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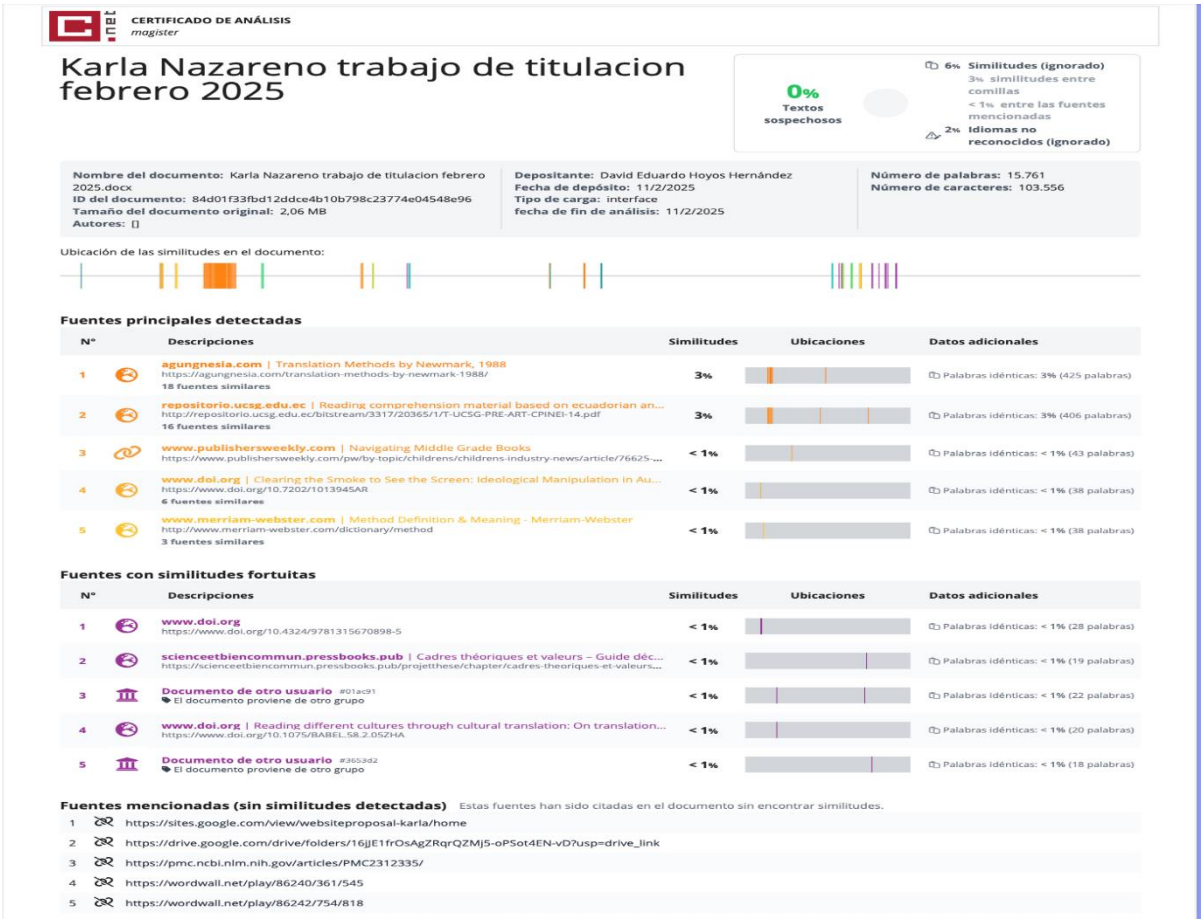

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I would like to dedicate this project to my grandmother, who was a ray of light in my life; to my mother Blanca, my auntie Gina, my sister Johanna, and my brother Leonardo for being there through tough times. Thank you for your unconditional support.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to integrate Ecuadorian literature in the EFL classroom through the translation of selected chapters of the historical fiction book, *Horacio, el ferrocarril y las esterlinas desaparecidas*, to be used as instructional material among middle grade students to enhance their vocabulary acquisition skills. The translation utilized the communicative approach to ensure readability in the target readership, and several excerpts from the book were analyzed to prove the efficacy of said method. Additionally, a website was built, allowing students to access the selected chapters as well as interactive post-reading activities. By translating a local book into English, this research highlights the potential of literature-based instruction as an effective tool for vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, it supports the development of engaging, culture-rich pedagogical resources that bridge linguistic and historical knowledge, reinforcing the value of incorporating Ecuadorian literature in EFL curricula.

Keywords: *middle-grade literature, Ecuadorian literature, EFL vocabulary acquisition, literary translation, communicative approach, Trans-Andean Railway, Ecuador's History.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Justification

Since the invention of writing, humans have recognized the importance of recording information about the world around them, which have had a significant impact on their cultures and nations. Each country holds an array of stories that trace back to its origins, offering its population a glimpse into a past that, though long gone, has shaped society across the centuries. Colonization, scientific discoveries, political upheaval, civil wars, revolts and revolution: it is in these and countless other events that the evolution of humankind is deeply rooted. But only through the analysis of the past can a population recover millennia of knowledge and understand how major historical events are interconnected to present-day dilemmas and issues. Historian David Thelen (1998) stated, “Using the past is as eating or breathing. It is a common human activity. What we have in common as human beings is that we employ the past to make sense of the present and to influence the future” (p. 190).

In schools, as part of Social Studies, History is a core program worldwide. Lessons are usually taught chronologically—prehistory, ancient civilizations, the Middle Ages—and it goes on until it reaches the modern era. Apart from all these major world events, each country is required to teach students local historical events that are part of their own identity. However, it is uncommon for EFL students to receive history lessons in their target language. Including a historical fiction book as part of the reading material is linked to a more meaningful and culturally relevant experience. Reading about a familiar setting in a foreign language allows students to explore their cultural heritage while simultaneously improving their conversational skills. This approach facilitates students’ ability to confidently articulate historical facts in English.

Nowadays there are many great historical fiction books in the market for young readers. The Book Thief (Zusak, 2005) is set in 1939 during the Nazi occupation, and Secrets of a Sun King (Carroll, 2018) is a mystery set 1922, the time when Howard Carter discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun. However,

these novels focus on historical events from foreign contexts rather than local. Therefore, it is crucial to include historical fiction books in the classroom that narrate Ecuadorian historical events in English, as they serve as valuable tools for learners to gain a deeper understanding of the history that shaped their homeland.

1.2 Problem Statement

Textbooks are widely recognized as fundamental learning tools across various academic disciplines, which are typically authored by experts in language acquisition, ensuring alignment with stablished pedagogical principles for second or foreign language learners.

In Guayaquil, Ecuador, one such institution utilizing these resources is *Unidad Educativa El Libertador,* a bilingual school affiliated with Oxford University Press, which allows them to use both physical and digital student books and workbooks, as well as access interactive tools such as videos, audios, and activities to ensure the students' successful learning. *Everybody Up* is a widely used textbook series from Oxford University Press designed for young learners. As their website describes, "Get students talking with Everybody Up 3rd Edition. Plenty of videos, songs, and stories, together with a strong focus on pronunciation and grammar ensure your students will become confident in their English language communication" (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

Language acquisition indeed involves all the aforementioned items; there cannot be a proper development of a second language without the study of grammar, phonics or semantics. However, literature is also one of the foundations of good language instruction. As Ghosn (2002) states, "Authentic literature provides a motivating, meaningful context for language learning, and it presents natural language at its finest, promoting vocabulary development in context" (p.173).

Through literature, students can develop their reading skills and explore different themes, cultures and other topics that are relevant to their age.

However, a significant issue arises due to the predominance of literature from the United States and the United Kingdom in Ecuador. This is not only due to the exclusion of Ecuadorian books from EFL materials but also because there is a lack of modern translated works from Spanish into English.

Another challenge in EFL instruction is the development of students' reading comprehension skills. These skills can be difficult to develop due to a lack of background vocabulary knowledge and low motivation. Students often struggle with motivation when engaging with foreign literature that does not resonate with their cultural experiences.

To help students develop a deeper understanding of their identity and values, more Ecuadorian literature should be available for EFL learners. An example of such literatura is Graciela Eldredge's *Horacio, el ferrocarril, y las esterlinas desaparecidas.* Intended for twelve-year-old readers, the book is suitable for seventh-grade students. Blending elements of science fiction and historical fiction, the novel a seventeen-year-old boy who travels through time to various historical periods in Ecuador, where he explores the construction of the Trans-Andean Railway construction and encounters historical figures such as Eloy Alfaro.

Including this book or similar works in the reading curriculum can help students connect with their historical and cultural roots, an aspect often lacking in foreign literature. Moreover, students can acquire new vocabulary, which they can apply in various EFL class activities to reinforce their learning.

This research focuses on providing vocabulary acquisition activities for the development of reading skills among middle grade students, specifically seventh grade, using a translated version of the Ecuadorian book *Horacio, el ferrocarril, y las esterlinas desaparecidas* by Graciela Eldredge.

1.3. Research questions:

- What are the pedagogical advantages of incorporating a translated version of local literature that has historical-cultural aspects, in the EFL class for seventh graders, specifically when working on vocabulary acquisition for the development of reading skills?
- Which translation techniques are appropriate for rendering text rich in cultural aspects and idioms?
- What elements are needed in instructional material for developing EFL reading skills through vocabulary acquisition among seventh graders?

1.3 Objectives:

1.3.1 Main objective:

To create instructional material that can help develop reading skills through vocabulary acquisition and foster local culture learning, by means of a translated version of the Ecuadorian literature work *Horacio, el ferrocarril, y las esterlinas desaparecidas* by Graciela Eldredge".

1.3.2 Specific objectives:

1. To investigate how local literature fosters cultural awareness among young learners in the EFL classroom during reading practices.
2. To search which translation techniques are appropriate for rendering an Ecuadorian Literature work.
3. To explore elements needed in instructional material for developing EFL reading skills through vocabulary acquisition and fostering local culture learning among seventh graders.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Translation

According to Tymoczko and Gentzler (2002), “translation is not simply an act of faithful reproduction but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration and fabrication – and even, in some cases of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes” (p.244). In other words, translation is, at its core, a task that goes beyond looking for equivalent words in a dictionary and mindlessly using them to replace the original text. It requires for the translator to have deep knowledge of both source and target languages, as well as expertise in the field the texts come from, such as academic, scientific or literary (Parks, 2014).

Translation involves strategic decisions, knowing which method is more appropriate for a text, the cultural differences between source and target language, and the fact that there will always be some sort of loss in the final product.

2.1.1 Strategic Decisions

Strategic decisions concern the overall approach to the translation, not just individual words or phrases. These are always planned and consider various factors that influence the translation process. Moreover, translation strategy is a macro-level phenomenon in which translators must consider various parameters such as the nature of the source text, the target audience, and the purpose of the translation when determining their approach (Shlepnev, 2018).

2.1.3 Translation Method

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines method as “a procedure or process for attaining an object: such as (1) a systematic procedure, technique, or mode of inquiry employed by or proper to a particular discipline or art; (2) a way, technique, or process of or for doing something.” Choosing a method is part of the translation process. After reading and analyzing the source text, the translator must decide which method will reproduce the work coherently and

naturally for the target audience. “It is to understand the strategy of the work as a whole, its rhythms, its imagery, its stylistic techniques; only then can we reconstruct it as a coherent whole” (Parks, 2014).

2.1.3 Cultural Awareness

Culture represents a whole universe of ideologies, beliefs, customs, and lifestyle in a particular society. A translator must be aware that these can change significantly across cultures to properly understand the nuances and transmit the message without it leading up to misunderstandings or disrespectful connotations for the target audience.

According to Tursunovich, 2002,

> Every person in society since childhood absorbs his native language along with the culture of his people. All the subtleties of folk culture will be reflected in the language of these people. If we consider only the phrases themselves, then they reflect the whole spirit of the people and their ideology (p. 168-169).

The role of the translator is, therefore, to research the target culture more profoundly to ensure the naturalness of the rendering, as well as being mindful that it will sometimes pose a challenge to bridge this gap in communication.

2.1.4 Translation Loss

It occurs when some aspect of the source text is not, or cannot be, fully conveyed in the target text. Since languages are different, it is an inevitable process. Fawcett (1997) stated that,

> The variation between languages in the different components and relations of word meaning has two consequences for translation. Firstly, the meaning that is transferred will be decided by situation and context, not by the dictionary, and secondly, the transfer will nearly always involve some form of loss or change. (p. 25)

2.1.5 Basic Terminology in the Translation Process

Dickins et al (2017) proposed the following key acronyms to be used during the translation process:

Source Language (SL): The original language of the text requiring translation.

Target Language (TL): The language into which the original text is to be translated.

Source Text (ST): The text requiring translation.

Target Text (TT): The text which is a translation of the original.

2.2 Translation Methods

2.2.1 Word-for-word Translation:

“This is often demonstrated as interlinear translation, with The TL immediately below the SL words. The SL word order is preserved, and the words translated singly by their most common meanings, out of context” (Newmark, 2001, pp. 45–46).

2.2.2 Literal Translation:

“The SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents, but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context. As a pre-translation process, this indicates the problems to be solved” (Newmark, 2001, pp. 46).

2.2.3 Faithful Translation:

“It attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures. It 'transfers' cultural words and preserves the degree of grammatical and lexical 'abnormality' (deviation from SL norms) in the translation” (Newmark, 2001, p. 46).

2.2.4 Semantic Translation:

As stated by (Newmark, 2001)

> Semantic translation differs from 'faithful translation' only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value (that is, the beautiful and natural sounds of the SL text, compromising on 'meaning' where

appropriate so that no assonance, wordplay or repetition jars in the finished version. Further, it may translate less important cultural words by culturally neutral third or functional terms but not by cultural equivalents, and it may make other small concessions to the readership. The distinction between 'faithful' and 'semantic' translation is that the first is uncompromising and dogmatic, while the second is more flexible, admits the creative exception to 100% fidelity and allows for the translator's intuitive empathy with the original (p. 46).

2.2.5 Adaptation:

This is the 'freest' form of translation. It is used mainly for plays (comedies and poetry; the themes, characters, plots are usually preserved, the SL culture converted to the TL culture and the text rewritten. The deplorable practice of having a play or poem literally translated and then rewritten by an established dramatist or poet has produced many poor adaptations, but other adaptations have 'rescued' period plays (Newmark, 2001, p. 46).

2.2.6 Free Translation:

“Free translation reproduces the matter without the manner, or the content without the form of the original. Usually, it is a paraphrase much longer than the original, a so-called 'intralingual translation*, often prolix and pretentious, and not translation at all.” (Newmark, 2001, pp 46-47).

2.2.7 Idiomatic Translation:

“Idiomatic translation reproduces the 'message' of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original” (Newmark, 2001, p. 47).

2.2.8 Communicative Translation:

“Communicative translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership” (Newmark, 2001, p. 47).

2.4 Literary Translation

Translating literature goes beyond merely linguistic and syntactic knowledge of source and target languages. It involves a deeper insight into how words are woven to create meaning and paint a picture on the reader’s mind, the tone of the narrator and the writing style, the overall pacing of the story, the age of the target readership as well as the literary genre (e.g., middle-grade, fantasy, science-fiction, etc.).

For Civitillo (2020), translating literature “cannot be based on manual recipes or universal truths due to the vast diversity of aesthetic and literary movements, authors, works, genres and subgenres, and periods of writing as well as reception contexts present in a work. These are topics that require extensive training not only in language but also in culture” (p. 43). This perspective highlights the complexity of literary translation, which requires a translator who can navigate cultural nuances while balancing fidelity to the original with a creative adaptation necessary for cross-cultural resonance.

2.4.1 Communicative Approach in Literary Translation

As stated by Parks (1995), "The communicative approach is one which focuses its attention not on language as such, but on what is done with language. It is interested in the transfer of meanings from one person to another. In a word, it is interested in communication." (p. 239). This perspective emphasizes the functional role of language as a tool for conveying meaning, which prioritizes the reader’s experience and comprehension over rigid adherence to structural or lexical accuracy.

This approach finds resonance in Peter Newmark’s (2001) concept of communicative translation. Newmark articulates that communicative translation "aims to produce a target text that elicits the same effect on its

readers as the original text does on its audience." The goal, therefore, is not merely to replicate words or syntax but to ensure that the translated text achieves equivalent communicative efficacy and resonance within the cultural and linguistic framework of the target audience. This method requires the translator to deeply consider the intended audience's cultural and linguistic norms, adapting idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and stylistic elements to achieve naturalness and clarity.

Newmark further elaborates on the essence of communicative translation by noting that it is for the kind of reader who "does not anticipate difficulties or obscurities, and would expect a generous transfer of foreign elements into his own culture as well as his language where necessary" (p. 164). This underlines the translator's responsibility to bridge the cultural and linguistic gap by not only translating words but also adapting foreign elements to align with the target culture, ensuring that the message remains both accessible and meaningful.

For instance, in communicative translation, a phrase with a culturally specific reference in the source text might be adapted to an equivalent expression in the target language that conveys the same emotional or situational impact. The translator exercises a balance between fidelity to the source text's message and fluency in the target text, aiming to avoid alienating or confusing the audience with overly literal renderings.

This approach is particularly relevant when translating Ecuadorian literature into English for use in EFL classrooms. By employing communicative translation, educators ensure that students not only develop their English proficiency but also gain meaningful insight into Ecuadorian culture. Instead of presenting direct but potentially obscure translations, culturally rich expressions can be adapted to maintain their impact while preserving authenticity. This strategy allows students to engage more deeply with the text, enhancing both their linguistic competence and their appreciation for Ecuadorian cultural heritage.

2.4.2 Literary Translation Challenges

Languages are vast, linguistic systems that differ from one another. When translators are decoding two languages such as Spanish and English, differences such as level of formality, phonetic system, word order and noun gender–to list a few–become clearer the more the translator delves into the two grammatical structures. There are basic challenges such as switching the position of an adjective, the auxiliaries, the genderlessness of English nouns or the countable or uncountable ones, false friends, etc. However, translation is more complex than just spotting linguistic differences.

Unlike other types of translation (e.g., technical, video games, subtitling, legal translation, etc.), literature abounds with rhetorical figures, idioms, informal language, slangs, and abstractions that demand to decode what the author's intention was when writing a particular fragment. Moreover, the translator is faced with a type of "recreation," that is, to convert a book written in a foreign language and effectively transfer all the context as naturally as possible for a new audience.

Parks (2014) stated that,

> An important premise to keep in mind is that everything in the translation will tend to be read as if written in English, as if planned that way. Hence it is pointless trying to keep vague allusions to foreign texts that the reader cannot know, or indeed as some translators do, trying to retain something of the structure of the original language in the translation (p. 247).

Furthermore, Fawcett (1997) pointed out,

> The variation between languages in the different components and relations of word meaning has two consequences for translation. Firstly, the meaning that is transferred will be decided by situation and context, not by the dictionary, and secondly, the transfer will nearly always involve some form of loss or change (pp. 25-26).

A successful rendition is the aim of any translator, but it is not without its challenges. Building on Fawcett's observation, one of the challenges a translator faces is the transfer of culturally bound terms and phrases from one language to another. There is an anecdote from author Gabriel García Marquez (1993) about the translation of his book One Hundred Years of Solitude. While referring to Caribbean culture, which is not easily understood by Europeans, he said, “The language, when compressed in English, gains strength. […]. I worked a lot with the Italian translator and with the French translator. Both translations are good; however, I do not feel the book in French" (p. 112).

The inherent variations between languages can lead to loss or changes in meaning. For example, the Spanish idiom “camarón que se duerme se lo lleva la corriente” means that a person can miss out on opportunities if he or she is careless in life. However, a literal translation (“a shrimp that sleeps is carried by the tide”) would make no sense for the English speaker.

In the above example, a translator might decide to look for an equivalent that both conveys a similar idea and is popular among the target audience, such as “you snooze, you lose,” or “don’t rest on your laurels.” The imagery of the original idiom will be inevitably lost, yet untranslatable terms are not unprecedented. Costa (2001) explains, when a translator hits a wall when encountering cultural terms or idioms in a text, then a solution is to dive deeper into the culture of the target language. He asserts, “The writer expresses his temperament, his experience and his thought in his writing, in his grammatical structures, the vocabulary, the syntax, the punctuation, the rhetorical resources of inversion, repetition, parallelism, rhetorical figures, metaphors and metonymies, ambiguity, obscurity, rhythm, tone.” (p.22)

Aside from cultural differences, another challenge in translation is wordplay. Fawcett (1997) further explains the term by stating the difficulty of transferring a French pun,

> If the subject of a text forces the translator to remain within the same semantic domain as the pun, and if the target language quite simply has

> no two words in that domain that can form a wordplay, then the pun is untranslatable. How, for example, are we to translate the pun in *Ie socialisme francais est lin cadavre exquis* where the last two words can be taken quite literally as 'good-looking corpse' (socialism was dead), but also as a reference to the Surrealist game of Consequences (French socialism was a jumble of disparate tendencies). There would seem to be no possibility of translating this wordplay. (p. 33)

2.5 Literature and Culture

Culture and literature are inextricably linked. Language is a product of culture, and therefore, there are vastly different cultural backgrounds present in literary works. Ecuadorian novel *Baldomera* by author Alfredo Pareja (1938), for example, mirrors through the writing style of the author, tone and the setting the social classes of the 1920s. The addition of colloquialisms and expressions that are mostly known within the context of the Ecuadorian culture are meant to reflect people's lifestyles, their mannerisms, and interactions.

British literature and American literature are another case in point. Although they share the same language, the fact that these are two separated countries is enough for the language to exhibit vast differences. Park (2001) argues that linguistic choices are often a reflection of a country's "way of living." For example, the American tendency toward abbreviation and simplification, seen in words like "dorm" (dormitory) or "math" (mathematics), reflects a cultural emphasis on efficiency and practicality. Conversely, while not all British authors adhere strictly to traditional forms, there is often a greater appreciation for formal language and historical literary conventions, potentially reflecting a culture that is more connected to history and tradition. This difference is not merely about word length; it extends to vocabulary as well. In the British *Harry Potter* series by J.K Rowling, characters use British slang and idioms, grounding the story in a specific cultural context. This includes things like using "jumper" instead of sweater, and expressions like "blimey" or "brilliant."

2.5.1 Cultural Representation in Literature

As culture and language are two sides of the same coin, literature can be a pathway to bring little-known communities to the public. Literature carries undercurrents of the time and place in which it was written, and this has an emotional impact on the reader (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997). For example, the Young Adult book *Where the Dark Stands Stills* by A. B. Poranek (2024) is rich with Polish folklore, which can make the reader feel connected to all these captivating legends. *Zhara: Guardians of Dawn* by S. Jae-Jones (2023) mingles fantasy with Chinese and Korean culture. Though most of these stories are a product of their authors' creativity and imagination, the lore and traditions belong to real communities.

Culture in literature not only expands the literary landscape, making it more diverse and representative, but it can also encourage readers to learn more about different cultures and perspectives, and be more engaged in the language itself. Through literature, students can develop a full range of linguistic and cognitive skills, cultural knowledge, and sensitivity (Henning, 1993). By incorporating diverse cultural elements, literature breaks free from the limitations of narratives that only reflect Western or Eurocentric perspectives, offering readers a wider array of new stories, voices, and worldviews.

Cultural representation in literature can play a crucial role in promoting empathy and understanding between different communities. When readers see themselves reflected in the pages of a book, or when they learn about the experiences of those from different backgrounds, it can help to break down stereotypes and prejudices. This can lead to greater acceptance and inclusivity, both within the literary world and in society as a whole. When using literature in language teaching, it is important to consider the learner's character, culture, and their own interpretive tools (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997)

2.5.2 Middle-grade LIterature

Middle-grade literature holds a significant place in the publishing industry. Its typical target audience is children aged 9 to 12, and it tells stories that are all about what children face in their daily lives, such as their thirst for adventure, friendship, self-discovery, or coming-of-age themes.

Executive Editor at Atheneum Books Reka Simonsen pointed out that:

> Middle-grade fiction deals with the things kids are going through at those ages: friendships made and lost, family relationships changing, physical changes, a wide range of school experiences, and a growing awareness of the wide world outside of oneself and the injustices it often contains. (Maughan, 2018)

There are a variety of genres within middle-grade fiction, but in all stories the writing is age-appropriate; the language is clear, without too much flowery or lyrical writing, since it wants to ensure comprehension while expanding vocabulary. The stories are often fast paced, with plots designed to hook young readers from the start, and chapters that are not too long and not too short. There are also moral messages in the narrative—kindness, perseverance, honesty—which provide readers with subtle but meaningful lessons. Additionally, in recent years, middle-grade fiction books have offered a more inclusive reading experience, often featuring characters from varied cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

2.6 Literature and English learning

2.6.1 The Role of Literature in the EFL classroom

Brumfit & Carter (1986) pointed out that,

> Literary texts provide examples of language resources being used to the full, and the reader is placed in an active interactional role in working with and making sense of this language. Thus, literature lessons make for genuine opportunities in group work and/or open-ended exploration by the individual student (p.15).

Literature possesses a myriad of genres at its disposal, and it is the richness of themes, writing styles and narrative voices that can bring more than simply storytelling and joy to EFL learners. Language itself is embedded in literature, which is an opportunity for learners to set aside the textbook and use all the knowledge they have acquired during their lessons to immerse themselves in stories that compress everything in one single book: verb tenses, real-life dialogues, figurative language, phrasal verbs, different registers, and so on. Literature can often bring learners closer to new ways of expressing themselves through the characters they are reading about, allowing them to explore the language more compellingly. Lina & Arshad (2024) point out that, “By engaging with literary texts, students are prompted to navigate the complexities of language and culture, thereby broadening their worldview and deepening their understanding of the target language” (p. 21).

2.6.2 Literature as a Motivational Tool

As Lina & Arshad (2024) observe, authentic literary texts provide a refreshing departure from traditional language learning materials, offering a more engaging and enjoyable experience. The meaningful context provided by literary works makes language learning more relevant and memorable, motivating learners to actively participate in the learning process.

In the case of middle-grade fiction, for children who engage more in adventurous tales, the right book can be a source of motivation for students by presenting the language in the form of a story with relatable characters and interesting places. It can foster a love of reading and help students to improve their literacy skills.

Ladousse (2001) argues that, beyond stimulating creativity and imagination, reading literature engages and develops the reader's emotional intelligence (EQ). This quality makes literature especially valuable in language classrooms, where the components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1998) play a significant role in enhancing language learning.

2.6.3 Benefits of Local Literature

According to Keis (2006, as cited in Ebe, 2010), “Validating and celebrating students’ backgrounds and cultural experiences can often lead to reading engagement and increased reading proficiency” (p. 5). It is through a familiar context that students are more likely to feel connected to the foreign language. A story set in a familiar place with customs and social dynamics known to the students can make their learning more meaningful and relevant. Additionally, culturally specific vocabulary and expressions can be easier to retain because they are relevant to students’ daily lives.

Moreover, Ebe (2010) while reflecting on her own experiences with reading assignments during her lessons with bilingual elementary students, she found out that “students tend to do poorly on reading assessments when they cannot relate to or bring background knowledge to the text they are asked to read” (p. 194). She therefore developed a rubric that can help teachers determine whether a text is culturally relevant. Freeman & Freeman (2007) used that rubric while working with teachers who “have been excited about how the children connect to the events and can extend the reading by comparing characters and events to their own families and experiences.” (p. 106). One of these teachers recounts how her latino students were not performing well in their English lessons specifically reading and writing, so she decided to bring books to the classroom that were more closely related to the students in terms of culture and heritage (Freeman & Freeman, 2007). This anecdote highlights the importance of culture in literature as a strategy to make English learning more engaging to young learners.

Furthermore, the Schema Theory discusses the importance of cultural knowledge for English learning. This theory emphasizes the role of prior knowledge and experience in understanding new information because readers understand texts by combining the information in the text with their background knowledge (Zhao & Zhu, 2012). While there are three types of schema—linguistic content, and formal—it is the content schema that relates to background knowledge about the world, which can be especially relevant

when considering the use of local literature. (Carrel, 1984, as quoted in Zhao & Zhu, 2012).

“Local literature,” in this context, refers to works written by Ecuadorian authors, which can reflect specific cultural values, traditions, and the social realities of the students. The Ecuadorian book Cumandá, for example, can resonate with students because they likely already possess knowledge of the setting, which is the Chimborazo Province. This existing knowledge can elicit a deeper meaning and message from within the text. Conversely, when students encounter literature from unfamiliar cultures, they may lack the necessary content schemata to fully grasp the text, potentially leading to misinterpretations and comprehension difficulties.

2.6.4 Teaching History through Historical Fiction Books

Historical fiction books blend factual events with storytelling to offer a different view on how certain time periods and events developed in the past. In the classroom, this genre can be a unique avenue for teaching history. Unlike traditional history textbooks, which often focus on dates and events in isolation, historical fiction immerses learners in the cultural, social, and emotional contexts of historical periods.

Since history textbooks are often seen as uninteresting or tedious, the integration of historical fiction books in the classroom can bridge the gap between students' prior knowledge and new historical concepts, helping students form meaningful connections and deeper understandings (Sliwka, 2008).

Author June Hure’s *The Silence of Bones,* for example, is set in Korea, in the year 1800, and vividly shows the readers what life and social classes were like during the time of the Joseon Dynasty. Another book that combines fantastical elements with real scenarios is *What the River Knows* by Isabel Ibañez, which takes place in Buenos Aires, Argentina in the 19th century, as well as in El Cairo, Egypt, when archeological digs were popular.

Historical fiction books not only foster a deeper understanding of historical events but also develop critical thinking, empathy, and an appreciation for diverse perspectives. As observed by Sliwka, (2008),

> By its very nature, history is composed of stories about people who are no longer alive to speak for themselves. Perhaps this is why so many students find it difficult to relate to social studies–the participants seem so far removed from the students' own lives. In order for students' knowledge to grow, an interest in the particular topic must be initiated, and this is where teachers can make a difference. Those silent voices of history can be brought to life through the use of historical fiction in the classroom (p. 61).

2.7 EFL Vocabulary Acquisition

It refers to the process of learning and mastering new English words by individuals whose first language is not English, and vocabulary acquisition represents a critical part of the learning process of EFL. Mastering a language revolves around learning its vocabulary (Rubin & Thompson, 1994), as well as acquiring a substantial amount of L2 lexis to produce the language effectively.

However, the process involves more than simply knowing a word and its definition. Acquiring new vocabulary means that learners must recognize that words function within a larger linguistic network, influencing and being influenced by other lexical elements. According to Thornbury (2002), words are categorized into various linguistic groups, including word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.), word families (base words and their derivatives), and word formation processes (affixation, compounding, and conversion). Additionally, learners must grasp the significance of multi-word units such as phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions, as well as lexical relationships like collocations (common word pairings), homonyms (words with the same spelling or pronunciation but different meanings), polysemes (words with multiple related meanings), synonyms and antonyms, and hyponyms (words that fall under a broader category).

Furthermore, vocabulary acquisition involves an understanding of lexical fields, which group words based on related meanings, and the nuances of style and connotation, which shape how words are used in different social and cultural contexts. Without this broader lexical awareness, learners may struggle with comprehension, appropriate word choice, and natural expression in English. Effective vocabulary learning strategies must therefore go beyond rote memorization and encourage deeper engagement with words in meaningful contexts, facilitating long-term retention and practical application.

2.7.1 Process of EFL Vocabulary Acquisition

Due to the nature of the EFL setting, in which the language is not constantly used outside the classroom, EFL vocabulary acquisition is a complex process. Various factors have an impact on learning vocabulary, such as teaching methods, learning strategies, and the learner's environment. It can be acquired intentionally, through direct instruction and focus on specific words, or incidentally, through exposure to language in context, such as reading or listening (Chanturia & Webb, 2016; Hynam, 2021). Intentional learning is when attention is paid to vocabulary learning; it is often more effective and leads to faster and greater gains (Spada & Lightbown, 2013). Incidental learning occurs unintentionally through reading, listening, or communicative activities, which is a slower process in its pick-up rate (Hynam, 2021).

According to Green et al. (2007) learning a new vocabulary word involves forming a connection that associates the concept it represents (its meaning) with a new sound pattern and the grammatical processes it follows. New sound combinations need to be temporarily stored and practiced in memory to establish a lasting mental representation of the word (Baddeley et al., 1998, as cited in Green at al., 2007).

Furthermore, Takaéc (2008, as cited in Gutierrez, 2020) compiled a list of the most commonly used schemes to present new vocabulary:

A. connecting an L2 item with its equivalent in L1
B. defining the meaning, presentation through context,

C. directly connecting the meaning to real objects or phenomena,
D. and active involvement of learners in presentation.

Building on the above list, the approach of connecting an L2 item with its L1 equivalent is to tap into learners' existing linguistic knowledge, providing a quick and clear reference point. Defining the meaning fosters a deeper conceptual understanding by encouraging learners to grasp the essence of a word beyond mere translation. Presentation through context situates vocabulary within meaningful scenarios, enhancing retention by linking words to real-life situations or narratives. Directly associating meanings with real objects or phenomena utilizes visual and experiential learning techniques, making abstract words tangible and relatable. Lastly, actively involving learners in the presentation process engages them cognitively and emotionally, fostering ownership of the learning process and promoting long-term retention.

2.7.2 Elements Needed in Instructional Material: EFL Learning Techniques for Vocabulary Acquisition in Middle-School Students.

An effective technique for helping students with vocabulary acquisition is extensive reading. Reading is a significant practice for vocabulary acquisition as it allows learners to form connections between word forms and their meanings while processing meaningful input (Min, 2008).

There are two main sets of strategies that can be applied to the learning of new words: cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Cook, 1995). Cognitive strategies involve manipulating information to enhance learning, such as: repetition, resourcing (using dictionaries), translation (using L1 as a basis for understanding L2), grouping, deduction (e.g. morphological deduction to find the meaning of a word), recombination, contextualization (placing the word into a language sequence), keywords, guessing the meaning, elaboration or transfer; metacognitive strategies entail planning and monitoring the learning process itself, they include self-management, self-monitoring, self-evaluation and directed/selective attention (Cook, 1995).

Thronbury (2002) observes that, “learning a second language involves both learning a new conceptual system, and constructing a new vocabulary network--a second mental lexicon.” (p. 18). He also states that long-term meamory plays a crucial role on vocabulary acquisition and summarizes research findings relevant to word learning and memory (pp. 24-26):

1. **Repetition** – Repeated exposure to a word is crucial. Encountering a word at least seven times in spaced intervals increases retention.
2. **Retrieval** – Actively recalling a word (retrieval practice) strengthens memory and improves future recall.
3. **Spacing** – Distributed practice over time is more effective than cramming. Revisiting vocabulary at gradually increasing intervals enhances retention.
4. **Pacing** – Learners should have opportunities to process vocabulary at their own pace, with time for silent rehearsal and organization.
5. **Use** – Actively using words in meaningful contexts helps transfer them to long-term memory (''Use it or lose it'').
6. **Cognitive Depth** – The more cognitively demanding the engagement with a word (e.g., deciding its part of speech or using it in a sentence), the better it is remembered.
7. **Personal Organizing** – Learners recall words better when they create their own sentences rather than just reading or rehearsing them.
8. **Imaging** – Visualizing a mental picture related to a word improves retention, even for abstract words.
9. **Mnemonics** – Memory aids like the keyword technique or rhymes help retrieve words from memory.
10. **Motivation** – While motivation itself doesn’t guarantee retention, it leads to more time spent on practice, indirectly aiding memory.
11. **Attention/Arousal** – Conscious focus is necessary for learning; words that evoke emotional responses tend to be remembered better.
12. **Affective Depth** – Emotional connections to words enhance memory, as learners recall words tied to personal experiences and feelings.

In the case of young learners, one crucial factor is to foster the joy for learning by tailoring existing techniques to suit children's needs. Such as:

- **Contextual Teaching:** it presents vocabulary within meaningful contexts rather than in isolation, such as through the use of authentic texts, videos, or audio recordings where words naturally occur (Nation, 2001). For example, to teach words like bake, whisk, and ingredients, it can be through a recipe. Another useful tool is to use short stories or dialogues to introduce terms related to emotions or daily routines.

- **Visual Aids:** it uses images, flashcards, infographics, or realia (real objects) to associate words with visuals (Thornbury, 2002). For example, pictures of fruits while teaching their names; or labeled diagrams to teach parts of a car or body.

- **Interactive Activities:** it incorporates games, role-plays, and collaborative tasks to make vocabulary acquisition engaging and memorable (Ur, 2012). Games such as Play charades, Pictionary, or vocabulary bingo; and role plays that simulate scenarios that enable them to use new words and expressions in context.

- **Incorporating Technology:** it is the use of apps, online games, and multimedia resources to make learning interactive (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007). Apps like Duolingo or Memrise can be helpful for personalized vocabulary practice, and YouTube videos, podcasts, or online quizzes can also expose students to the natural usage of vocabulary.

2.7.3 Vocabulary Acquisition to Improve Reading Skills

Reading and vocabulary are closely related. The more a learner is exposed to the L2, the greater their ability to decode linguistic structures, make inferences and gain a deeper understanding of how words take on different grammatical forms. Reading is the most important of the four skills in English as a foreign language (Carrell, 1998, as cited in Moussa, 2013). Through reading learners

acquire new word meanings and enhance their understanding of existing vocabulary through repeated exposure (Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2011).

Reading is undeniably one of the most effective ways to develop reading skills (Moussa, 2013) as increased exposure to written materials significantly enhances learners' reading abilities and overall performance. Beyond being a key source of knowledge, reading also contributes to overall language development, with a particularly strong impact on vocabulary acquisition (Douglas & Gonzo, 1994, as cited in Moussa, 2013).

Reading and storytelling are intertwined, as exposure to literary texts introduces students to a wide range of vocabulary, dialogues, and prose. This not only appeals to their imagination but also supports the development of English language skills, cultural awareness and critical thinking about plots, themes, and characters (Truong, 2009).

3. METHODOLOGY

This research project adopts a conceptual framework, which means it is firmly based on existing theories rather than producing new ones. Hirschheim (2008, as cited in Jaakkola, 2020), points out that conceptual research is "not derived from data in the traditional sense but involves the assimilation and combination of evidence in the form of previously developed concepts and theories" (p. 19).

This framework allows this project to apply translation concepts and techniques to render an English edition of a historical fiction text for middle-grade EFL students, aiming to promote vocabulary acquisition and cultural awareness about the Trans-Andean Railway and its significance for Ecuador, which is the target audience's country of origin, even if they are students from immigrant parents living in a foreign country.

Newmark's communicative approach was primarily used in the rendering of the historical fiction text, "Horacio, el ferrocarril y las esterlinas desaparecidas." Although no practical experimentation was conducted during this research, which is based entirely on theoretical concepts that define and support the study's framework, its findings may serve as a foundation for future testing and application in educational settings.

As stated by Alakrash et al. (2021), incorporating local culture in the curriculum can improve EFL students' language skills. This confirms that culturally relevant tools, in this case, literature, can aid learners in bettering their vocabulary acquisition skills.

3.1 Selected Ecuadorian Literature Material

The title of the selected book for this project is *Horacio, el ferrocarril y las esterlinas desaparecidas* by Eldredge (2014) published by Loqueleo Santillana. It is a historical fiction book for children. This book was selected for its historical elements. The story follows a boy who travels back in time to significant events in Ecuador's history. It begins in the modern era, where the protagonist, Horacio, borrows a device that enables him to travel through time. Musing where to travel, Horacio recalls he is learning about Eloy Alfaro and

the Trans-Andean Railway in school, and decides he wants to see this historical event with his own eyes. His adventure begins in 1872, in the Ecuadorian highlands. From there, he jumps from year to year and witnesses important events such as García Moreno's death, the Great Fire of Guayaquil, and the major setbacks that unfolded during the construction of the Trans-Andean Railway until it finally arrives in Quito.

This is a work of fiction, which means not everything is historically faultless. Most characters are the product of the author's imagination, except for historical figures like Eloy Alfaro, Archer Harman, and others.

3.2 Instruments Used in Rendering of Translated Material

3.2.1 Communicative Approach

In the case of the selected literary material, it was noticed that the author's writing style is easy to read. Since it is targeted for young learners, it is not overfilled with complex sentence constructions, rhetoric, and figurative language that may overwhelm a young reader. However, there is the gap between how children books are written in the source language (Spanish) versus how books are written in the target language (English). It is not solely the linguistic nuances that vary, but also both cultures had been shaped by different literary traditions. As described by Newmark (1988), "Communicative translation is social, concentrates on the message and the main force of the text, tends to under-translate, to be simple, clear and brief, and is always written in a natural and resourceful style." (p. 48). Therefore, it was applied the rendering of the selected literary text.

3.2.2 Techniques in the Communicative Approach

Vinay & Darbelnet (1995), and Newmark (1988) established different techniques (or Translation procedures) to be used during the translation process; some adhere to more word-for-word translations and literal accuracy while others prioritize the target culture and renderings that are more appropriate and culturally acceptable to said readership. The communicative approach falls into the latter category, and some of the techniques that may be applied are as follows:

- **Transposition:** It shifts word categories (e.g., changing a noun to a verb) to match the natural flow of the target language.
- **Modulation:** It changes the perspective or point of view to sound more natural in the target language. Negative forms in the SL are inverted to the affirmative in the TL.
- **Equivalence:** It uses a different phrase that conveys the same emotional or cultural impact**.**
- **Adaptation:** Or cultural substitution. It replaces culture-specific terms, idioms, or references with something familiar to the target audience.
- **Reduction:** It omits unnecessary elements while keeping the meaning intact.
- **Expansion:** Adding words for grammatical correctness or stylistic effect.
- **Compensation:** The stylistic translation technique by which a nuance that cannot be put in the same place as in the original is put at another point of the phrase, thereby keeping the overall tone.
- **Explicitation:** A stylistic translation technique which consists of making explicit in the target language what remains implicit in the source language because it is apparent from either the context or the situation.
- **Generalization and Specification:** Generalization occurs when the SL is rendered with a broader meaning in the TL. Whereas specification is when the SL requires a word with a narrower meaning in the TL.

4. FINDINGS

In this section excerpts from different chapters were selected to analyze the process of the translation and how the communicative approach applies to the text fragments. Although not in great quantity, there are scenes, dialogues, and expressions that, given the syntactic nature of the Spanish language, need to be adapted to the target language to be more readable and natural, avoiding ambiguity, disruption of the reading flow, and confusion while ensuring the literary text remains engaging and enjoyable for readers.

Table 1. Excerpt from Chapter 01: "The Chronophone."

ST	**TT**
El telecronovisor	THE CHRONOPHONE

Analysis of Table 1

The title of the chapter in the SL is a wordplay of two different words: tele + cronovisor. "Tele" comes from "telephone," as one of character later explains in the very first chapter. This is the device that will allow the protagonist, Horacio, to travel back in time, and it is a combination of a chronovisor and a smartphone.

The rendering keeps "cronovisor = chronovisor," because it is explained that it was a real device, and that is the author's intention, to emphasize the historical "chronovisor" legend. However, a literal rendering would not be as natural in the TL. In "telechronovisor," the prefix "tele" is more associated with television or remote transmission. Adding "phone" as a suffix will make it clear to modern readers that the device has also "smartphone" characteristics.

Table 2. Excerpt from Chapter 04: "The South Railway."

ST	**TT**
De pronto, en la mitad de la mañana, **las labores se ven interrumpidas por los gritos desesperados del telegrafista**.	Suddenly, in the mid-morning, **a desperate voice disrupts everything. It's the telegraphist, screaming,** "President García

—¡Han matado al presidente García Moreno! ¡Han matado al presidente! De todas partes, la gente se acerca a la oficina central de la estación ferroviaria. **El rumor de gritos, llantos y preguntas llena el ambiente**. Todo es desorden y desconcierto. Entre los gritos alcanzas a escuchar: **—¡Los compactados...!** Faustino Lemus... No puede ser... Dios mío... ¡Que lo tenga en su gloria!	Moreno has been **killed**! The president has been **murdered**!" People rush from all sides to the railway station's main office. **The air suddenly fills with their cries, sobs, and frantic questions.** Everything is chaos and confusion. Amid the noise and screams you hear, **"The conspirators!** Faustino Lemus… It can't be. My God…! May he rest in peace!"

Analysis of Table 2

"las labores se ven interrumpidas por los gritos desesperados del telegrafista" was rendered to "a desperate voice disrupts everything. It's the telegraphist, screaming" to switch from passive to active voice and make the scene impactful. Moreover, active voice is more commonly used in English.

"President García Moreno has been killed! The president has been murdered!" Here two synonyms were used, because "killed" is a more subdued word, it is a general description of someone who has lost their life and does not necessarily imply criminal intent. However, "murdered" specifically refers to an unlawful and intentional act of killing. It implies criminal intent and wrongdoing. The contrast is to build up suspense of what is going on. If the reader first reads "killed" they will immediately wonder how, which will be revealed in the next sentence.

"El rumor de gritos, llantos y preguntas llena el ambiente," was expanded to "the air suddenly fills with their cries, sobs, and frantic questions." Firstly, "suddenly," because everything is unexpected, and secondly, "their cries, sobs…" is to link it to what people are doing after hearing the shocking news, which makes it more visually emotional given the context.

“Los compactados” was adapted to “the conspirators.” Given the historical context, García Moreno was killed by a group of people who were against his government; and them, together with Faustino Lemus, conspired to carry out the assassination. “Los compactados,” may or not be the name of that group, since it is not capitalized, and there is no direct English equivalent of the word either. Therefore, to keep confusion from upsetting the readability of the story, a more common word was chosen.

Table 3. Excerpt from chapter 07: “General Alfaro’s Dream.”

ST	**TT**
—Como usted sabe, don Lizardo, **mi gran anhelo siempre ha sido la unificación de nuestro país:** que la **Costa, la Sierra y el Oriente estén comunicados entre sí.** Solo de esa manera podremos hablar de una patria grande y próspera en la que todos sus habitantes **se sientan hermanos** y el intercambio de los productos de cada región **enriquezca nuestra economía.** —Así es, **mi general.** También creo que esta construcción es fundamental para el progreso de nuestra patria —**responde el ministro.**	“As you know, Mr Lizardo. **I’ve always dreamed of a unified country:** the **Coast, the Highlands, and the Amazon connected, able to communicate with one another.** Only then can we speak of a great and prosperous nation. People will **feel closer to their neighbors,** and trading goods with each region will enrich our economy.” **The Minister nods agreeably,** “You’re right about that, **sir.** I also believe that a railway is fundamental to our nation’s progress.”

Analysis of Table 3

“Mi gran anhelo siempre ha sido la unificación de nuestro país" was reduced to “I’ve always dreamed of a unified country” to make it more conversational and direct.

“Costa, la Sierra y el Oriente.” While “Oriente” does literally mean “East,” in the context of Ecuador, it refers to the Amazon region. This decision shows cultural

awareness and provides clarity for the English reader who might not be familiar with the specific regional divisions of Ecuador.

“habitantes se sientan hermanos” was rendered to “people will feel closer to their neighbors,” using generalization. In the English-speaking world, “brothers and sisters” is more commonly used in religious or philosophical contexts.

“responde el ministro” was expanded to “The Minister nods agreeably,” to make the dialogue more dynamic and visual.

“Mi general” rendered to “sir,” in this case, because, in English, saying “my general” is not a natural way of addressing a superior.

Table 4. Excerpt from Chapter 09: “Guayaquil in Flames.”

ST	**TT**
Todo está preparado para la Convención Nacional del 9 de octubre de 1896 en Guayaquil. En ella se definirá el nuevo estado geopolítico del Ecuador propuesto por el presidente Alfaro. **Mediante este proyecto,** el país será transformado en **Estado confederado**, pero los enemigos políticos de la Revolución Alfarista se oponen a este **intento descentralizador.**	Everything is ready for the National Convention of October 9th, 1896, in Guayaquil. It will decide Ecuador’s new geopolitical status, as proposed by President Alfaro, so the country can become **a confederation.** However, the political enemies of the Alfaro Revolution are against **his ideas of sharing more power with the people.**

Analysis of Table 4

Here, the SL style shifts to a more journalistic style. For “Mediante este proyecto,” reduction was applied, and the conjunction “so” was used to keep the amiable literary flow of the text. “Estado confederado,” was simply merged into “confederation.” Estado = country, and it is repeated twice in the SL but

with synonyms. Therefore, it was deemed unnecessary to use the same word twice.

“Intento descentralizador,” is something more common in journalistic contexts, so. “Descentralizador” was expanded to “his ideas of sharing more power with the people,” to explain in simple terms what “descentralizador” means.

Table 5. Excerpt from Chapter 09: “Guayaquil in Flames.”

ST	**TT**
Cuando llegas, **te quedas atónito ante** la magnitud de la catástrofe. **Las campanas tañen enloquecidas, lúgubres y sobresaltadas desde las altas torres de las iglesias:** —Ding dong, ding dong. **Las gentes corren trastornadas** por las calles gritando: —¡Fuego! iFuegol	When you arrive, the sight of the catastrophe **leaves you speechless**. **Church bells rang across the city; a mad, dark peal.** *Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong.* **Panic-stricken people run up and down** the streets, yelling, “Fire! Fire!”

Analysis of Table 5

“Te quedas atónito” was rendered to “leaves you speechless,” instead of a literal “you’re aghast” (even though the translation for “atónito” is along the lines of “amazed or astonished,” which are more like “positive” words). However, in this context, the protagonist’s reaction is due to something shocking; that’s why the sentence was also reordered. First “the catastrophe,” to remark the negativity of the situation, and then the reaction.

“Las campanas tañen enloquecidas, lúgubres y sobresaltadas desde las altas torres de las iglesias,” this was rendered to “Church bells rang across the city, a dark, mad peal” using reduction and compensation. “Church bells” encapsulates “campanas + altas torres de las iglesias,” in which “high towers” is not needed since towers are always somewhere high. The part “a dark, mad

peal" was moved to the end to put it closer to the onomatopoeia "*ding-dong"* so the description is more vivid.

Table 6. Excerpt from Chapter 10: "The National Convention."

ST	TT
En su mensaje habla de los problemas que aquejan al país y que deben ser solucionados sin pérdida de tiempo: implantación de nuevos cultivos, **descentralización de las rentas nacionales**, apertura de las funciones públicas para las mujeres, aumento de salarios, **abolición del concertaje de los campesinos de la Costa y la Sierra.**	In his message he speaks about the country's most concerning problems, **which are imperative to solve:** more cultivable lands, **better distribution of the national wealth,** available jobs for women in the public sector, pay raise, **no more forced labor for indigenous farmers in the coast and the highlands.**

Analysis of Table 6

Here the SL's style is journalistic, which fits in the Ecuadorian context; however, in the TL, the word choice can disrupt the reading flow by confusing young readers that are barely grasping political terms, specifically, "descentralización de las rentas nacionales," and "abolición del concertaje." The first term can be translated to "decentralized national revenues," but it still tells nothing to a young reader. The latter is far more complex. "Concertaje" is an Ecuadorian term that has no direct equivalent in English. It means, "Contract by which an indigenous person was obliged to carry out agricultural work for life and by inheritance, without receiving a salary or receiving a minimum salary." As defined by the Royal Spanish Academy. In the rendering it was adapted to "forced labor," to keep its readability.

Table 7. Excerpt from Chapter 11: "Americans Get Interested in the Railway."

ST	TT

…, los informes que llevaron los accionistas son favorables y, sobre todo, realzan la personalidad democrática y honorable de don Eloy Alfaro, quien les manifestó, cuando ellos le ofrecieron ciertos porcentajes personales: —«Usted es hombre de negocios, yo soy el jefe del Estado. La nación me paga para que la sirva y no para que **comercie** con ella».	…, the reports they take back to the investors are favorable; they particularly highlight Eloy Alfaro's democratic and honorable character. **When** he was offered a personal percentage, **the president firmly replied,** "You're a businessman, and I am the head of state. The country pays me to serve it, not to **profit** from it."

Analysis of Table 7

In the SL the sentences in the text are only separated by commas. In Spanish, long sentences with multiple clauses connected by relative pronouns (like *quien*) are common and natural. Whereas English favors shorter, more direct sentences; splitting the sentence improves clarity for English readers.

"quien les manifestó" was "firmly replied" adds an explicit tone of determination. This choice makes Alfaro's response sound more assertive, possibly emphasizing his integrity more than in the original.

"Profit" instead of a more literal "don't do business with it." The latter sounds too general, and it misses the moral implication that it is about personal financial gain rather than simply engaging in commerce.

Table 8. Excerpt from Chapter 13: "A Dangerous Road."

ST	**TT**
Se encuentra totalmente desmoralizado y hasta podrías jurar **que sus ojos brillan por el efecto de las lágrimas.**	He's visibly discouraged. You can even swear **his eyes shine with tears.** "What do we do now, **sir**?"

—¿Y, ahora, qué hacemos, **general**? El presidente se pone de pie, sonríe nerviosamente y le responde: —Primero, don Archer, ¡tomemos un trago de whisky para espantar al diablo y después veremos qué se hace! De inmediato, les pasas **una charola con dos vasos de whisky y te quedas en espera de nuevas órdenes.** En tu interior dices: **«¡Así se habla, mi general!».**	The president stands up, smiling nervously. He says, “First, Mr Archer. Let us drink some whisky to scare the devil away! Then we’ll see what we can do.” You immediately **serve them two glasses of whiskey.** ***Spoken like a true General!*** you think as you wait for new orders. You immediately **serve them two glasses of whiskey**. ***Spoken like a true General,*** you think as you wait for new orders.

Analysis of Table 8

“que sus ojos brillan por el efecto de las lágrimas” was simplified to “his eyes shine with tears” since English does not need too many words to convey the same meaning.

“General” was rendered as “sir” because "sir" is respectful and neutral, fitting for addressing a leader without being overly formal or dramatic, whereas “general” sounds slightly too formal and ceremonial for a dialogue of this nature.

“De inmediato, les pasas una charola con dos vasos de whisky.” Was rendered to “You immediately serve them two glasses of whiskey.” The TL simplifies and condenses the original. The mention of “charola” is omitted, making the action more direct. While “te quedas en espera de nuevas órdenes” is shortened to “as you wait for new orders” and moved to the last part for smoothness in the TL.

«¡Así se habla, mi general!» conveys approval in a praiseworthy way. The phrase “Spoken like a true,” is an idiomatic expression which means that something someone has said reflects the character, attitude, or beliefs of the person being described. It conveys the same idea of admiration that is present in the SL while adding a little bit of informality befitting a young boy.

Table 9. Excerpt from Chapter 14: “Soldiers of Peace.”

ST	**TT**
Ella no te reconoce y haces lo posible para no dejarte ver, pues no sabes cómo podrías explicarle **que sigues igual que antes.**	She doesn’t recognize you, and you do your best to stay out of sight—you have no idea how you would explain to her **your still-young appearance.**

Analysis of Table 9

Here, “que sigues igual que antes” was adapted to “your still-young appearance.” The TL is more specific in highlighting that the character, because he is a time traveler, has not aged like his friend Eugenia, that he is still young-looking, which is obviously unnatural. Moreover, English is a language that allows this kind of compound words, and it is interesting for a reader to find such chunks of language that add to the uniqueness of it, so little by little they grasp the differences between mother tongue and foreign language.

Table 10. Excerpt from Chapter 21: “Devil’s Nose.”

ST	**TT**
Todos están ateridos. Los obreros de tierra caliente son **presas del soroche** y hay dos que caen muertos con **los labios morados** y el cuerpo tieso.	Everyone is numb with cold. Workers from warmer lands suffer from ***soroche*--altitude sickness.** Two even fall dead, their bodies stiff, **their lips blue.**

La comida caliente del campamento y **unos tragos de puntas alivian el frío de los trabajadores,** que luego se retiran a dormir agotados.	The campsite's hot food and a sip of **sugary liquor warm the workers from the inside out.** Then, exhausted, they all retire to sleep.

Analysis of Table 10

Here the original word "soroche" has a direct translation, ("altitude sickness,") but it was not eliminated because it adds to the overall atmosphere that the story takes place in the Andes, in the Ecuadorian highlands. The explanation of what it is was added. Moreover, the color detail in "labios morados" was rendered to "their lips blue," because in the context of someone dying from extreme cold (hypothermia), their lips typically turn blue or bluish-purple due to a lack of oxygen, therefore, describing it as "blue lips" is the most common and natural way to describe it in English.

"Tragos de puntas" is an Ecuadorian alcoholic drink made from sugar cane. Unlike "soroche" which is a word with a direct translation, "tragos de puntas" will need a more detailed explanation, which would be in-text or as a footnote. However, it may disrupt the reading to add three words in Spanish that for an English reader may not be easy to decipher. The rendering was adapted to "sugary liquor."

"Alivian el frío de los trabajadores" was rendered as "warm the workers from the inside out." It is a more sensory, descriptive phrase to show how the food and drink warms these people up in such a cold setting.

Table 11. Excerpt from Chapter 22: "The Sterling Robbery."

ST	**TT**
—Llegó el fin de semana y todos los trabajadores nos **aprestábamos a cobrar nuestros jornales**. Cuando	"It was on the weekend, and all the workers had gathered to **get our hard-earned pay.** When Mr Harman

el ingeniero Harman envió las cajas de libras esterlinas, uno de los capataces dio la voz de alarma: **«¡Se han robado las esterlinas! ¡Se han robado las esterlinas!».** »Harman **se puso pálido** y se acercó personalmente al lugar donde estaban guardadas las cajas. **En efecto,** de los ocho contenedores solo quedaban cinco. De inmediato **se dio toque de queda** y se prohibió que cualquiera entrara o saliera del campamento.	sent for the boxes, one of the foremen raised the alarm, **'The money's gone! Someone stole the sterling!'** "Mr. Harman's face **turned white as a sheet!** He ran straight to the storage room to see for himself. **It was true!** There were only five boxes out of eight. **They put us under curfew** right after that. No one could leave or enter the camp.

Analysis of Table 11

The SL is a little serious in tone; the person narrating the theft is one of the workers, and it is a dialogue. That is why the rendering aims for something more conversational and a little informal.

"aprestábamos a cobrar nuestros jornales," rendered to "get our hard-earned pay.**"** The SL is too formal for a dialogue and the context. A similar tone was encountered in "«¡Se han robado las esterlinas! ¡Se han robado las esterlinas!»" which was rendered to 'The money's gone! Someone stole the sterling!' because it sounds somehow unnatural in English to add the currency. However, since that is the intention because the story demands it, that same detail was kept in the TL in the second sentence.

Furthermore, "se puso pálido" was translated as "turned white as a sheet!" to add informality and make it more visually descriptive for the target audience, as well as adapting "en efecto," to "It was true!" which is more dynamic and less formal in a dialogue.

Lastly, se dio toque de queda" was rendered as "They put us under curfew" to change the passive voice because for a dialogue it makes the storytelling stronger, and the active voice feels more fluid and conversational.

Table 12. Excerpt from the book's title.

ST	TT
Horacio, el ferrocarril y las esterlinas desaparecidas.	Horacio's Railway Chase & the Sterling Robbery

Analysis of Table 12

For middle grade reader books, publishers usually look for titles that exciting and easy to understand. The SL "Horacio, el ferrocarril y las esterlinas desaparecidas" captures excitement for its intended audience. However, in English, that intention will be lost with a literal translation. Moreover, the TL "Horacio's Railway Chase & the Sterling Robbery" adheres to the preference of the English language for shorter sentences, especially when the readership is children.

5. CONCLUSION

The research conducted throughout this project highlights the importance of including culturally relevant literature in the EFL classroom. The translated book immerses children to their own rich history, enhancing vocabulary acquisition through a narrative set in their own homeland. It facilitates English learning in a more familiar context as well as fostering a love for reading.

The translation of Horacio's Railway Chase & The Sterling Robbery allowed for the adaptation of culturally rich content while maintaining the integrity of the original narrative. Through the application of the communicative translation approach, linguistic and cultural barriers were minimized; also, adjusting syntax and vocabulary to suit the target audience while maintaining the authenticity of historical and cultural elements was essential to make the text more comprehensible and engaging for EFL students.

This project aligns with previous research on the use of literature in EFL classrooms, showing that historical fiction can be an effective medium for vocabulary development. Through engaging narratives that incorporate culturally and historically relevant contexts, students are more likely to retain and apply new vocabulary. Furthermore, this approach fosters both linguistic competence and cultural awareness, encouraging meaningful discussions in the classroom. Future research could explore the long-term effects of this approach, particularly in relation to vocabulary retention and student engagement. Additionally, comparative studies between different translation strategies and their impact on EFL learners' comprehension could provide further insights.

Ultimately, the translation and adaptation of historical fiction for EFL learners not only aid in vocabulary development but also foster a deeper appreciation of history and culture. By bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, this approach allows students to expand their lexical resources while connecting with meaningful narratives that enrich their learning experience.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Educators are encouraged to incorporating translated historical fiction into their EFL reading curriculum to enhance vocabulary acquisition and improve reading language skills. The use of contextualized vocabulary exercises—such as interactive games and activities in the classroom—can help learners grasp new words effectively and learn how to use them in context. Additionally, implementing pre-reading and post-reading strategies will encourage deeper comprehension and vocabulary retention.

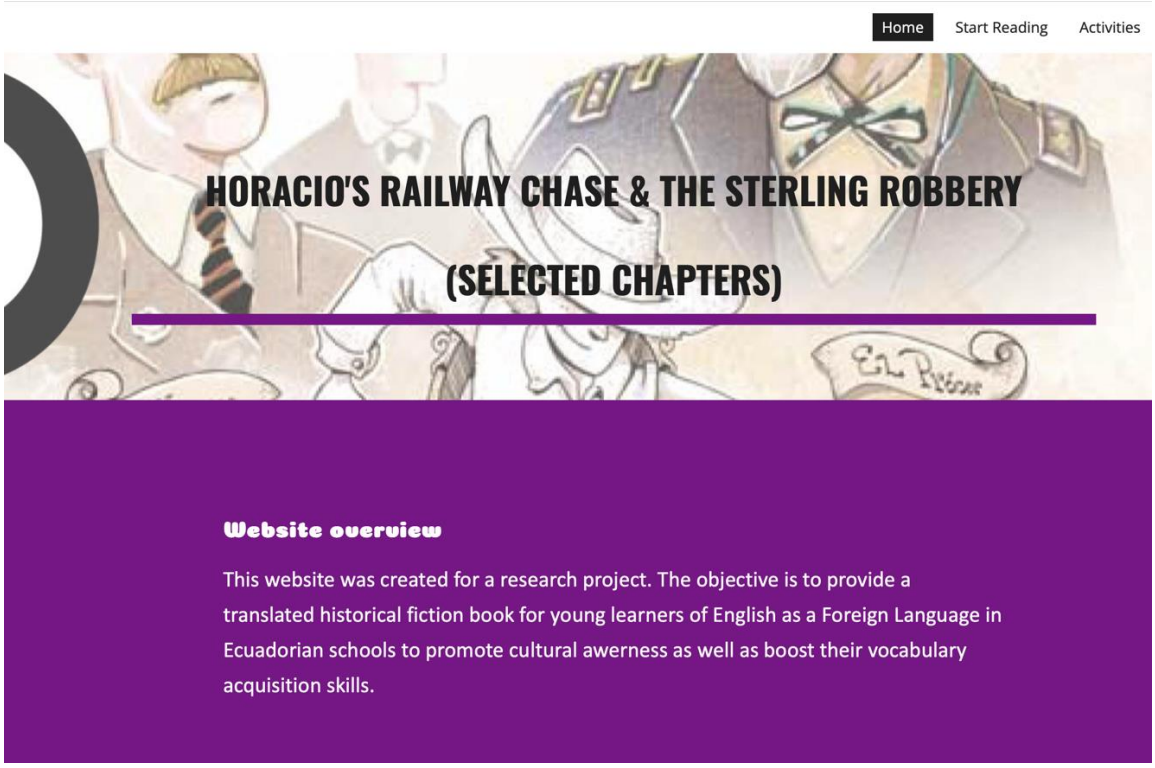
Curriculum designers in bilingual and EFL programs should aim to create a balance between foreign and local literature to ensure that students develop both language proficiency and cultural awareness. Future research should focus on the long-term impact of reading translated historical fiction on vocabulary acquisition and retention. Furthermore, studies exploring the effectiveness of digital tools, interactive reading platforms, and multimedia resources in supporting vocabulary learning could provide valuable insights for modern EFL instruction.

7. PROPOSAL

The aim of this project was the translation of a historical fiction book for children to highlight the significance of local literature in language learning and how valuable it is as a resource in the EFL classroom to promote cultural awareness. It also aims to provide instructional material which educators can use to improve their students' reading skills through vocabulary acquisition activities.

For the proposal, some chapters were chosen to exemplify the set of activities that can serve as guidance on how teachers can effectively integrate the translated book into their lessons. For that purpose, a website, using the tool Sites by Google, was built. It is for students to have access to the chapters in one place. It also has links for post-reading activities. Teachers can check the website in the following link: https://sites.google.com/view/websiteproposal-thesis/home

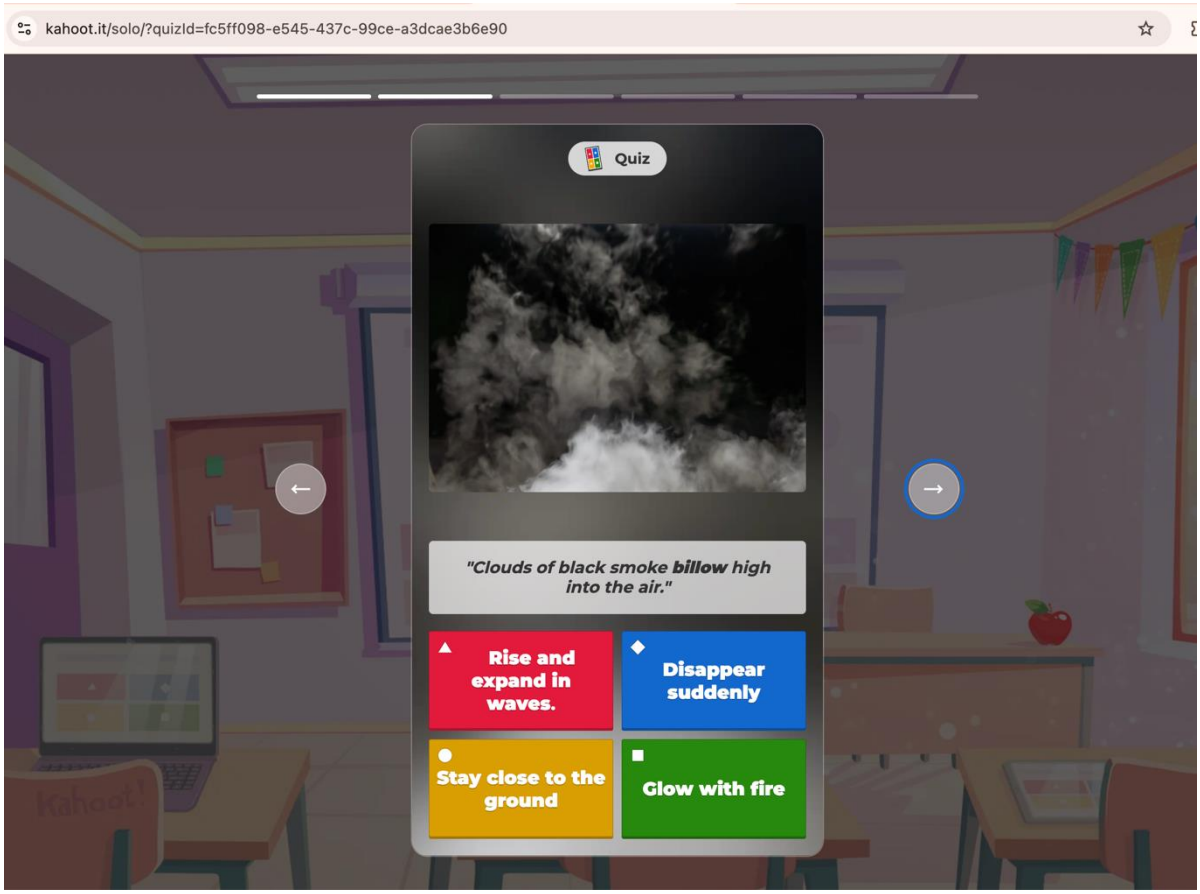
Figure 1. Website Horacio's Railway Chase & the Sterling Robbery.



Developed by the author.

By way of introduction, the teacher can bring realia to the classroom (such as a poncho or the toy of a train) and give students a sneak peek into the story by asking questions about the Ecuadorian historical events narrated in the book and mixing in a bit of fiction to pique the students' interest in reading an adventure set in their homeland. There are activities for students to do on their own after they have read one chapter. Such as the example below:

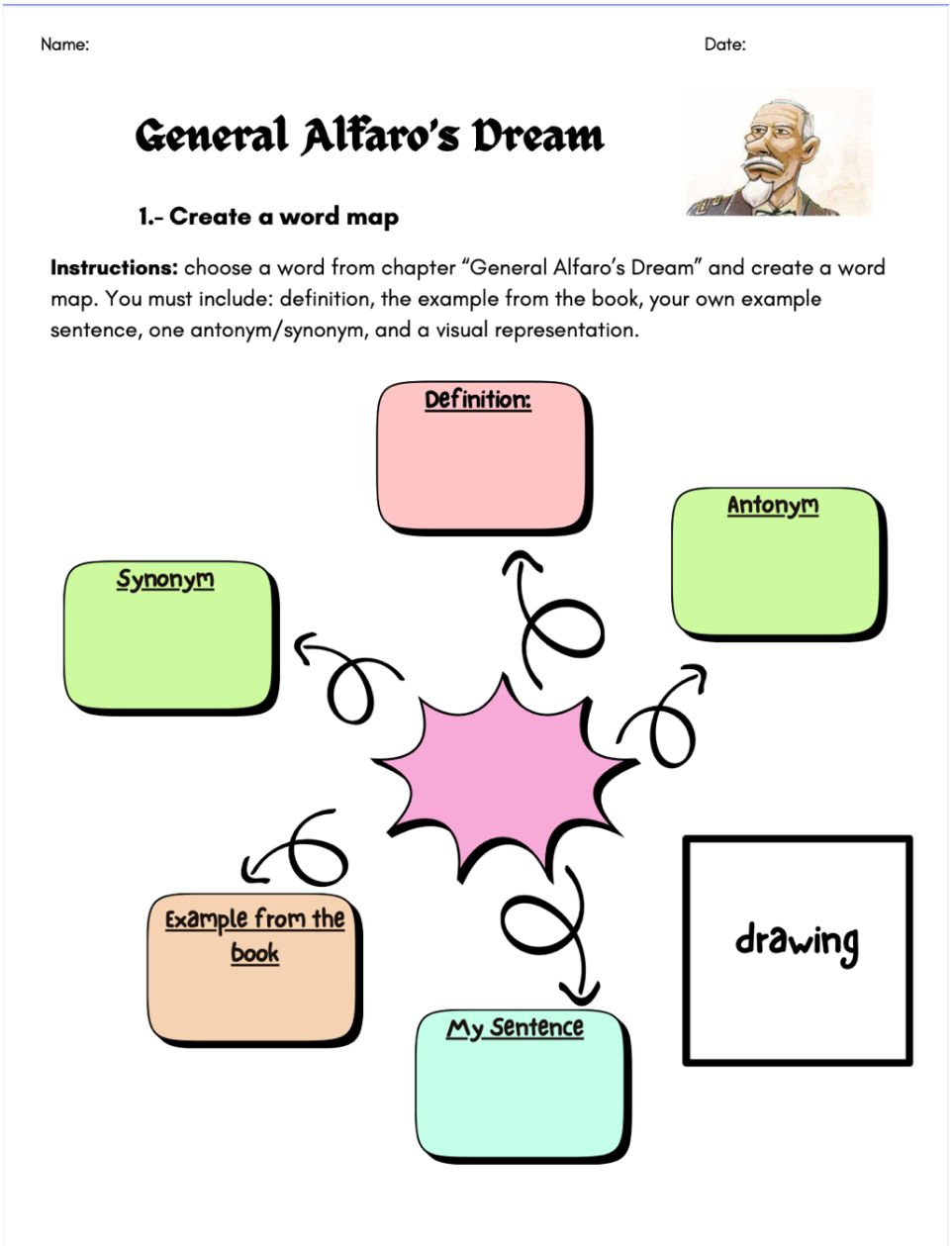
Figure 2. Example of post-reading activity based on Chapter 09: Guayaquil in Flames.



Developed by the author.

Moreover, the following link provides teachers with post-reading to use in the classroom to make the learning experience more active and dynamic: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16jJE1frOsAgZRqrQZMj5-oPSot4EN-vD?usp=drive_link As the example below shows:

Figure 3. Example of classroom activity based on Chapter 07: General Alfaro's Dream.

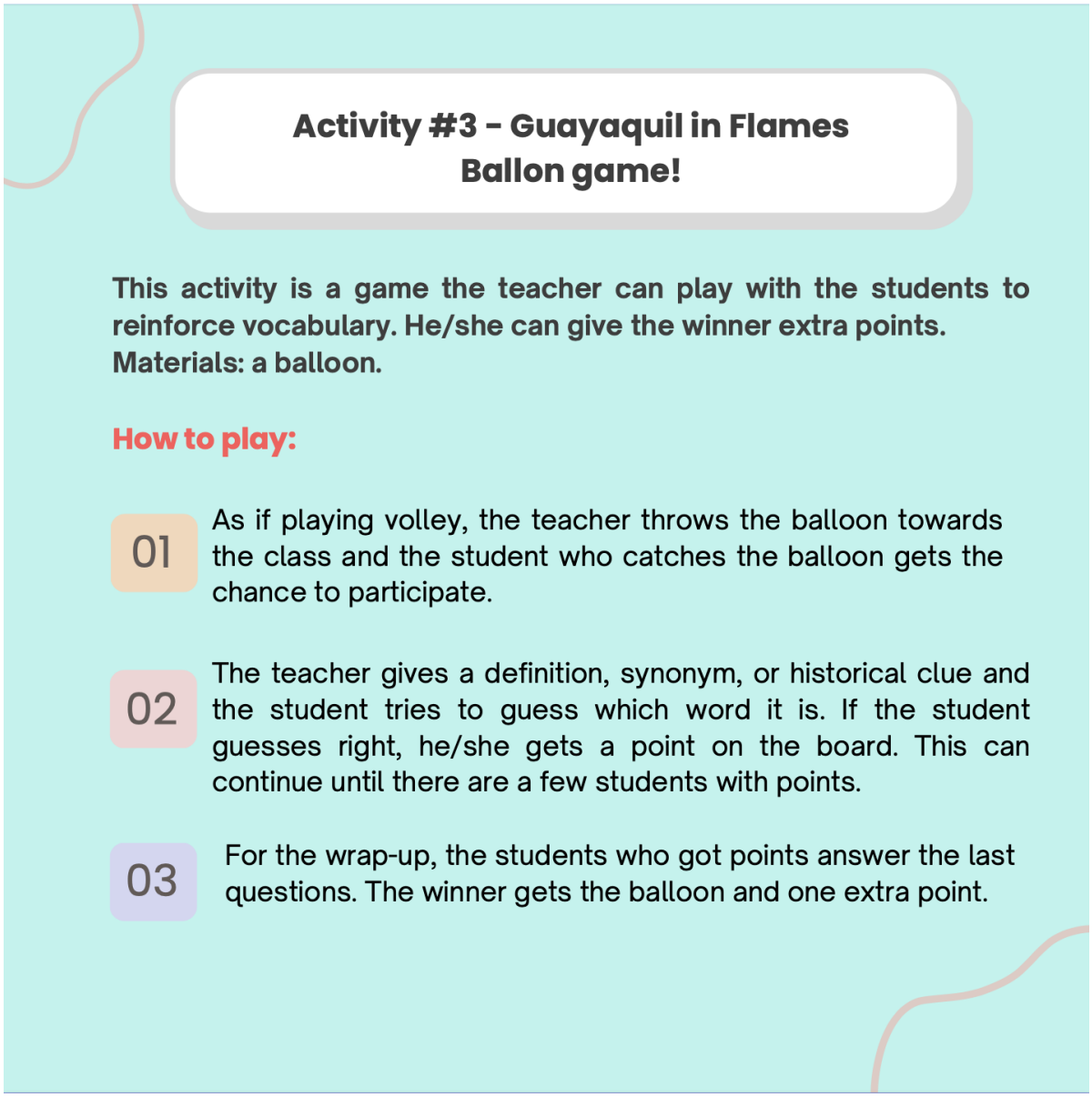


Developed by the author.

For this activity, students are tasked with finding a word in the chapter and writing down the definition, a synonym and antonym, the example on the book and their own sentence, followed up by a drawing to create a visual representation of the word. The activity will help them learn how to use the words in context. Also, depending on the chosen word, it may have different meanings, which the teacher can further explain to deepen the learners'

knowledge. Furthermore, activities in class such as the one below can reinforce comprehension through an interactive challenge; these activities can make vocabulary acquisition more memorable (Ur, 2012).

Figure 4. Example of Classroom activity based on Chapter 09: Guayaquil in Flames.



Developed by the author.

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8. APPENDICES

8.1 Links to Access Post-reading Activities for Students, Teaching Resources and Website.

Table 13. Links to Access Students' Post-Reading Activities.

Chapter Title	Links to students' post-reading activities
García Moreno's Death	https://wordwall.net/play/86240/361/545
General Alfaro's Dream	https://wordwall.net/play/86242/754/818
Guayaquil in Flames	https://create.kahoot.it/share/activity-3-based-on-chapter-nine-guayaquil-in-flames/fc5ff098-e545-437c-99ce-a3dcae3b6e90
Americans Get Interested in the Railway	Worksheets.theteachercorner.net
Soldiers of Peace	https://create.kahoot.it/share/activity-5-study-the-vocabulary/07cc38d1-2562-4576-89da-90e5b21c2d44
Devil's Nose	https://wordwall.net/play/86244/542/802
The Sterling Robbery	https://wordwall.net/play/86271/576/323

Developed by the Author.

Table 14. Links to Access Teachers' Resources, and Website.

Chapter Title	Links to post-reading resources for teachers
García Moreno's Death	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IFKji6U5gxWGmFJBpCYVDpkYX3WuOQcW/view?usp=drive_link
General Alfaro's Dream	https://drive.google.com/file/d/192e4KgW8C8buVNGP45WDcoNRsPJdMpUT/view?usp=drive_link
Guayaquil in Flames	https://drive.google.com/file/d/18oLyGjCzx4IDOqGp8pwPxrBa5kbf4Ce/view?usp=drive_link
Americans Get Interested in the Railway	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1i8WiRQk6REYk901EB-O4lDEbvsgYCf7z/view?usp=drive_link
Soldiers of Peace	https://drive.google.com/file/d/12XXqxZhBQQtfo5XpDKvxTa7owOkOE-3/view?usp=drive_link
Devil's Nose	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iD46GZVVwxd84qsjxiRucG9Xj9ufnkvD/view?usp=drive_link
The Sterling Robbery	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MNUoyxrI4pjtD8roxj3fiJAW7Ul8lV8e/view?usp=drive_link
Website link: https://sites.google.com/view/websiteproposal-karla/home	

Developed by the Author

8.2 Translation of the book *Horacio, el ferrocarril y las esterlinas desaparecidas,* rendered into English as Horacio's Railway Chase & The Sterling Robbery.

CHAPTER 01 - THE CHRONOPHONE

Today is your seventeenth birthday and your Uncle Pedro—a physicist you consider brilliant and fascinating but a bit eccentric to your family—invites you to his lab to show you his latest invention. There you see all sorts of mechanical devices: pendulums, lenses, spyglasses, microscopes, telescopes, strange-looking cameras, and a small round artifact that immediately catches your attention.

"It looks like a stopwatch, Uncle," you say.

"Ah!" he replies. "It's one of my latest inventions: the Chronophone. I've spent the last couple of years perfecting it. It's almost ready—just needs testing."

"What does it do?" you ask.

"Well, my invention merges the properties of a chronovisor and a mobile phone. My idea is that this device will allow us to communicate not only with the past but also with the present."

"I don't get it. Can you explain it a bit more slowly?" you ask him.

"You see. The chronovisor was invented in the Middle Ages. According to its designer, it allows you to travel back in time. I've updated it. If you click the blue button on the right, you'll open a gate to the year that you type on the screen, like on a cell phone. If you press the green one, the gate opens again to take you back to where you were in the present."

"And the red button?"

"That's where the cell phone comes into play. It allows you to call someone in the present to ask for help if necessary. It's an emergency button in case something goes wrong in the past. If the green button malfunctions, pressing the red one will take the traveler immediately to my lab. The battery lasts up to six hours. If the device dies in a different age, the time traveler may be lost. I'm still working on it, though."

"But you sure it works?"

“I’ve tested it on my parrot and the cat, and I did manage to bring them back. Of course they couldn’t tell me what they saw. I’ve yet to run some diagnostics to register it.”

You’re fascinated. You can’t stop thinking about the Chronophone.

That evening, while everyone is gathered in the living room celebrating, you sneak out of the house and head to Uncle Pedro’s lab. There, over the table, lies the mysterious device.

Without giving it much thought, you wear it around your wrist, “Where should I go?” you ask yourself.

You remember that your class is learning about Eloy Alfaro and the railway for an inter-school contest. You try remembering the date the construction of the Trans-Andean Railway began. Maybe 1872? You type the date on the screen.

You press the blue button, activating the Chronophone.

A whirlwind of energy appears and swallows you up, taking you to 1872.

CHAPTER 02 - THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY

Traveling in time, you discover, makes you drowsy. But once you recover, you find yourself in the middle of an unfamiliar, desolate landscape. You check the Chronophone. It’s three o’clock in the afternoon, December 5th, 1872.

Silence envelops the landscape. A soft yet cold wind makes you shiver. Your clothes barely keep you warm. You’re wearing a yellowish coat, a birthday present from your Aunt Rebecca that you agreed to put on out of politeness; you’re not precisely a fan of such a color. But your blue jeans and leather boots—part of the school uniform–give you some comfort.

You start walking up a hill to find out what’s on the other side. Slipping here and there and dangerously close to rolling down, you climb on by grabbing the bushes that grow there. When you reach the top, you take in a white house in the distance, quite big, with iron-barred windows and a tiled roof. It looks like a farmhouse, because you glimpse chickens, pigs, and cattle grazing on the fields. There are other houses about, also brick-built and tile-roofed, scattered across the foot of the mountain.

The sky is darkening. You don't want to spend the night out in the open, so you rush down the path. You reach for a bush, but it rips off the earth and you roll down the hill. Your head hits a rock and everything goes dark.

When you regain consciousness, you find yourself on a rickety bed. A candle next to you dimly illuminates the room.

A black-haired girl with brown skin smiles at you. "Thank goodness you're alive! We found you passed out down in the ravine. What were you doing there? Are you the son of the foreman who was supposed to come from Quito with the president?"

"I… I don't know what I'm doing here…" you stammer.

"It's fine. You look nice and I want you to feel comfortable here. My name is Eugenia."

"Nice to meet you. Eugenia. I'm Horacio, but—"

You want to tell her that she's mistaken you for someone else, but you're interrupted by a high-pitched voice that calls, "Eugenia! Eugenia! Did you bring the water?"

"I'm coming, mom!" the girl replies. "The boy is awake. I think he's Mr Julio's son, the foreman that was supposed to come today."

"But how? We haven't seen any carts or mules around."

"I'm not sure, but he's very cold."

You check your clothes. Over them you're wearing a plain, long-sleeved khaki shirt and pants of the same color. Next to the bed you see your boots, all covered in dust.

"Give him one of the ponchos the workers wear," the mother says.

Eugenia heads to a room that has all the looks of a cellar. Wool ponchos, raincoats, gabardine-made pants, hats, caps, spades, spikes, and other tools are stored in there.

"Follow me." the girl instructs. "Here we store our clothes and all the tools the workers use. They'll be gone soon, since the highway is already finished."

Still dizzy from the blow, you notice you're wearing a cloth bandage around the head. You follow Eugenia and ask, "Where are we?"

“Sibambe. Your father, the foreman, is waiting for you to organize the welcoming for Doctor García Moreno. He’s coming from Quito to inspect the National Highway.”

“The National Highway? Not the railway, then?” you ask.

Eugenia stares confusedly at you. She says, “The blow must have hurt you real bad. There aren’t any trains around here.”

She gives you a wine-red poncho made of sheep wool, and a wide-brimmed hat so that casts most of your face in shadows.

“It suits you well! As if tailor-made. That way we can hide your head bandage.” she says, and a giggle escapes her.

You blush, mumbling a nervous, “thank you.”

“Come on! You can eat at the camp’s hall. I think there are leftovers from supper.”

Following her, you see she wears a long gray skirt, common among country women. She also wears a long heavy jacket, a green one, and an even greener shirt peeks out from the neck. A gray, square-patterned shawl complements her outfit, and she’s styled her dark hair in two braids. Rustic-looking shoes cover her feet. Eugenia looks a little old-fashioned, you think.

You follow her into a big, square room. There are four wooden tables, long and polished by use, with two benches each that are just as long and where the workers probably sit. You choose the farthest corner, less illuminated by the tallow candle on the table.

The girl brings a steaming soup of beans, cabbage and potatoes in a brass bowl, and a loaf of bread that’s a bit hard, but good to satisfy your hunger. You eat as if it is the most delicious feast you’ve ever had.

After dinner, Ms Teresa, Eugenia’s mother, says, “We’ll see how you feel in the morning! Tonight, I'll make sure you have a place to sleep in the cellar. Tomorrow, your dad will come, and you can go with him.”

You thank Eugenia and her mother for their kindness and go to your makeshift bedroom.

You suddenly remember the Chronophone. You check your wrist and let out a sigh of relief: there it is, your ticket back home. Your physical condition isn’t great right now, so you decide to recover your strength with a good night’s rest.

Little by little you drift off to sleep.

CHAPTER 03 - PRESIDENT GARCIA MORENO

The next day, you wake up to the noise, loud voices and the sounds of people bustling about. You feel much better now. Heading out to look for Eugenia, you find her in the kitchen, next to a giant stove. She's making sure potatoes, corn, hens and guinea pigs are cooked perfectly in the big pottery pots. Meanwhile, lambs and porks roast in the oven, dripping fat onto the coals with a sizzling sound. The delicious smell whets your appetite. Other women diligently help to prepare the food and decorate the camp's dining hall with tricolored flags and flowers. The main table is the most embellished, ready to receive García Moreno.

Suddenly, you feel the uncomfortable, suspicious gaze of a brown-skinned young man with straight hair and dark eyes. He's Antonio, Eugenia's brother, who has noticed she's taken a liking to you. Not wanting to get into any trouble, you quickly go outside. A group of workers talk excitedly about the highway. The noise doesn't let you hear what they're saying, though.

You approach a brown-skinned man, rather short, who looks like the chatty type. "Are you waiting for the South Train?" you ask.

"No, son. None of that. We're waiting for President García Moreno to inaugurate the National Highway. What is that nonsense about a train anyway?" He turns around to his friends and says, "Hey, guys. This kid is nuts! He's come to see the arrival of *a train*! Ha, ha."

Luckily for you, the president and his delegates come riding on their horses at that moment. Cheers ripple among the workers and townspeople; no one hears what the short, chatty man is saying. He soon forgets you too.

A hand grabs you by the arm. Before realizing it, Eugenia is dragging you away from the site and back to the kitchen. She wants to give you something to eat—a dish of guinea pig with chili sauce, a pork steak, roast lamb, and a big chicha mug.

"Help yourself," she says, smiling. "Nothing will be left with all those people here."

You gobble up your food. It's delicious.

“Hungry, aren’t you, boy?” Antonio says. “Don’t be afraid. You’re my sister’s friend, so you’re my friend too.”

You don’t want to miss the highway inauguration, so you choose a secluded spot and witness an unprecedented historical moment.

During his speech, President García Moreno—solemn, forbidding—praises the remarkable job everyone did in the construction of the National Highway, which is going to bring together a part of the Ecuadorian highlands. He also announces the possible construction of a train to Milagro that will make communication between the coast and the mountains possible.

You realize you got the date and the event wrong and try to escape. Melting into the crowd and far from prying eyes, you slip behind a wall, typing, “South Railway” on the Chronophone, hoping to get it right this time. The portal opens, a whirlwind swallows you up, taking you to the event you wrote.

CHAPTER 04 - THE SOUTH RAILWAY

You check the Chronophone and read, “Yaguachi, 1875” on the screen. You find yourself in a train station that’s bustling with activity. You start walking around, but it’s too hot, so you take off the poncho and the coat, leaving only the shirt you wear underneath.

You spot a mechanical workshop nearby and go to take a look. Inside there’s a parked locomotive with a sign that says “Guayaquil” on it. Fascinated, you stare at the beautiful machine. Your heart thumps excitedly. It’s as if you’re looking at the toy of the train’s locomotive you used to play with, but this one is truly big.

Beyond the locomotive there’s a large water tank. Later you learn that its capacity is eight million liters and is used to supply water to the locomotives. Workers raise fences to keep animals from getting into the railroad. Others are putting up posts to later wire the telegraphic line. Everything feels so very strange, different from your day-to-day reality. At that moment you hear someone call your name.

“Horacio! Horacio!”

You turn to the voice. Striding up to you is a dark-haired girl wearing a gauzy white dress with purple flowers. She bombards you with questions as soon as she reaches you.

“Horacio, where have you been? It’s been a while since I last saw you. You disappear from Sibambe without a trace.”

You’re surprised but quickly recognize her. “Eugenia! Long time no see. I almost didn’t recognize you. You’ve changed.”

“Of course,” Eugenia replies. “It’s been three years. But you look exactly the same!”

“What brings you here?”

“My parents work on the South Railway that President García Moreno is building. Since they worked in the construction of the National Highway, they’ve been called here—my father as a train driver, and my mother to run the workers' canteen here in Yaguachi. We’re really happy. Father is getting paid two hundred monthly, and Mother and I make one hundred together. We’re planning on saving that money to buy some land. We’ll have our own house!”

As you walk with Eugenia, you notice a great deal of rails bunched up next to the mechanical workshop. “What are those?” you ask.

“Those are the rails Mr McClellan, the engineer, brought to keep building the tracks,” says a familiar voice behind you. “What are you doing here? Where have you been? You always show up when you’re least expected.”

It’s Antonio, Eugenia’s brother. He looks curiously at you.

“I’m just admiring the railway,” you reply.

“Careful there. I’m keeping an eye on you,” he says, suddenly grabbing you by your shirt collar.

Before you can react, Antonio lets go and walks away, laughing boisterously.

“Ugh, my brother!” Eugenia heaves a sigh. “Please, forgive him. He’s very protective. With so many strangers around, he thinks we must be extra cautious.”

You’re going to reply, but just then a whistle strikes the air as a locomotive arrives. A name on both sides reads, “Quito.” You feel thoroughly excited. The train is so close, like never before! It brings a sense of happiness. Of newness. You’ve always heard stories about the old steam locomotives,

but being there before one, hearing it whistle and drag the wagons, leaves you at a loss for words.

People step out of the carriages like characters in a black-and-white photograph, like your grandmother's old black-and-white photographs. Your attention shifts momentarily to the porters unloading bulging packages and loudly asking for the owners.

"Now we can trade goods with the coast." Eugenia says.

Night is falling. Your friend invites you to eat at her mother's.

"Mommy Teresa! Mom…" Eugenia calls out. "Look who's here!"

"Who?" Ms Teresa replies. Then, seeing you, she exclaims, "Horacio! But where have you been, boy? My daughter was so worried when you were suddenly gone!"

Eugenia blushes to the root of her hair. "He can eat here, and sleep in the workers' quarters."

"And your father? How is he? We haven't seen him since the highway construction ended."

"My father…? My father… Yes, my father is doing okay. Working on other constructions," you answer quickly.

You take a seat. Eugenia brings you a delicious chicken soup and a bowl full of white rice to accompany the soup. A big, *chicha* mug completes the meal. You eat so ravenously that Eugenia exclaims, "It's as if you haven't eaten in years!"

You laugh. "Yeah. In years. Ha, ha, ha."

That night you sleep in the workers' quarters. Everyone gives you curious looks, but Ms Teresa explains that you're an old family friend, and they leave you alone. Before calling it a day, the workers chatter away. You listen in.

"We've built forty-five kilometers of railway so far," one of them says. "From Yaguachi to Milagro."

"Still a long way to go," another one adds.

"The president said there's enough material for thirty more kilometers."

"Good to hear that. Our jobs depend on it!"

Little by little the chatter dies down. Everyone falls asleep.

Early the next day the campsite gets busy. After breakfast everyone goes to work. You see that the foremen organize and assign tasks. The place is bustling with activity—just another day of projects in progress.

Suddenly, in the mid-morning, a desperate voice disrupts everything. It's the telegraphist, screaming, "President García Moreno has been killed! The president has been murdered!"

People rush from all sides to the railway station's main office. The air suddenly fills with their cries, sobs, and frantic questions. Everything is chaos and confusion. Amid the noise you hear, "The conspirators! Faustino Lemus… It can't be. My God…! May he rest in peace!"

Fear grips you. You need to get away. The tumult gives you a chance to move unnoticed and hide behind a bulging rail-made barricade. You hesitate, wondering whether to go to Quito and see what happened to García Moreno or going on ahead to the event, "South Railway, Eloy Alfaro, 1895."

CHAPTER 05 - GARCIA MORENO'S DEATH

Your curiosity for more History wakes up with the telegraphist's news. You decide to travel to Quito to learn all about President García Moreno's assassination. You check the Chronophone. "Aug 6th, 1875," it reads.

You're taken to Independence Square. Fear, distress, and anguished cries hang in the air outside Carondelet Palace. Carefully, you make your way toward a group of women dressed in black, everything but their faces covered by silky garments. They talk between loud sobs with a few men equally shaken by the events.

You strain your ears and listen closely.

"Poor little thing, our president!" one of the women sobs. "He was about to enter the palace through the south staircase after praying at the cathedral."

"He was, indeed," a man nods. "But then a group of liberal conspirators, hiding among the columns, ambushed him with gunshots and machete strikes."

"I saw him," says another man. "That Colombian Faustino Lemus Rayo, the ex-officer who once served the government. He attacked the president with a machete."

“And those vile liberals were there too!” adds another woman. “Roberto Andrade, Manuel Cornejo, Abelardo Moncayo y Manuel Polanco. They were armed with guns.”

“My dear president,” wails a third woman. “His aide-de-camp couldn’t protect him. The president fell off the atrium to the square, severely wounded. They took him to the cathedral and now he lies there, dying.”

“The papers he was holding got covered in blood after the attack. The assassins were shouting, ‘freedom,’ and death to the tyrant.’ But he, a devotee to the core, said, ‘God’s not dead!’”

There’s a commotion all of a sudden. Faustino Lemus Rayo is trying to make his getaway through the square, but the soldiers from the 1st Battalion catch up on him, slash him with their swords and arrest him. As they take him to the barracks, a corporal-ranked officer fires a rifle, killing Lemus on the spot.

You see a group of soldiers, led by a commanding officer, marching in battle formation toward the site of the attack, “Long live the government!” they shout in unison.

They order the crowd to disperse from the area around the Government Palace, and they immediately obey. You, too, slip away. Terrified as you are, you don’t want to be there anymore.

I’ll research more about this once I’m back home, you decide. *I better go, before anything awful happens to me.*

You hide behind one of the pillars of the Archbishop's Palace. No one sees you, so you type “1895” on the Chronophone, heading off to see the railway built during Eloy Alfaro’s government.

CHAPTER 6 - ELOY ALFARO ARRIVES IN QUITO

You find yourself in a very different Quito City. Crowds fill the streets, expectation building up as they wait for the arrival of a very important personage.

“Alfaro is coming!’ Someone says eagerly.

Others add, “The Freemason is here. The heretic! Let’s go see him.”

Women cross themselves, seemingly fearful, but their curiosity wins out and they rise on tiptoe to have a better look at the man. They shove past to the front.

The convoy comes into Independence Square. Flowers rain down from balconies. Schoolchildren sing the national anthem. You're dazzled, not knowing what to think. Meeting Eloy Alfaro—the Old Warrior—in person feels so extraordinary that you let yourself get carried away by the swaying crowd.

Soldiers ride on horses. Through a gap in them you catch a glimpse of a brown-skinned man with closely cropped hair and a short white beard. He wears a serene expression, far from domineering.

The crowd begins to cheer. "Long live Eloy Alfaro! Long live the Supreme Leader! Long live the Liberal Party!"

All voices merge in a chorus. Even you join, whooping and saying, "Hooray!"

The entourage heads to a place called *Casa Azul*, the residence of Dr Rafael Portilla, where the General will be staying.

You feel a tap on your shoulder. Turning around, you see a soldier.

"You're here too, huh," he says.

"Antonio? Good to see you here! What are you doing?"

"I'm one of Alfaro's soldiers. Come with me. I'm in charge of assisting the General."

You stay in Casa Azul with Antonio. He introduces you as a relative, and sends you to the aide-de-camp, who instructs you to pay special attention to anything the general might need in his office. You're sent to the troop's supply store to get the appropriate uniform for your new duties. You put it on over your clothes, knowing you'll need to take it off later to go undetected in your travels.

People come in and out of the house—some to complain, others to submit special requests to the General. He listens carefully, and everyone leaves contentedly. Antonio is tasked with giving away coins to the poor who seek aid and protection.

You tell Antonio that you have to go home. You thank him and say goodbye.

Your interest in learning more about the railway and Eloy Alfaro grows and grows. The anticipation fills you with a little impatience.

CHAPTER 07 - GENERAL ALFARO'S DREAM

The Chronophone transports you to 1897. Near Carondelet Palace's entrance, stands a short, brown-skinned man. He reminds you of the chatty man you met in Sibambe, though this man has only one arm.

"Hey, kid. You work here?" he asks.

"No… yet. I'm looking for a friend."

"So, you're one of the boss's employees, aren't you? He's a good man! Did you know he's already hired an American engineer to continue building the South Railway?"

"How do you know?"

"I see and hear things. No one pays me much attention because I'm disabled, you know. I lost my arm in the Gatazo battle, and since I'm no longer fit for combat, I work as a messenger."

"Ah. Then you must know Antonio Sánchez, from Sibambe?"

"Absolutely! He helped me get this job."

"It's him I'm looking for."

"Then we'll see each other around, kid. Good luck!"

You head inside Carondelet Palace. They let you easily in, since you're a familiar face. You find Antonio by Alfaro's office. He asks you to bring coffee for the general and Minister Lizardo García, who is informing him about the railway's status. You pour them a cup of coffee, retreat, and stay by the door, overhearing their conversation.

"As you know, Mr Lizardo. I've always dreamed of a unified country—the Coast, the Highlands, and the Amazon connected, able to communicate with one another. Only then can we speak of a great and prosperous nation. People will feel closer to their neighbors, and trading goods with each region will enrich our economy."

The Minister nods agreeably, "You're right about that, sir. I also believe that a railway is fundamental to our nation's progress."

"We must conduct a full analysis of this ill-fated project, always plagued by failures. I can say that García Moreno worked with honesty and effort, but he only managed to build fifteen kilometers from Yaguachi. Veintimilla and Caamaño, amid greed and turmoil, extended it to the Chimbo bridge. Later, Caamaño himself, amid shady business practices, built the track back to Durán

to avoid the long river navigation. Antonio Flores, as you know, never believed in the railway and thought bridle paths were enough for a country like ours. So much so that he focused on building a path from Babahoyo to Guaranda, which bears his name: Flores Route. The man only believed in mules!"

“And after twenty years of different governments since García Moreno,” the minister adds. “The railway in service has a total length of sixty-nine kilometers. Most of it is well-kept. There are four locomotives, but only two are operational. The Yaguachi mechanical workshop has the necessary tools for repairs, and with around one-hundred and seven thousand dollars, the railway can reach Chimbo Town, sir.”

“But my goal is for the railway to reach Quito. That will connect the coast and the highlands and unify the country. We need a specialist to conduct the necessary research.”

“Aye, sir. I’ll see to it personally,” the minister says and leaves.

After hearing the conversation, the deep respect you’ve always had for Eloy Alfaro grows even more. His ideals and aspirations befit a leader of your time and not from the 19th century. Now you have a lot of material for Social Studies!

CHAPTER 08 - THE MOST DIFFICULT CONSTRUCTION.

Minister Lizardo García requests that the Bank of Ecuador hires an experienced engineer to put in charge of the management and construction of the railway to Quito.

On that September morning in 1896, you’re in Eloy Alfaro’s office. He’s in a meeting with the renowned British railway engineer, Mr. V. Segdal Muller. As they talk, Eloy Alfaro organizes a commission—including Emilio Estrada, Rafael Ontaneda, and engineers Thill and López—to accompany Muller and conduct the necessary studies for a project that will follow the mountain ridges of Sibambe, using the same route mapped out by García Moreno’s team.

You carry a tray with a deliciously brewed coffee for Eloy Alfaro and a *pinchagua* cigarette from Manabí. That’s when you hear, for the first time, that this railway project will be “the world’s most difficult construction.”

Afterwards Eloy Alfaro meets with his ministers and decides that on October 9, to celebrate Guayaquil’s Independence Day, the national

convention will be held. There he'll present his report to the nation and request congressional approval to begin the railway construction under government supervision.

You decide to travel to Guayaquil with the general and his team.

CHAPTER 09 - GUAYAQUIL IN FLAMES

Everything is ready for the National Convention on October 9, 1896, in Guayaquil. It will decide Ecuador's new geopolitical status, as proposed by President Eloy Alfaro, so the country can become a confederation. However, the political enemies of the Alfaro Revolution don't want to share power with the people and are against it.

Night has fallen over Quito, all its inhabitants sleeping soundly. Yet in Guayaquil something sinister happens. At eleven o'clock a fire sets the city ablaze—the most terrifying fire that has ever occurred in the city.

Soon the horrifying news is all around Quito. You jolt up to the sudden commotion near the government headquarters.

"Guayaquil is on fire! Guayaquil is on fire!"

You quickly get up, absorbing all the conversations you possibly can.

"Everything was ready for the celebrations at the Governor's building," someone says.

"It was!" another replies. "They say it was sabotage. The fire started across the street, at La Joya warehouse."

You type, "Guayaquil, October 5th, 1896," on the Chronophone, and the whirlwind of time takes to the city.

When you arrive, the sight of the catastrophe leaves you speechless. Church bells rang across the city, a mad, dark peal. *Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong.*

Panic-stricken people run up and down the streets, yelling, "Fire! Fire!"

It's chaotic. Clouds of black smoke billow high into the air. Towering flames eat away the rooftops. You're close to the Governor's building, watching the Salamandra Company firefighters desperately trying to contain the raging inferno—but to no avail. The fire spreads quickly, burning everything in its path.

Suddenly, large sheets of zinc swoosh past your head like enormous black wings, startling you. Luckily, the flames don't spread to the Governor's building—it's upwind of the fire. From there you can see the flames devouring every bit of the city. Women and children sob and cry by the riverbank, deeply moving anyone who hears them.

Heart in your throat, you decide to go back. You type "Quito, 1896," and you're swept back to where you were before.

Over the next few days, the fire continues its destruction. Most of the people have vanished. You travel with Alfaro to Guayaquil and witness the execution of a man named Juan Tello, accused of starting the fire.

The city is no more—just ashes. Tears well up in your eyes. You feel an overwhelming urge to go home. But you also know that if you leave now, you may never return to the past again. Enthusiasm for seeing this adventure through to the end encourages you to stay.

CHAPTER 10 - THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

You go forward in time and arrive at the National Convention, held on October 9, 1896, in Guayaquil's honor. The city is in ruins. You watch as ships drop anchor in the port, bringing food aid from allied countries.

Eloy Alfaro is appointed interim president of Ecuador. You attend his swearing-in ceremony and the reading of his message. The general is a short man but has a strong will. Even so, after all the recent events, he looks nervous and distressed.

In his speech he speaks about the country's most concerning problems, which are imperative to solve: more cultivable lands, a better distribution of the national wealth, available jobs for women in the public sector, pay raise, no more forced labor for indigenous people in the coast and the highlands.

After that, you return to Quito with Alfaro and his supporters. It's now January 1897, and the general is elected head of the state for four years.

Alfaro speaks about the dire times Ecuador is living in, but not a reason for him to collect new taxes or increase the revenues. Everyone's surprised. Alfaro adds that, if properly managed, the current revenues are enough to rebuild the country. He also mentions the dire state of the education system

and the urgent need to improve primary school so the next generations can have a better future.

And then, at last, the words you've been waiting to hear—his lifelong dream: the railway.

"Even amidst this long, grueling campaign," Eloy says. "My mind has not strayed from the railway enterprise that will unite the communities of the coastal region with those of inland Ecuador. My earnest wish," he goes on, "is for the success of this lifesaving endeavor on which all progress depends."

As you reflect on all the time traveling you've been doing these days—witnessing events, attending inaugurations, and observing the efforts of the authorities to make the country better—you realize how much you've learned. Now you see history and geography in a new light, far more fascinating than when you merely listen to your teachers in class.

CHAPTER 11 - AMERICANS GET INTERESTED IN THE RAILWAY

On the Chronophone you type, "December 1896," and in seconds you find yourself inside Eloy Alfaro's office. He's signing a document addressed to Luis Felipe Carbo, the Ecuadorian ambassador in Washington, instructing him to take all the necessary steps to get American businessmen and investors interested in the railway.

"Let's hope for a swift and positive response" the president says.

Soon, the ambassador sends a favorable reply: a group of investors in New York are interested in forming a syndicate to undertake the railway project. The government presents the proposal to the National Assembly, which after reviewing it, grants its approval.

President Alfaro sends a telegram:

TELEGRAM

Ecuadorian ambassador
Trans-Andean Railway investors are ensured honorable support
from the government and the whole country
that relies on this transformative project.

(S) ALFARO

Several investors form a syndicate to move forward with the railway construction. They appoint Archer Harman and Edward Morley to travel to Ecuador and meet with the Supreme Leader, General Eloy Alfaro.

Aboard a steamship they arrive in Guayaquil, and then head to Quito by rail, the one that reaches the Chimbo Bridge. From there they continue along the Pallatanga-Cajabamba road on muleback. When the two engineers finally reach the capital, you check the Chronophone and see that it's March 13, 1897.

The next day, they go to the Government Palace, and you have the opportunity to meet Archer Harman personally. He's tall, lean, blond and imposing, with a determined look on his face that you consider traits of a strong, unyielding character.

From that day on, a series of meetings and negotiations take place. By the end of the month, an agreement between the syndicate and the government to begin the construction of the railway is completed.

The syndicate's representatives explore the possible railway route before going back to their country. According to what you hear at the presidential residence, the reports they take back to the investors are favorable; they particularly highlight Eloy Alfaro's democratic and honorable character. When he was offered a percentage of the project, the president firmly replied, "You're a businessman, and I am the head of state. The country pays me to serve it, not to profit from it."

At last, in June, the contract is signed. The Guayaquil and Quito Railway Company is established, and construction begins.

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE TELEGRAPH

You learn that the contract The Guayaquil and Quito Railway Company signed includes the construction of a telegraph line between Durán and Quito. You've always heard about the telegraph because your grandfather was a telegraph operator. Deeply curious to find out how it all works, you travel to Riobamba

City, where workers are putting up poles to modernize the telegraphic system and later string the wires that will carry messages along the railway.

There you meet an American engineer who's an expert in telecommunications. You ask about the telegraph.

In a heavily accented Spanish, he kindly gives you and the workers a brief lesson, "Telegraphy," he says, "consists of a set of devices that transmit messages almost instantaneously over long distances. Many scientists worked on this invention for a long time, but in 1837, the American painter Samuel Morse built a telegraph and created a highly practical alphabet for sending messages. With the code I'm about to show you, messages can be transmitted from one place to another using electrical impulses that travel through the wires attached to the poles."

He pulls out a chart displaying an alphabet of lines and dots, each representing different letters.

Letter/Symbol	Code
A	●—
B	—●●●
C	—●—●
D	—●●
E	●
F	●●—●
G	— —●
H	●●●●
I	●●
J	●— — —
K	—●—
L	●—●●
M	— —
N	—●

O	— — —
P	●— —●
Q	— —●—
R	●—●
S	●●●
T	—
U	●●—
V	●●●—
W	●——
X	—●●—
Y	—●——
Z	— —●●
0	— — — — —
1	●— — — —
2	●●— — —
3	●●●— —
4	●●●●—
5	●●●●●
6	— ●●●●
7	— — ●●●
8	— — — ●●
9	— — — — ●
Ä	●— ●—
Á	●— — ●—
Å	●— — ●—
Ch	— — — —
É	●●—●●
Ñ	— —●— —

Ö	— — — ●
Ü	●● — —
Full stop (Period)	● — ● — ● —
Comma	— — ●● — —
Colon	— — — ●●●
Question mark	●● — — ●●
Apostrophe	● — — — — ●
Dash	— ●●●● —
Parenthesis	— ● — — ● —
Equals sign	— ●●● —
Inverted comma	● — ●● — ●
@	● — — ● — ●
Error	●●●●●●●●

You and the others are amazed. Some have already worked with the telegraph system installed during García Moreno's time.

"How does the code work?" you ask in wonder.

"Each letter or number is transmitted individually with dots and dashes—that is, telegraphic signals that differ in duration. A dash lasts approximately three times as long as a dot. Between each pair of symbols, there's a pause roughly equal in length to a dot. To separate transmitted words, the pause is seven times the length of a dot."

He then shows a switchboard that must be operated by pressing the fingers on it. "When you press the keys, the electromagnetic pointer will draw marks on the strip of paper that moves around the cylinder. These marks must then be converted into letters, words, and numbers to form the message. Telegraph operators must learn both the code and how to use the switchboard. We'll see who is interested in learning."

The explanation over, the workers disperse, commenting about the telegraph. You'd love to learn how to operate it, but you don't have the time.

When everyone is distracted, you hide behind a pile of telegraph poles and type, “1897, Independence Square, Quito.”

The spiral of time takes you back to the Government Palace.

CHAPTER 13 - A DANGEROUS ROUTE

Several meetings take place in Eloy Alfaro’s office to determine the route the railroad will follow. The engineers hired for the next construction phase have found that the current road—Kelly Road—runs through volcanic terrain, making it unsafe for both trains and passengers. Despite that, work continues using the most advanced construction techniques available.

But the small locomotives sink into the treacherous terrain as they travel through the area, and that’s not all: a massive landslide buries everything under tons of rocks and dirt. Archer Harman returns to Quito after being in the landslide area, heading straight to the Government Palace. He requests a meeting with Eloy Alfaro. You let him in without haste.

After greeting the president, he exclaims, “Sir! The mountains roared and came crashing down onto the tracks, burying people, houses, cars… Everything is gone. We lost ten kilometers of railroad and the prepared ground for laying the rails. You can’t imagine the destruction! People ran in terror, rocks tumbled down from hilltops, the rivers roared furiously, and the rain fell mercilessly. It was as if the devil himself was conspiring against us.”

He’s visibly discouraged. You can even swear his eyes shine with tears.

“What do we do now, sir?” Harman asks.

The president stands up, smiling nervously. He says, “First, Mr Archer. Let us drink some whisky to scare the devil away! Then we’ll see what we can do.”

You immediately serve them two glasses of whiskey. *Spoken like a true General!* you think as you wait for new orders.

After a long conversation, the two men consider the possibility of changing the route to a safer one.

CHAPTER 14 - SOLDIERS OF PEACE

Faced with the challenges of building the railway in the Chimbo region, it’s decided that the project will follow the banks of the Chanchán River instead.

As you overhear from the engineers, constructing the railway along the riverbanks will be easier—it's simply a matter of building bridges rather than cutting through solid rock. The construction will progress more quickly.

The starting point is moved to Bucay. However, according to reports reaching President Alfaro's office, while the terrain there is more stable, malaria and other diseases pose a serious threat to the workers. You learn that a team of American doctors has been hired to address the devastation caused by these illnesses.

New campsites and workshops are set up in a place known as Dark Sleepy Beach. The construction continues. You consider joining the team to visit the new site, but it's too risky, what with the diseases and all that. Archer Harman returns to Quito.

You hear him informing Alfaro, "Mr President. We have another terrible problem! The forests are full of shrubs that house countless tiny reddish insects, and they're wreaking havoc on the workers. We need to do something!"

After discussing the necessary measures, Harman returns to the campsite. Meanwhile, dozens of workers have died from the harsh climate, extreme humidity, scorching heat, and relentless insects.

Among the dead, you learn, is Chief Engineer Davis, who died from heatstroke. He's replaced by Harman's brother, Major John Harman.

The first graveyard is built along the railroad to bury the *soldiers of peace*, as those who have fallen in the monumental construction are called. The next step is to clear the land and destroy the shrubs that harbor the disease-carrying insects.

Most Ecuadorian workers, especially the highlanders, have abandoned the project because of the toll it takes on them. The contractors feel forced to recruit workers from the British colonies in the Caribbean and Central America, where people are already experienced in this kind of work, having participated in a railway construction in Jamaica.

You learn that four thousand Jamaican workers, along with some Puerto Ricans, have been hired by the James MacDonald Company, which is responsible for supplying the manpower for the project.

The construction continues uninterrupted. All contractors are eager to finish their assigned section as quickly as possible. Their earnings depend on that. “When the work is finished, the bill is paid,” you hear them say.

Curious to see how the work is progressing, you travel to Bucay. Most of the people who once lived in Chimbo have resettled there.

When you arrive at the campsite, you unexpectedly come across your old friend Eugenia. But she’s now a grown woman, living with her husband and two small children. She doesn’t recognize you, and you do your best to stay out of sight—you have no idea how you would explain to her your still-young appearance.

In Bucay, you learn that the construction in the mountain zone—the section that goes up to the highlands from Bucay to Alausí—poses a true challenge for both engineers and workers.

Activity starts early in the campsite. After a hearty, nourishing breakfast, the workers take up their shovels, pickaxes, and crowbars and start clearing the path to lay down the wooden railroad ties made from local wood. The place is a whirl of activity. It feels like the inside of a huge beehive. But instead of honey, you think, the final product is an extraordinary project that even in your time is remembered with awe and admiration as one of the greatest engineering feats of its era and a testament to the steely determination of the Old Warrior.

As you move among the workers, you hear their mounting concerns about the discrimination they’re being subject to by some of the gringos that run the company. It seems the Jamaicans are plotting an uprising. You realize not everything can go smoothly without conflicts.

CHAPTER 15 - THE JAMAICAN WORKERS

The Jamaican workers have come under the promise of fair treatment and a daily wage of two British pounds, part of which will be set aside in a savings fund for when they return home after completing their work. Police officers and soldiers were also hired to keep order.

Unfortunately, not all promises are kept. Seeing the armed foremen in the campsite seems more like a movie you once saw about inmates forced into hard labor in a prison rather than the reality of workers building a railway.

That morning, panic spreads among chiefs and guards in *La Victoria*, the campsite you're staying. Soldiers have just rescued Mr Reinolds--the chief at the construction site in Bucay Chico--from a group of Jamaican workers who were pursuing him. The man managed to escape by firing his gun right before the Jamaicans could capture him and make him answer for his cruel, tyrannical behavior.

A defense operation is immediately put into action. Heavily armed police officers and the entire workforce are to defend the contractors.

Outraged, the Jamaicans come in, but they find the authorities well prepared and waiting for them. This catches them off guard, and in that moment of hesitation, the police seize the opportunity to fire warning shots into the air and subdue them. The workers are captured, their hands tied with ropes behind their backs.

As the men are being taken back into the campsite, one of the engineers notices a big man purposefully heading to the warehouse where dynamite is stored. The policemen manage to get there, right when he's trying to light the dynamite, but two well-aimed shots to his legs bring the worker down. As the police close in, the wounded Jamaican snatches a gun from a police officer and fires… Or tries. The gun is locked. The attack fails.

The police officers escort the rebels back to the campsite. A meeting among workers, technicians, and foramen takes place to discuss and negotiate better working conditions. In the end, they reach an agreement: the workmen promise not to rebel again, and the contractors commit to treating them more fairly.

That night, after dinner, oil-soaked candles are lit around the campsite, and everyone goes to bed. Darkness reigns outside the tents. You hear insect sounds coming from the encompassing wilderness. Mosquitoes buzz around you, but the upheavals of the day make you fall into a deep, undisturbed sleep.

CHAPTER 16 - OLD HUIGRA

You decide to visit Sigsipamba and type that name on the Chronophone. The whirlwind of time takes you there.

The construction is still ongoing, undeterred by the harsh climate conditions. Those leading the railway construction don't back down, working enthusiastically and with great determination.

Along the roads previously opened, hundreds of mules come and go, bringing tools, railroad trails, ties, food, and other necessary items. You've never seen so many beasts of burden gathered in one place. The sight fills you with awe. It occurs to you that just as monuments should be built to honor the workmen, so too the animals that resignedly helped be celebrated. You make a mental note to share that very same thought in your class, once you're back.

Little by little the workmen tread up the Andes' foothills. The weather is improving, and they reach Sigsipamba, about three thousand feet above sea level. A milder weather welcomed them.

You hear that new contractors have arrived, probably Americans and Italians, judging by their accent. Alongside the local workers, they begin "laying the line," meaning they transport the blueprints to the locations where the railway tracks will continue.

In the morning, four young men have to take the blueprints and set off to the area where a wall is to be built. One of them is called Daniel. As they saddle the mules, Daniel's mule escapes. The other three men go on ahead. Mortified, Daniel asks for help capturing the animal. Someone advises him to lure the mule with a plate of salt. And so he does. The mule takes the bait. Daniel catches and saddles it, and he sets off right away.

He scolds the mule on the way. "Sheesh," he tells the animal. "It's your fault I'm running late for work. You know that without blueprints you can't lay the line and everything gets stuck? But you're just an animal. What would you know?"

The mule only flickers its ears, trotting on up the road.

As he gets closer to his destination, Daniel finds something terrible has happened: a landslide has dragged his other three companions down the mountain in a mass of rocks and mud. Numb with disbelief, he turns around, bearing the unsettling news back to the campsite. Teary-eyed, he strokes the mule's head, whispering his gratitude. Now he believes the mule first escaped because it sensed the danger. The noble creature twitches its ears.

“You saved my life!” Daniel says gratefully. Big tears fall from his eyes. He strokes the mule’s neck. “You’re a good animal! Thanks to God and your stubbornness I’m still alive. You’re a good friend!”

Chiefs and workers organized a rescue party. You slip in among them and go with them to the landslide area. It’s a chasm that plunges steeply into the river below. Down there, among the dirt and rocks, you can see the mules’ legs covered in mud. Shovels and picks in hand, the men dig through the rocks and the mud, finally uncovering the young men—tragically, they have perished along with their animals.

A sudden wish to be back at home overwhelms you; a wish you haven’t had since the fire in Guayaquil. Yet the thrill of learning more and more about the railway makes you screw up your courage and stay.

The accident fresh in their minds, the workmen take more precautions as they continue up the foothills. They soon reach a place called Old Huigra, located in a narrow corridor between towering mountains chiseled by the powerful waters of the river that flows toward the coast. There the workmen set up camp, yet more nasty surprises await them. The place is plagued by vipers. Whenever the rocks are moved to keep the construction going, nests of venomous snakes appear, ready to wreak havoc among the workmen despite the precautions. There’s no choice but to relocate the site to a safer spot, so they break camp. Higher they climb, up to a place called New Huigra, as opposed to the previous one.

CHAPTER 17 - WELCOME TO NEW HUIGRA

Wanting to go back a little further in time, you type “1902, New Huigra” on your device. When you arrive, you find yourself in a place with nice weather: not too hot, not too cold. You check the date on the device: “5/2/1902.” There is a flourishing village. Wooden houses are scattered on both sides of the railroad, the likes of which you’ve seen when traveling to the coast with your family. Everything is neat and clean. On the left side of the Chanchan River there is a group of wooden houses that, you later find out, belong to the Jamaican workers.

A sense of festivity hangs in the air. Today the train arrives. Everything is ready for it to begin operations. The Railway Administration has been

created. You go and read the labels, *President. Management. Superintendent's Office. Audit Department. Printing Service. Telegraph.* Amid the excitement, you can move freely.

You go to the warehouses. There's a great deal of tools, ready to be used. But what surprises you the most is the number of mules in the stables. You reckon there are at least five hundred beasts of burden. Also, something you haven't seen before: a great many cattle to feed the workmen, and lots of grain. There are shops selling a little bit of everything. The accepted currency is the British pound.

Just then a whistle sounds. It's the train! The waiting crowd erupts in cheers. You're euphoric, too. That great engine has always filled you with such joy, and now more than ever because you're witnessing a key moment in the history of the Ecuadorian railway.

Archer Harman gives the welcoming speech in Huigra station. He asks everyone to join efforts in finding Ecuadorian workers for the next part of the construction to Alausí, which is crucial for the project's progress. Bridges and walls will be built, but conquering a treacherous clifftop called Santa Elena will prove an arduous task. Then the route will continue through different places and towns, reaching stations in cities such as Guamote, Riobamba, Ambato, Latacunga, and its final destination: Quito.

Hearing the conversations around, you learn that the Jamaican workmen have deserted, hiding away in the haciendas, mostly in Guayas Province. Others are sick, not able to bear the weather of the Andes region. It's all very worrisome for the construction company. Insufficient manpower will paralyze the project, or its completion will take far too much time. Amid cheers and a thunderous applause, the opening ceremony concludes, and everyone disperse back to their chores.

CHAPTER 18 - BRIDGES AND TUNNELS

The workers start leveling the ground and raising several bridges all the way to Chanchan station, outside the tunnels.

You arrive at the campsite, and you hear what's been happening so far. Due to the great number of workers, some of them are likely to have a shady past. Mr Mac Donald, the contractor, complains that he's struggling to keep order and the workers safe. Especially on the weekend. Lots of street vendors, knowing the workers get paid, come to sell all sorts of things—including alcohol. Combined with gambling, it often leads to squabbles and quarrels. On top of that, theft has become a problem, with materials and tools left outside the camp frequently disappearing.

Once again you realize that things aren't easy for those wanting to carry on with the project. But that's not everything. To cross a section of solid rock, the construction of a tunnel that isn't budgeted is needed. Also, when the workmen get sick, it leads to additional expenses for the company, risking financial difficulties.

Archer Harman has to travel to the United States to ask for a loan and solve the problem. According to what you hear, Harman tells the stockholders that there are mines of precious stones in the area that can be exploited. That's how he sells a lot of stocks, and the railway construction goes on. People whisper that it's only a possibility, but the only way to keep the project going.

But the funds are not enough. The construction in the Devil's Nose sector requires greater financial resources. You accompany Archer Harman to see Eloy Alfaro, but you arrive first because you use the Chronophone, while he travels on muleback. By the time he gets to the president's office, you already know all the details. You play the role of an attendant, serving coffee, water, or anything they may request.

You hear when Harman tells the president that he's going to England to seek funding for the project, because what they got in New York is not enough.

CHAPTER 19 - TRIP TO ENGLAND

The construction continues while Archer Harman and his brother John travel to England. From there they send Eloy Alfaro a coded telegram to report how things are going. You listen when the president reads the message to one of his ministers.

"'*We obtained funding from Sir Sivewright, a true gentleman, who offered his help, anytime, to continue with our project. Moreover, the English Crown has granted the prisoners of the English colonies parole to go to Ecuador and work on the section from the small tunnel up to the top of Santa Elena. Those who complete their sentence while working may be freed and either remain here or choose any place they wish to live. The rest must return to serve out their remaining time where required. Each worker will have insurance of two pounds in case of accident or death.*""

The president and the minister exchanged a satisfied look.

Eloy Alfaro exclaims, "That's wonderful news! It seems fortune is finally on our side. The railway project is truly becoming a reality."

A few weeks later you hear that Archer Harman, and his brother are back, just as they'd announced in the telegram. They bring with them several boxes filled with British pounds.

Also, taking all the precautions, five hundred men arrive on well-guarded ships, and are transported to Huigra aboard the brand-new railway that now reaches that station.

Without delay, Harman heads to the town to continue working. Six mules carry the boxes of British pounds, which will pay the workers' overdue wages. The boxes are stored in one of the campsite's warehouses and covered with tarps until the weekend.

CHAPTER 20 - ARCHER HARMAN

You want to know more about the engineer who's supporting Eloy Alfaro and his dream of completing the railway that will connect the coast and the highlands. On the Chronophone you type, "Archer Harman and Luis Felipe Carbo, Washington, 1897."

The whirlwind of time takes you there. In the blink of an eye, you're in the capital of the United States.

You're standing in front of a yellowish building with large doors decorated with wrought iron arches. Two giant soldiers stand on either side of the main entrance, making you jump, but then you see these are wooden soldiers. You feel a little awkward, but you go in anyway.

The elegance of the place amazes you. You've never seen something like that: neat walls, a brown wooden ceiling with shiny black beams, a large bar with a dark marble table and lit by countless lamps. The tables in the dining hall are occupied by elegant, well-manner men.

You feel as if you were in an old movie. But, of course, you're in 1897.

To remain undetected, you hide behind an enormous carved column. You notice that everyone there seems to be businessmen. Just then, you hear one of them call a man who is playing pool in a room next to the dining hall.

"Hey, Harman. Can you come?"

"Sure!" he replies, stops playing and walks up to the group.

"This is Felipe Carbo, the ambassador of Ecuador, a country in South America. He's come to present us with a proposal for the construction of a railway. What do you think? Do you want to build a railway?"

Dr Carbo and Harman shake hands.

One of the businessmen tells Carbo, "Archer Harman is an American engineer with experience leading projects in some of the most dangerous and inhospitable lands. Building the railway would be no small feat for him. He's worked with many syndicates involved in constructing railroads across the United States and understands the ins and outs of corporate finance and construction. He also knows how to sell railroad bonds in England and Holland, issue stock, secure grants of public land near the railway, manage campsites and manpower, and acquire coal mines nearby—all techniques commonly used in railroad construction."

Another man joins in the conversation and says, "We believe he's the right man for the job."

You realize all of them are speaking in Spanish. Later you learn that's because they've worked in South America, constructing railways in Perú and Chile.

Harman takes a keen interest in the project and joins the team, the syndicate of builders working on the Trans-Andean railway. So that's what happened! Now you finally know how Harman got involved in the construction of the Guayaquil-Quito railway—*the impossible railway,* as it's known, for all the exceptional challenges it posed.

CHAPTER 21 - DEVIL'S NOSE

In the president's office you hear that constructions in the most difficult area are finally starting. It's difficult because there's a steep mountain known by the indigenous people as *Cóndor Puñuna,* which means "where the Andean condor sleeps." It's a very sacred place for them. You get there using the device.

Beautiful birds soared the sky over the mountain. These are Andean condors. It won't be long before they have flown away because of the workmen and the explosions.

James Mac Donald's English company oversees the project in this sector. He's an engineer and assistant to the leading engineer John Shaw.

That morning, when you wander the place, Shaw sees the gigantic rock he's got to conquer and exclaims, "Devil's nose!"

From that moment on, that's what everyone will call the mountain. You're amazed and satisfied to learn something new about one of the most stunning places in the railway route.

But what's more important is that you have the chance to see for yourself how this section of the route was constructed. You join the group of blueprint-bearers, going with them hither and thither. Since most people there come from different places, no one is particularly interested in knowing who you are.

A camp is set up on the triangle-shaped land between the mountain and rivers Alausi and Guasuntos. A variety of tools are brought here: drills, augers, knots, shovels, picks, lamps, dynamite, and ropes.

The three tunnels and the ten manually built bridges they constructed back in Huigra seems child's play compared to the task ahead. Conquering the mountain challenges all knowledge and experience the engineers, technicians, and workmen have.

More than four thousand Ecuadorians, Caribbeans, Central Americans, and Europeans workers are to conquer the mountain. Since most of them are convicts, the security is tight.

The weather is harsh and cold, typical mountain-climate. In the afternoon a thunderstorm blows up around them. Everyone is numb with cold. The workers from warmer lands suffer from *soroche,* or altitude sickness. Two

even fall dead—their bodies stiff, their lips blue. You wear the poncho that Eugenia gave you a while ago and that you always carry with you; sometimes you've used it as a pillow, sometimes as a blanket. The hat has protected you against the sun and now against the chilly wind.

The campsite's hot food along with a sip of sugary liquor warms the workers from the inside out. Then, exhausted, they all retire to sleep.

Activity begins early the next day. Skillfully, the Jamaican workers climb up the almost-straight mountainside, opening holes on the rock to put sticks of dynamite inside. They light the wick, then go quickly down before the dynamite explodes. The mountain roars as if in protest, shattering to smithereens. Other workers clear the way, leveling the ground, and building narrow, railroad embankments. Little by little they open a zigzag path, the only way for the railroad to pass.

Working, the Jamaican sing songs in their language. One song in particular catches your attention.

Oh! John Shaw
Money good
Oh! Mac Donald
Money bad.
Rice and flour
kill jamaicanos
water and sugar
Kill bovidian

The men's hard work reminds you of the Quito legend about the atrium of San Francisco, in which Cantuña made a pact with the devil to build the colossal temple within schedule.

Feelings of anguish, admiration, and gratitude come over you. You're convinced that without the sacrifice these men did and their strenuous work, the railway would never have happened. Now that you've seen up close everything these unsung heroes did, you appreciate their fighting spirit and courage.

The ear-splitting dynamite, the extreme cold, and the agonizing wait for what may happen next prompt you to leave and go to Alausí when the train arrives.

CHAPTER 22 - THE STERLING ROBBERY

In Alausí you hear that three of the eight boxes Archer Harman brought from England to pay the workers' wages have been stolen. One of the blueprint-bearers that you met back in Devil's Nose recounts the events. You listen attentively.

"It was the weekend, and all the workers had gathered to get our hard-earned pay. When Mr Harman sent for the boxes of money, one of the foremen raised the alarm, 'The money's gone! Someone stole the sterling!'

"Mr Harman's face turned white as sheet! He ran straight to the storage room to see for himself. It was true! Out of the eight boxes, there were only five. They put us under curfew right after that. No one could leave or enter the camp.

"When the investigation started, all suspicions fell on two Caribbean workers who were seen wandering suspiciously around the warehouse where the boxes were kept. They were tortured into a confession, but nothing came out of them, so they were left to die outside the camp. The next morning, they were supposed to get a burial, but the bodies had vanished. We don't know if someone help them out, or if the cold jolt them awake and they ran away.

"The neighboring haciendas were thoroughly searched, but the men were nowhere to be found. Maybe someone hid them to protect them the horrible punishment, or maybe they fled towards the coast. But they couldn't have taken the money with them, could they? They were in bad shape, and the news travelled quite fast all along the railway line.

"It was all well-planned, let me tell you, but the pounds must still be somewhere hereabouts. The thieves will probably come back for their loot someday."

You're intrigued. You promise to research a little more about the stolen money once you're back in your time. What if the British pounds are still buried somewhere?

CHAPTER 23 - THE TRAIN ARRIVES IN ALAUSI

You type, “Quito, 1901,” and the whirlwind of time takes you to Independence Square. Arriving at Alfaro’s office, you find out that Harman has written him a letter from New York, telling him about the difficulties and setbacks there have been because of negative comments and ill-intentioned people. He needs the English American capitalists to lend him more money to continue the railway construction.

Alfaro is visibly mortified that many people have taken it upon themselves to disgrace his and Archer Harman’s reputation by accusing them of corruption and heresy, saying that the train isn’t going to get to Alausí.

Alfaro’s eyes shine with indignation. “My dear friend Harman,” he says out loud, as if Harman was there. “When men receive credit for their accomplishments, there’s always people who try to belittle them and do harm. Of course, the train will get to Alausí and then to Guamote, Riobamba, Ambato, Latacunga and Quito! That is what you and I are here for, to fulfill our dream.”

You’re very excited and wholeheartedly support the general. You wish you could tell him that there’s nothing to worry about, that the train is definitely going to get to Quito and make a glorious entry. But you bite your tongue. As a time traveler, you can’t say anything, because you run the risk of being called crazy or something similar.

Finally, on September 2nd, 1902—when Eloy Alfaro is no longer president and after the tremendous task of overcoming the Devil’s Nose had taken hundreds of lives—the train arrives at Alausí.

Using the Chronophone, you get to Huigra. You hop up the train together with Archer Harman, another engineer called Shunk, John Harman, and other experts and workers. You feel like you’re in a dream when the train begins to move along the rails towards Alausí.

Before your eyes unfold the green highland landscape, the sun-kissed mountain peaks, the gaping chasms the builders had to overcome. The train passes through tunnels and across bridges. The clean morning air refreshes your throat.

As the engine goes up a slope, puffing smoke like a huge steel dragon, you hear one of the blueprint-bearers exclaim, “We’re at seven hundred feet above sea level!”

The loud whistle announces that they are approaching Alausí. Your heart, like that of the train passengers, beats rapidly with excitement. A band starts playing in the station. Hundreds of people have gathered to wait for the railway; they applaud frantically, laugh, cheer and give free rein to their excitement and joy.

When it arrives, Major John Harman and Shunk are the first to disembark. They are received by a commission appointed by General Leonidas Plaza, the President of Ecuador, as the President of the Municipal Council has excused himself from participating.

The enthusiastic crowd lifts the two engineers onto their shoulders and, amidst joyful cheers, carries them to the Municipal House, where the official handover of the railway to the city takes place.

As you watch and join the celebration of the train’s arrival, a flashing alert suddenly sounds on the Chronophone. Stepping behind the station, you check your electronic equipment. A warning appears on the screen: *only 45 minutes of battery life remain. If you don’t recharge it at least 15 minutes before it dies, the device will stop functioning.*

You must choose to attend the train’s arrival in one location: Guamote, Riobamba, Ambato, Latacunga, or Quito. But only one, because the battery is running low. Visiting multiple places it’s a risk. You can be stranded in time. After some thought, you decide to go to the train’s arrival in Quito.

CHAPTER 24 - THE RAILWAY’S ARRIVAL TO QUITO

You type on the Chronophone’s screen: “Arrival of the Trans-Andean Railway to Quito”, and the device completes the entry: “June 25, 1908.”

It’s five in the morning. The city has woken to the thunderous noise of cannons and artillery firing from up high in Pichincha, Panecillo, and Itchimbía, beginning the celebration.

Church bells chime jubilantly throughout Quito and will keep on doing so every hour throughout the day, as ordered by Archbishop González Suárez.

When the Cathedral clock strikes 8:30 a.m., government officials and foreign dignitaries begin arriving for the grand event.

A tent, adorned with the flags of Ecuador and the United States, stands proudly on a rise near the new station. Nearby, a massive floral arch has been erected, under which the locomotive will triumphantly pass through. In a symbolic act, América, General Eloy Alfaro's daughter, drives a golden nail into the final rail in Chimbacalle.

News of the train's progress, transmitted via telegraph from station to station, spreads from Durán to Quito. At last, the powerful whistle pierces the air, accompanied by the billowing smoke and the rhythmic *chucu-chucu* of the wheels on the rails. The crowd erupts with excitement, filling the streets and avenues to witness the arrival of the colossal machine. For many, it represents progress and hope; for others, it brings wickedness and the devil with it.

For an hour, carts shuttle men, women, and children to and from the station, their faces lit with excitement.

Speeches begin, honoring the heroic efforts of General Eloy Alfaro, his government, and the members of The Guayaquil and Quito Railway Company, including Archer Harman, Engineer Shunk, John Shaw, MacDonald, and the English gentleman Sir Sivewright. Tributes are also paid to the thousands of Ecuadorians, Jamaican, Central American, and European workers who dedicated their lives—and in many cases, sacrificed them—to make this dream a reality.

A moment of solemnity follows as the crowd pays tribute to Major John Harman, whose death from fever occurred before the train reached Salcedo.

The bitterness, slander, and fierce opposition faced during the railway's construction are momentarily forgotten.

You catch sight of General Alfaro, standing amidst his family. Dressed in a dark suit and long frock coat, he leans on a cane with a silver handle, visibly moved. His dream of uniting the Sierra and the Coast, of ushering in an era of progress and prosperity for Ecuador, has finally come true.

With emotion, he declares, "The powerful voice of the locomotive has just echoed at the gates of Quito, the 'Light of America!'"

Suddenly, the alarm on your device goes off, snapping you back to reality. You glance at the screen: *10 minutes of battery remaining.*

With a heavy heart, you take one last look at the Chimbacalle station and type in your birthday: *“11/21/2013.”* You press the green button, but nothing happens. A cold sweat runs down your forehead. You wait a moment and press it again—still nothing. The minutes tick by rapidly.

The screen lights up with another warning, *five minutes remaining… Four… Three…*

In a panic, you remember the red emergency key. You press it, and suddenly, the door to the time vortex opens, transporting you back to Uncle Pedro’s laboratory.

Your uncle, who had slipped out of your birthday celebration worried when he saw you leave and not return, greets you with a sigh of relief.

“What’s with the outfit?” he asks, eyeing your poncho and hat with a bemused expression. “You look like a railway worker!”

From inside the house, you hear your mother call out, “Horacio! The cake is ready! Come blow out the candles!”

Quickly, you shed the work clothes and throw your arms around your uncle. Together, you head towards the house, and with shining eyes, you exclaim, “It works, Uncle! It really works! I’ve got so much to tell you…”

DECLARACIÓN Y AUTORIZACIÓN

Yo, **Nazareno Delgado, Karla Cecilia**, con C.C: # **0919024083** autor/a del trabajo de titulación: **Vocabulary and language skills acquisition using translated historical fiction in young learners of english as a foreign language** previo a la obtención del título de **Licenciada en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros-Inglés** en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil.

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RESUMEN/ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research was to integrate Ecuadorian literature in the EFL classroom through the translation of selected chapters of the historical fiction book, *Horacio, el ferrocarril y las esterlinas desaparecidas*, to be used as instructional material among middle grade students to enhance their vocabulary acquisition skills. The translation utilized the communicative approach to ensure readability in the target readership, and several excerpts from the book were analyzed to prove the efficacy of said method. Additionally, a website was built, allowing students to access the selected chapters as well as interactive post-reading activities. By translating a local book into English, this research highlights the potential of literature-based instruction as an effective tool for vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, it supports the development of engaging, culture-rich pedagogical resources that bridge linguistic and historical knowledge, reinforcing the value of incorporating Ecuadorian literature in EFL curricula.			
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