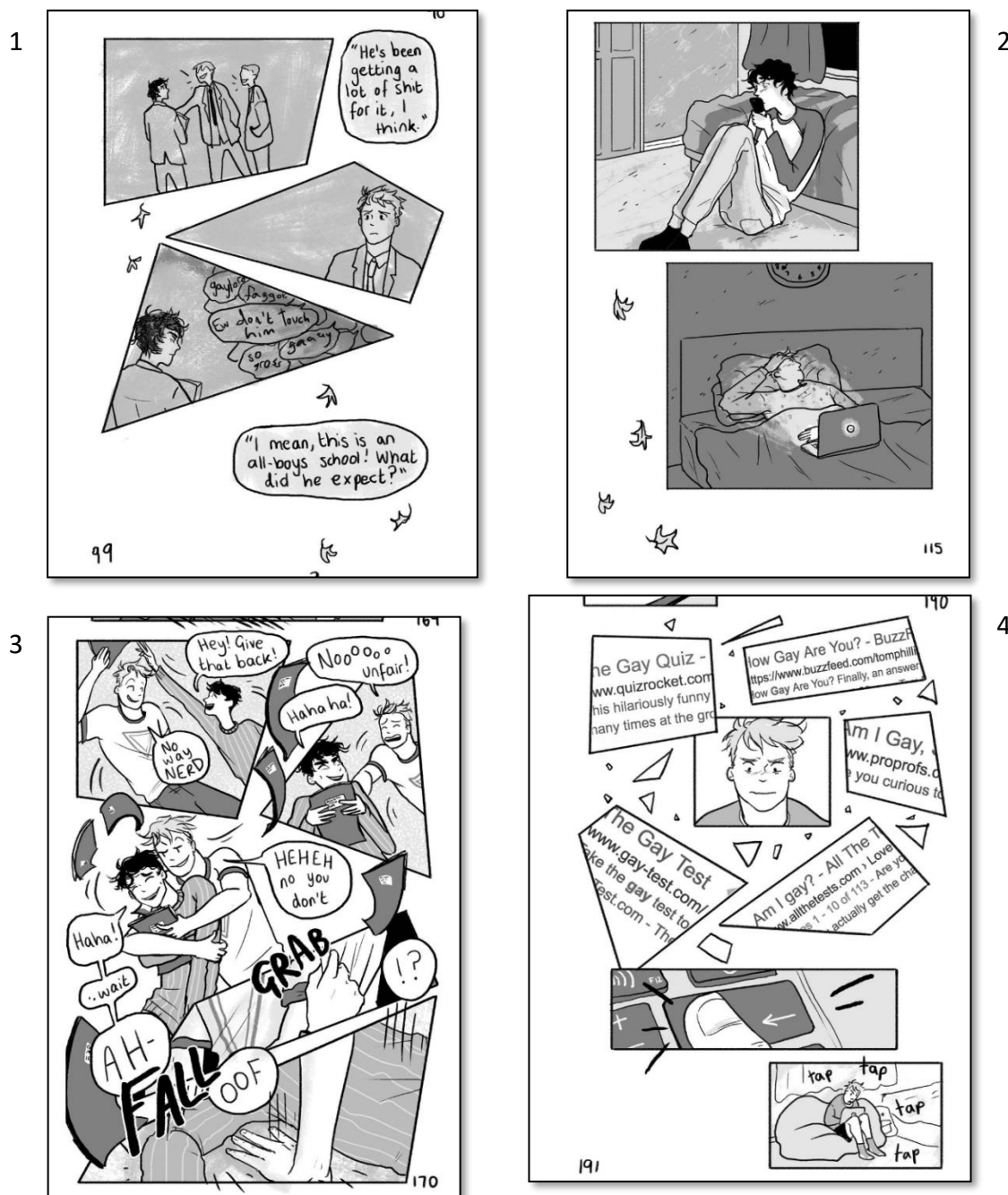
Images 24, 25, 26 & 27. Screenshots of the digital comic Heartstopper.

2. **Homework correction (10').** The teacher will quickly go through the answers in order to highlight repeated mistakes, so the students are aware of what to change in their worksheets.
3. **Q&A (20').** Firstly, students will read in class from panel 62 to panel 86 (episodes 9, 10 and 11 from part 1 on the digital version). Then, there will be several questions to see if they are following the events.
 - a. Nick needs to step between Charlie and Ben. What happened?
 - b. Why are the other kids surprised about Charlie's skills in rugby?
 - c. And what is Charlie concerned about after the rugby practice?

- d. How would you describe Ben's behaviour when meeting Charlie?
- e. Do you think Nick did the right thing?

Students will be asked to fill a chart with their answers to these questions, for keeping a summary of the plot up to this point (panel 86).

4. **Can you spot the details? (5')** For this activity, there will be a set of images from the comic. The goal is to describe the feelings portrayed and how does the author fit the characters' emotions into the drawings. Students must know that every detail is intentional, for the sake of storytelling.



Images 28, 29, 30 & 31. Screenshots from digital version of Heartstopper.

- 5. Who, who and what (15').** To practice their speaking and listening skills, students will do a role-play with characters of the comic. There will be two volunteers at the front of the class. The whole group helps to choose the scenario: who are those two people (i.e., Nick, Tao Xu, Tori, Charlie...) and the topic of their conversation. The volunteers are expected to introduce modal verbs (advice, deduction, ability) in their intervention. Additionally, they will be given cards with adjectives describing the tone (angry, unbothered, excited...) and they do not have to invent the speech on the spot. If necessary, they can have some time to do a brief script. This would be the template of the cards given to the students.

My tone is... or I am/sound...	WORRIED
I need to introduce...	Modal of ABILITY (can/can't, able to)
I need to use the word...	RUGBY BALL

Table 12. Students' flashcard to guide the role-play.

SESSION 6: Importance of mental health				
Activities	Timing	Skills practised	Materials and resources	Key Competences
1. Warm-up	5'	Speaking	Sticky notes, pen	CLC, PC
2. Brainstorming	20'	Speaking, writing	Notebook, blackboard	CLC, SIE, PC
3. Revision	20'	Writing, reading	Computers	CLC, DC, PC
4. Kahoot	10'	Reading	Computer, blackboard	CLC, DC, PC
5. Flipped classroom	Video: 5'	Listening	Computer	CLC, DC, PC

- 1. Warm-up: What am I? (5').** Even though it is similar to the original game, students will have sticky notes on their forehead with several words forming a full sentence. Since they cannot see the note themselves, they should work together to get in order, so the sentence is coherent. The vocabulary will be the type of modal verbs seen already (deduction, advice) and the vocabulary of the comic.

2. **Brainstorming (10').** With the help of others, each group of students should get ideas for their final project; what they will choose as the lesson or punchline, the characters that will appear, how they will create and design their panels... It would be necessary to bring the rubric given on session 3 (table 11) to have the visual support of the expectations.
3. **Revision (10').** This section is planned to go over modal verbs by completing a set of activities through online platforms, like Google Classroom, where will be able to upload links to other interesting educational websites. For instance, Edpuzzle permits the edition of videos to insert pauses with questions to the viewers. This is [one example](#) for modal verbs.
4. **Kahoot (10').** As a way of wrapping up, students will be tested on their knowledge about parts from 1 to 5 of the second episode. Nick and Charlie are becoming closer friends, and they start hanging out more, which is confusing for both of them. The questions can deal with facts ("what happened with Ben that made Nick get involved?") or with impressions ("who do you think is more confused: Nick or Charlie?"). Once the Kahoot is finished, students can discuss the answers and questions.
5. **Flipped classroom.** Students will watch at home this video from [Nearpod about modals of permission](#) (5').

SESSION 7: Final project – <i>Illustrator for a day</i>				
Activities	Timing	Skills practised	Materials and resources	Key Competences
1. Comic strip	45'	Writing	Comic, notebook, markers	CLC, SCC, SIE, CAEC
2. Kahoot	10'	Speaking, reading	Computer, blackboard	CLC, PC

1. **Comic strip (45').** The purpose of this session is to let the groups work on their own to design their comic strip. Once all the groups are finished, the comic strips will be shown on a big poster to hang on the wall of the classroom or in the corridor.
2. **Game: Kahoot (10').** Regarding the flipped classroom video, students will undertake a Kahoot with questions about modals of permission. The questions can be similar to these below:

1 It's beautiful! Thanks, but you _____ anything for me.

a. needn't have bought

b. needn't buy

c. mustn't have bought

d. shouldn't have bought

2 We'll _____ be more careful about what we say in the future.

a. have to

b. must

c. need to

d. be able

Image 32. Screenshot from exercise of [Test-english](#) website.

SESSION 8: Conclusion – <i>Fictional vs real world</i>				
Activities	Timing	Skills practised	Materials and resources	Key Competences
1. Warm-up	5'	Speaking	Blackboard	CLC, PC, SCC
2. Netflix TV series	20'	Writing, speaking	Computer	CLC, PC, CAEC
3. Discussion	20'	Speaking, writing	Notebook	CLC, PC, SCC
4. Comments on final project	10'	Speaking	Poster	CLC, PC, SIE

- 1. Warm-up: Taboo (5').** One student will go to the front of the classroom, facing the blackboard backwards. The rest will describe the chosen character (from the comic), without mentioning several forbidden words written on the blackboard. For instance, the students must describe Nick, without mentioning “rugby team”, “bisexual” and “blond hair”. The student guessing can say: “it must/might be Nick” depending on how sure they are (implementing the modals of deduction).

- 2. TV series (20’).** On this final day, the Netflix adaption of the graphic novel will be shown (just a few clips) so students can argue about the differences between characters’ physiques in the book and in the TV series. They can be questioned whether they expected those actors to interpret the characters and if the adaptation was able to fulfil their expectations. To make it easier for students, they will be given a chart (table 13 below) to fill in as they watch the clips.



Image 33. Downloaded from [Netflix Tudum](https://www.netflix.tudum.com/).

	<i>Similarities</i>	<i>Differences</i>
Main characters		
Location		
Rhythm of action		
Duration of events		
Extra details?		

Table 13. Activity chart to fill with their observations.

- 3. Discussion about fictional vs. real world (20’).** The students will have to disclose their impressions on how daily situations are depicted on the comic, whether they are similar to the reality that they know or not.

Questions:

- Would you classify the comic as “realistic”? Or is it too fictional?
- In which instances did you feel the most connected to the story?

- What is one situation that occurred in *Heartstopper* and made you feel that it could happen to you in real life? *For instance, Charlie was reluctant/afraid to join the rugby team due to his lack of confidence or experience.*
- Do you think is it possible to have a story like Nick and Charlie in real life?
- Is there such acceptance of LGBTQ youth nowadays? Why can we do to be more inclusive in our daily life?
- As a reader, are there any changes that you would make in the plot?

4. Comments on final project (10'). In this section, the students will express their opinions on the comic strips of the whole group. Comments about which part do they think it was the hardest to do or who is the most eye-catching. They have the opportunity to upload their projects on the school website or any social media, apart from the poster in the classroom.

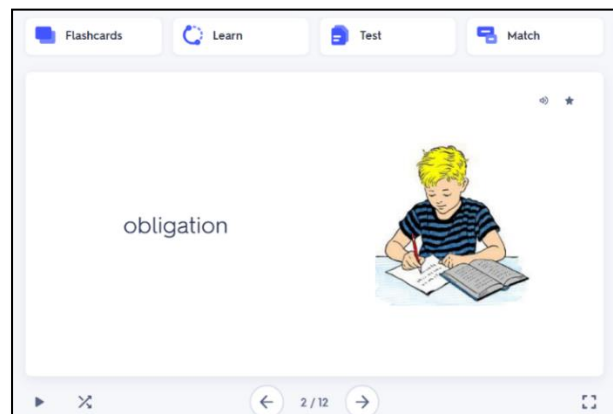
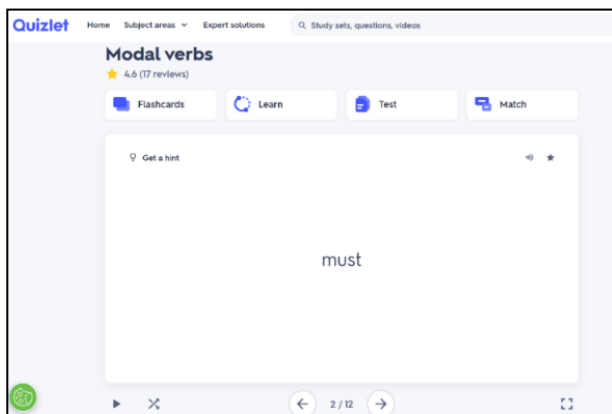
3.17. Extra activities

This section is devoted to proposing other tasks for the students that present any type of drawback. Every student should feel integrated during the lesson, regardless of their difficulties with the language. These are several ways to adapt the rhythm to them:

- It might be logical, but checking with our students is imperative. By simply asking them if they understand what was explained the day before, we are making sure that we did it correctly and also, students do not feel overlooked.
- Providing examples of how to study. We as teachers have been studying for a long time and we should be able to collect multiple studying models that may be beneficial for our students.
- Motivation. This compels to every student, but especially slow learners. One of the common issues is the lack of attention paid by teachers in their daily efforts. For that reason, kind words and rewards to reinforce their behaviour are encouraged. Thus, we are noticing their progress and they are contented.

Likewise, we would try to readjust the activities of the sessions, or we might be interested in finding additional tasks for struggling learners. These are a few ideas which can be used in any of the sessions of my lesson plan:

- Flashcards. One of the factors that characterize these students is the lack of memory. Therefore, writing flashcards could help them to acquire vocabulary, grammatical points or conversational techniques. The website and app Quizlet provides learners with the option to find cards or to fill their own.



Images 34 & 35. Screenshots from [Quizlet](#) about modal verbs.

In addition, there is the possibility to do certain activities (i.e., test) in order to check if they have learned the new material.

- Diary. This idea might be either for the student or the teacher. It is easier to track the obstacles by writing them down on a diary. Also, this makes revision less chaotic since we know where to start.

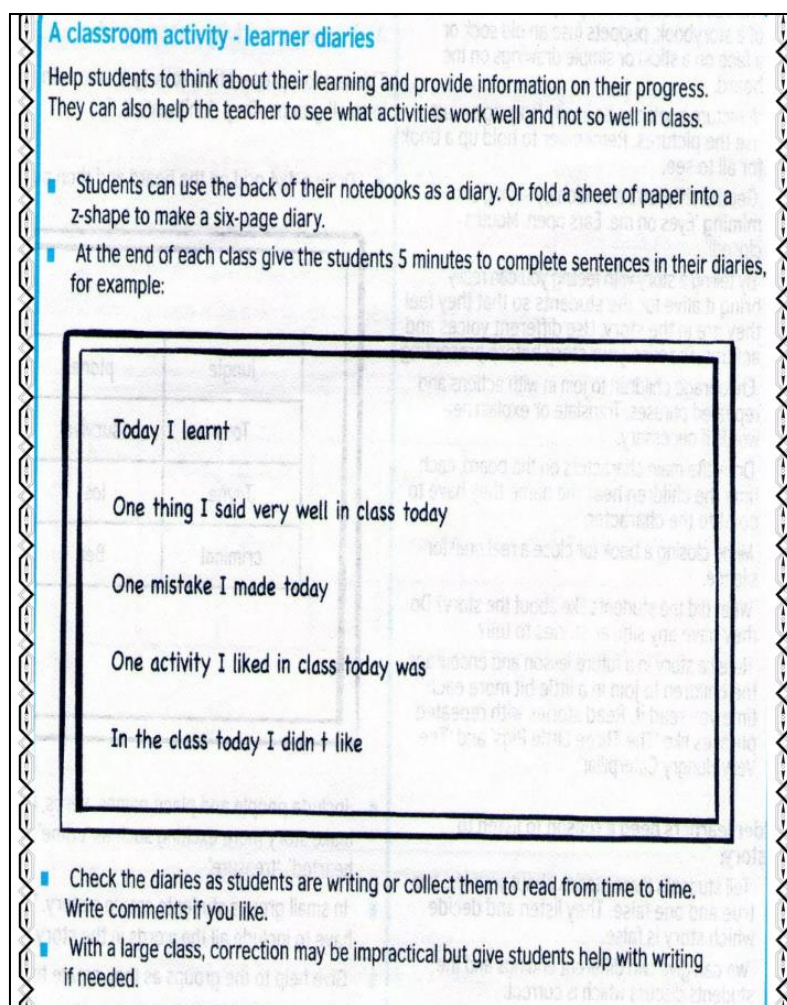


Image 36. Screenshot of worksheet from [SlideShare](#).

The example above is designed with guide notes for teachers on how to carry out the task and there are also model sentences to help students with the writing.

- Worksheets for further training. Generally, they have a positive impact on students because they can take worksheets as homework and later, they can be used as a glossary for studying.

PAST SIMPLE

Form: we add "ed" to all regular verbs.
Irregular verbs must be learnt by heart.

We use the Past Simple for something in the past which is finished.

- He **played** tennis **yesterday**.
- The children **went** to the park **this morning**.

We use "did" to make questions and "didn't" for negatives. The verb stays in the base form.

- **Did you see** Bob yesterday?
- They **didn't come** to the party on Sunday.

PRESENT PERFECT

Form: **has/have + past participle**

We use the present perfect for an action in the past with a result now or when we talk about a time from the past until now.

- **I've lost** my glasses. (I can't find them now)
- **I've been** to Spain, but I haven't been to Portugal.

We use: **hasn't/haven't + past participle** for negatives:

- John **hasn't seen** the film.

We use: **has/have + subject + past participle** for questions:

- **Have you seen** Jane today?

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verbs

- I _____ (see) the twins in town last week.
- _____ (you/ever/meet) her brother?
- Where _____ (you/be) last weekend?
- _____ (you/see) Kathleen?
- We _____ (not/go) on holiday last year.
- I love clothes. I _____ (buy) a lot this year.
- What _____ (you/do) last weekend?
- Dad _____ (repair) the car, you can use it now.
- Agatha Christie _____ (live) from 1890 to 1976.
- Granny still _____ (not/find) her glasses.
- Where _____ (you/buy) your laptop?
- Oh! You _____ (paint) the kitchen, I like the colour.
- What time _____ (you/get) home last night?
- Emma! Your letter _____ (arrive) at last!
- The weather _____ (be) good all week.
- I _____ (finish) work early yesterday.
- Sue's not here, she _____ (go) out.
- The weather _____ (not/be) very good last week.
- We _____ (be) to the cinema twice this month.
- Brian _____ (live) in England until the age of 14.

iSLCollective.com

Image 37. Document downloaded from [iSLCollective](https://www.islcollective.com).

In this case, the worksheet has two boxes at the top with the explanation of the specific grammatical point (differences between the present perfect and the past simple tense). Completing this as further practice, slow learners are able to easily identify the correct tense, having the advantage of the boxes whenever they need it. The worksheet below is another example, yet the composition is different. Activities are divided into categories according to their intended purpose: structure, uses, affirmative, negative, questions, as well as a full text.

Present Perfect Practice Worksheet

Form

Write down the correct form (pronoun + verb).

	Simple Past	Present Perfect Simple
I / open	_____	_____
he / write	_____	_____
they / do	_____	_____
you / swim	_____	_____
she / give	_____	_____

Use

When do we use which tense? Write present perfect or simple past in the blanks.

'Already' is a signal word for ... _____

'Just' is a signal word for ... _____

'2 years ago' is a signal word for ... _____

'Yet' is a signal word for ... _____

'Yesterday' is a signal word for ... _____

Positive Sentences

Put the verbs into the correct tense (simple past or present perfect simple).

Mary (win) _____ the lottery last year.

We (prepare / already) _____ dinner.

James (find) _____ your ring in the garden yesterday.

He (come / just) _____ home.

They (buy) _____ their car two years ago.

iSLCollective.com

Image 38. Document downloaded from [iSLCollective](https://www.islcollective.com).

Negative Sentences

Put the verbs into the correct tense (simple past or present perfect simple).

I (see / not) _____ anyone yet.
Phil (go / not) _____ to the cinema last night.
We (be / not) _____ to the zoo so far.
She (arrive / not) _____ yet.
Emily (visit / not) _____ me last week.

Questions

Put the verbs into the correct tense (simple past or present perfect simple).

(you / read) _____ the book yet?
How many letters (they / write) _____ so far?
When (he / tell) _____ you that?
(you / be) _____ at home last night?
How often (you / travel) _____ abroad till now?

Text

Put the verbs into the correct tense (simple past or present perfect simple).

A: (you / taste / ever) _____ sushi?
B: Yes, I (eat) _____ sushi at least five times so far.
A: When (you / eat) _____ sushi for the first time?
B: I (eat) _____ sushi for the first time on my dad's 50th birthday. He (invite) _____ the whole family to a Japanese restaurant.
A: (you / like) _____ it?
B: Absolutely. In fact, it (be) _____ so good that we (be) _____ to that restaurant three times. And on my mum's birthday, we (order) _____ some sushi and (have) _____ it at home.

iSLCollective.com

Image 39. Document downloaded from [iSLCollective](https://www.islcollective.com).

The majority of the extra activities mentioned can be done either at home or during the sessions (if the student is a fast learner). For instance, this type of student will not need worksheets with the theory boxes, but they have the option to complete others with similar activities or to prepare small projects, such as the diary or a podcast. For the latter, fast learners are able to devote their energy to create a space where they have the control and the confidence to explore ideas, to use their imagination. The website [Soundtrap](https://www.soundtrap.com) has an article in which addresses students in how to do a podcast.

- **Scripted fiction.** These podcast scripts typically tell a single story in a manner that resembles a TV show or an audiobook.
- **Interview.** Interview-style podcasts will have one or two hosts that conduct interviews with experts or interesting people.
- **Monologue.** When a single person is talking, it is considered a monologue podcast script. The person speaking may be sharing information or telling a story.
- **Nonfiction storytelling.** These podcasts tell real-life stories. Sometimes they contain interviews with people that were involved directly in the events or have expert knowledge related to the topic.
- **Conversational.** One of the most popular forms of podcast scripts is conversational, in which a panel of hosts records themselves speaking about a specific topic. This could revolve around pop culture, science, history, and more.

Image 40. Screenshot from the article about the production of a podcast.

In this article, they introduce several types of podcasts, apart from giving tips on how to plan the podcast script.

4. Conclusions

Certainly, the use of comics as a didactic tool in language learning has several benefits that may contribute to the development of the four skills. Graphic novels and comics are a highly engaging medium that can motivate students in the learning process, at the same time it provides them with a meaningful context for the language presented. By applying visual language, this type of literature offers a rich source of vocabulary and grammatical structures that students can learn in a natural way. However, it is crucial for teachers to consider their proficiency levels, interests, and cultural backgrounds when selecting the materials. In the case of this didactic unit, *Heartstopper* has the advantage of being a contemporary work, written by a young author, thus any conversation or issue depicted on the book may resonate with the experiences of our students. In addition, teachers should design activities that promote critical thinking and analytical skills rather than merely focusing on the literary text itself.

Furthermore, by dealing with complex topics and depicting various cultural and social situations, comics promote comprehension skills and experience, which are essential not only for communication, but for navigating the world. Additionally, comics can be adapted to the various levels, contexts, and age groups, which makes them a flexible tool for any foreign language program that is willing to introduce any type of literature. It is also worthwhile for language teachers to integrate comic books

into their curriculum and to explore their potential for stimulating the cognitive development of students.

In terms of the process, I had the opportunity to collect and gather all my experiences and knowledge in order to create this project. By remembering the moments instructing teenagers and children, I was able to design the unit with specific materials and techniques that worked with my students. However, I always had in mind that the didactic unit should count on possible modifications. For instance, worksheets might be useful for a certain type of student, yet it can be carried out in a digital platform if they have computers at school. The goal must be the implication and the convenience for the whole group.

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