

**THE TRAGIC BACKGROUND IN SPANISH POPULAR  
CHILDREN'S SONGS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS CONDUCTED  
WITH A MIXED METHODOLOGY**  
**DE LO TRÁGICO EN LAS CANCIONES POPULARES INFANTILES ESPAÑOLAS:  
UN ANÁLISIS DE CONTENIDO CON METODOLOGÍA MIXTA**  
**O TRÁGICO NAS CANÇÕES POPULARES INFANTIS ESPANHOLAS: UMA  
ANÁLISE DE CONTEÚDO COM METODOLOGIA MISTA**

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<b>KEY WORDS:</b> popular children's song mixed methods resilience tragic elements	<b>ABSTRACT:</b> On this research has been analysed the textual elements with a tragic content that appear on the lyrics of Spanish popular children's songs. It has been considered as tragic elements those passages which talk about topics related with tragic aspects of the human condition, such as death, violence, sadness, heartbreak and fear, among others. A content analysis as a mixed methodology has been used for that purpose. The elements mentioned before has been localised, counted, commented and categorised for its analysis. By this procedure, we have obtained some information and percentages that allow us to value the importance of tragic elements appearing on the lyrics analysed, as well as think over its adaptation as a possible educational resource for the tragic aspect of life.
<b>PALABRAS CLAVE:</b> canción popular infantil métodos mixtos resiliencia elementos trágicos	<b>RESUMEN:</b> Este estudio analizó los elementos textuales de contenido trágico que aparecen en las letras de las canciones populares infantiles españolas. Se entendieron como elementos trágicos aquellos pasajes de dichas canciones en los que se tratan temas relacionados con los aspectos trágicos de la condición humana como, por ejemplo, la muerte, la violencia, la tristeza, el desamor, el miedo y otros. Se utilizó el análisis de contenido como metodología mixta para tal empresa: localizar, contabilizar, comentar y categorizar los elementos mencionados. Así, se obtuvieron una serie de datos y porcentajes que nos permiten valorar la significatividad de la presencia de elementos trágicos en las letras de las canciones analizadas y reflexionar sobre su adecuación como un posible recurso didáctico para llevar a cabo una apta educación para lo trágico.

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:**

canção popular  
infantil  
métodos mistos  
resiliência  
elementos trágicos

**RESUMO:** Este presente estudo analisou os elementos textuais tidos como conteúdo trágico que aparecem nas letras das canções populares infantis espanholas. Entende-se por elementos trágicos aqueles, cujas passagens dessas canções, abordem temáticas relacionadas com os aspectos trágicos da condição humana, como por exemplo, a morte, a violência, a falta de amor, o medo, entre outros. Utilizou-se a análise de conteúdo como uma metodologia mista para tal empresa: localizar, contabilizar, comentar e categorizar os elementos mencionados. Então, foram obtidos uma série de dados e porcentagens, que nos permitiram avaliar o significado da presença dos elementos trágicos nas letras das canções analisadas e refletir sobre sua adequação, como um possível recurso didático para desenvolver uma educação apropriada para o que é tido como trágico.

## 1. Introduction

Music has been a part of our history since its first origins. From the first rudimentary rhythms to the current electronic music, human beings have given music an important role to play on their lives and cultures. At some point in our evolution, the first rhythms and sounds turned to be played along with lyrics and messages. Thanks to that, musical compositions reached a higher level, being able to transmit ideas through their lyrics. That is how a new concept was born, what we all currently known as song.

### 1.1. Music, songs and culture

Although they were treated in a very rudimentary and primitive way, songs have always been an essential requirement in the lives of the human beings since the first time (Crivillé, 1988). A huge number of songs have been composed throughout history, conforming our culture as time goes by.

The close relationship between language and culture has been the object of study of ethno-linguistics. It is known that every language expresses the culture in which its users are immersed and therefore, through the study of linguistic manifestations, we can get to know that culture (Martín Camacho, 2003). Considering the lyrics of the songs as an example of linguistic manifestation, we can infer that through their study we get a better knowledge about the culture and society in which they were created and used.

Besides, following the postulates of Berrocal and Gutiérrez Pérez (2002), there is no doubt that songs have meant one of the best conductors regarding the culture-historical transmission carried out by our ancestors. Many of these songs have been transmitted orally from generation to generation with the aim of preserving the cultural heritage without using the written code (Sheridan, MacDonald & Byrne, 2011).

We are who we are in part thanks to the songs we have been listening to throughout our lives. They influence directly our beliefs, emotions

and ideas and consequently, our behaviour, that is why music is an essential tool for knowledge and emotional adjustment (Campayo & Cabedo, 2016). Their messages have an effect on our way of thinking and understanding the world. Songs and other folk materials of our culture have a wide educational potential, not only in terms of the active learning of those who use them, but also in their relationship with the environment (Cerrillo, 2005). They are the complement to a complex and playful system that wisely combines leisure, physical activity, fun, culture and training in generalized contexts of poverty, which are not so different from the “current situations” that are itemised in the monograph presented by de Juanas (2018).

Particularly in Spain, the production of songs over time is very extensive. Therefore, through its study we have been able to know better our idiosyncrasy. We are going to focus our attention in a particular and curious group of them: the popular children’s songs.

Social pedagogy should now accomplish a new mission based on recovering children’s popular songs in our current context to use them in a social training and not only in a literary one. Following Martínez-Ezquerro & Martos (2019), the mix of traditions, genres and topics needs to develop a social literary education. In addition, we propose its application to a wider open intertextuality and intermodality that include popular songs as a “hybrid” between the literary, musical and social aspects. The preservation of the literary heritage, including the music and the culture, should confront the products of the global marketing.

### 1.2. Popular children’s songs (PCSs)

They are known as “popular” because their author is unknown and they remain alive thanks to people’s memory. They are used by children (in a complete or partial way) whether they were or not entirely for children. Popular children’s songs (from here on out named as PCSs) have been very present in the daily lives of the Spanish society. Children (both boys and girls) accepted them, used them and made them theirs, mainly with

the intention of using them to accompany their games and dances. Obviously, children were not aware of the educational potential of their lyrics. As Fernández Poncela (2013) points out, children hummed these PCSs between thoughtlessness and precociousness, causing a simultaneous in-trjection of the song's message as part of their child's brain and drafting their duty as adults in a future.

Simplicity characterizes this type of musical compositions. It is obvious because as we have said before, their main characters and recipients are children (boys and girls) and therefore the songs cannot be too complex to play and understand. They are perfect for children due to their characteristics: "The popular children's song holds melodic, rhythmic, formal, timbre, expressive, functional and interpretative features of interest for being able to deeply influence the child's soul" (Sarget, 2002, p. 208).

Furthermore, their lyrics talk about a huge variety of topics, they normally describe the everyday life of a society, community or territory. These are songs that talk about the life itself, that are sung (among other things) to show and teach the difficulties, wonders and misfortunes that define them.

In this way, love appears but in the shape of heartbreak. Unrequited love, disagreement between partners, lies and trickeries, even romances that end because of one of the partner's death, as in the famous song "Where do you go Alfonso XII?". The persistence on the importance of marriage marks the future of these children and raise the longing for marriage in the early ages. Equally, the war and the soldiers constitute one of the main topics, especially in old romances. The PCSs which are about famous warlike characters, important battles or the returns home from battlefield (triumphant or defeated) are very usual. War, violence, even child abuse, appear in an explicit way in the Spanish popular children's songbook (Fernández Poncela, 2013).

Obviously, there are numerous songs in which humour, joy and optimism are predominant. In the Spanish popular children's songbook appears songs about jokes, puns, tongue-twisters, riddles, and songs for parties and seasons (Cerrillo, 2005). Life is a swing of good and bad moments, of joyful and painful news, of events that bring us happiness and others that plunge us into sadness. The PCSs openly show the reality in which they were created and used.

However, we do not take advantage of this richness. It is believed that the popular song is currently undervalued and it is used less and less, as much in school as in a family environment. It is

also mistakenly compared traditional music with simple music. This belief is not supported by the evidence, according to Casals, Vilar & Ayats (2008) and Arriaga, Riano, Cabedo & Berbel (2017). These authors look into the musical preferences of the primary school students, confirming their preference for popular songs. Although, from today's point of view, children's songs are usually identified with happy and positive lyrics and messages, avoiding more delicate topics that are reserved for adult recipients.

### 1.3. PCSs, the tragic element and its educational potential

Nevertheless, there are PCSs that show textual elements of a tragic nature. Many of these compositions contain passages in which tragic aspects of life, such as death, are dealt with more or less explicitness.

Why do tragic elements appear in children's songs? Regarding the principles of ethnolinguistics again, following Martín Camacho (2003), the mere existence of songs in which diverse topics are treated means the importance that these topics possessed for the society. Death and tragedy were more present in our ancestors' lives, who talked about it more naturally than nowadays, at least in the PCSs. Far from embellishing and omitting the tragic content of live in their lyrics, some PCSs show it with a complete familiarity. In this way, and taking into account their historical educational potential, we deduce that there was about a subtle exercise of acceptance of tragedy and death. Also, as a last resort, they were useful for educating for tragedy; every time that the children learned, they used and internalized the messages of these songs as a real resilience exercise.

But what is the education for tragedy about? Needless to say that the topic of death and its derivative tragic elements represent one of the most concerns (if not the biggest one) of the human being throughout history. The questions it raises and the reflection on them are the focus in the history of humanity from its origins, in every part of the world (Gaona, 2012).

However, in spite of its importance, death is a taboo in our current society. According to Ordoñez & Lacasta (2007), currently in our society there are numerous taboos related to the emotional part of the human being, and one of them is associated with death, which has become a symbol of failure and decay.

Specifically, the taboo is noted when it comes to educating and talking to children about the tragic nature of the human condition. As it happened

not so long ago with the issue of sex, few families or teachers naturally educate their children or students on the topic of death and the tragic aspect of life. The strategy to follow consists in ignoring the issue, making the child to understand as late as possible his irremediable finitude and suffering as a human being. Herrán & Cortina (2007) explain it with the following metaphor:

In the topic of death, a kind of useless thread cocoon is created around it, from which nothing ever comes out, but which works very well to cover and plug it. Consequently, there is a paradox that the majority of those who investigate the education topic are still surprised when death is related to it. That is because in their minds the understanding of death is still locked up, glazed and camouflaged with flowers and scents of prejudice. (p. 2)

We understand that education should aim, not only to provide knowledge and pursue that the students acquire skills related to academic subjects, but also must prepare them to face any problem and difficulty that life puts them ahead. Obviously, reflection on death and human finitude is one of the moments to overcome, and not doing it properly can have negative consequences throughout a lifetime. Verdú (2002) states categorically that teaching without taking into account the topic of death means the absolute death of teaching since, for him, not treating what matters most, disqualifies any educational institution. Thus, school must pursue the inner and outer evolution of the students, in this order. To achieve this, it is an indispensable condition to incorporate what matters most into teaching and teacher's training, otherwise the task of educating will be impossible (Herrán & Cortina, 2009).

Therefore, education for death and tragedy consists in updating the reflection on human finitude, before and after a possible loss, in order to boost the integral development of the child, to educate him/her for life without forgetting its tragic components. As our ancestors once did by using the PCSs, we should also do it now with education. Assuming the taboo and trying to overcome it should be our objectives. There are already many educational proposals on this matter (Herrán & Cortina, 2007; 2008; 2009).

The PCSs are presented as an ideal resource to carry out the education for death and tragedy, in and out of the classroom, and its deep study is the first step for their pedagogical use in a future.

#### 1.4. Analysing song lyrics

The hypothesis of this study is stated as: PCSs lyrics show tragic textual elements in a significant degree.

By 'significant' is understood that it is not product of pure luck ( $\alpha= 0.05$ ), it has a criteria value judged by experts and compared to similar studies. We will try to verify this hypothesis by analysing the content of these songs, as well as the degree of presence and conceptual diversity of the inserted tragic elements; even if we assume that the presence of certain traits (tragic elements) in the PCSs implies familiarizing oneself with the question that the topic expresses.

If the presence degree of the tragic elements in the PCSs turns to be significant, we can deduce that the tragic aspect was treated more frequently and it was not shown as taboo, at least regarding the use of the PCSs as cultural transmitters and educational tools for children. It makes PCSs a perfect resource with a pedagogical power in teaching tragedy properly.

In a certain way, the main aim of this study will be getting to know the presence of tragic elements in PCSs lyrics. The tragic elements found will be localised and classified in order to value the importance of the presence degree obtained, as well as reflect on their adaptation as a teaching resource.

Some masters have not used the songbook in its entirety, maybe because of the variety and importance of the potential indicated that caused some kind of 'fear' to them. They have used the popular children's songbook in a too general way, little systematic and even vague, without taking fully advantage of its irrefutable excellences. (Cerrillo & Sánchez Ortiz, 2013, p. 312).

## 2. The method

It is presented here the typology of the design used, the sample, population and universe considered, the instruments for collecting information and the data analysis techniques that have been employed.

### 2.1. Study design

A content analysis method has been used for this study. It is a descriptive design through a mixed methodology, since quantitative techniques (such as accounting for the tragic songs and elements they show and obtaining percentages) and qualitative techniques (such as the categorization

of the tragic elements and a brief interpretative commentary of each of the elements found) have been used.

It is about a documentary analysis because we are working with Spanish popular children's songs, that can be considered as primary documents for the documentary revision, considering that they include original information.

The use of the content analysis as a mixed method, which combines an evident analysis (quantitative) with a latent analysis (qualitative), has been employed in various fields. Fernández-Cano & Rico (1992) used a mixed content analysis to analyse mathematical contents in written press materials. The mixed content analysis has been employed in the field of musical education in particular by Bernard, Weiss & Abeles (2018), Rohwer (2018) or Roberts & McFerran (2013).

## 2.2. Sample-Population-Universe

The sample of this study is constituted by a series of songs taken from the Cancionero Popular Infantil Español [Spanish popular children's songbook], this could be considered as the universe of the study. The accessible population consists of 4 songbooks, 676 songs in total. Given that we have not made any type of selection, population and sample matches. Therefore, it is about a census study. A sequence of this selection process is shown in Figure 1:

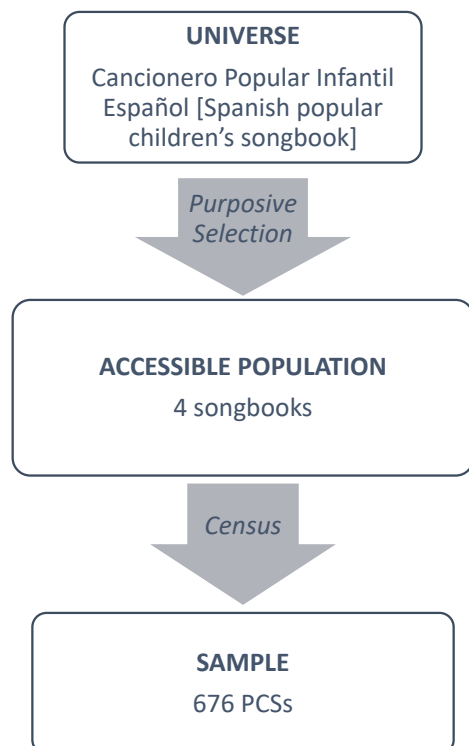


Figure 1. Procedure of sample selection.

The leap from the universe (all the Spanish PCSs) to the population (Spanish PCSs included in the four songbooks) could be questioned. We have chosen these four songbooks as representatives of the Spanish PCSs universe, regarding the knowledge of three experts in the field (two authors and an external expert). They consider these books as the most used and consequently the most representative between teachers in primary school.

The sample is made by 676 songs in total coming from 4 children's songbooks, described below. In the first one, "Cancionero Infantil" [Children's songbook] by Gil (1964), the 137 that form it have been analysed, without including the pieces considered as tongue-twisters, riddles and similes. In the second one, "Cancionero Popular Infantil Español" [Spanish popular children's songbook] by Hidalgo Montoya (1998), a total of 112 songs have been considered (the book contains 123 songs, but 11 songs have been already analysed in Gil's book named before). In the third one, "Cancionero Infantil Español" [Spanish children's songbook] by Córdova y Oña (1947), the 423 songs that it contains have been analysed, without taking into account other versions and variations of the same song that happen to be practically identical. Finally, we have analysed the four children's songs that contains the book named "Canciones Tradicionales Españolas" [Spanish traditional songs], by Martínez Blanco (2011).

Therefore, the sampling technique used is not a probabilistic one, but it is intentional. The PCS is considered as the basic unit of removable analysis on the four songbooks mentioned before.

## 2.3. Information gathering tools

From the tragic elements present in each song, a series of content categories are established to group and classify the tragic elements found.

By classify we mean: to group the PCSs according to the tragic elements found (words, sentences or complex clauses) regarding the conceptual similarity in the specific characteristics of such elements (structures referring to death, heartbreak, fear, violence, sadness and a miscellaneous category named others). Notice that in this analysis, the categories and groups are not previously given, but they can be deduced a posteriori from the chosen sentences. Besides, one song (the basic unit of analysis) may be assigned to more than one category.

Also, the already said categories are not always and necessary associated with death, but they are just tragic elements detected in the PCSs. Categories such as the heartbreak can transmit other

important lessons for life. It must be bear in mind that a content analysis does not intend nor can make unequivocal causal inferences, but it can deduce descriptive patterns or even explanatory patterns about an analysed reality, PCSs.

#### 2.4. Data analysis technique

The techniques for data analysis have been the ones related to the content analysis as a mixed method. For the use of frequencies and percentages (quantitative), in the first place, tragic elements have been located in the PCSs that define the sample. Next, these elements have been taken into account and classified in order to obtain a series of percentages that help us establishing inferences, deductions and conclusions. The content analysis in a latent level allows us to make lyrics interpretations as stories (qualitative).

#### 2.5. Example of content analysis

Here it is shown an example of content analysis with a mixed methodology. It is about the popular children's song "Dónde vas Alfonso XII" [Where do you go, Alfonso XII?], from the songbook "Canciones tradicionales españolas" [Spanish traditional songs] by Martínez Blanco (2011). Here we can see how the elements found are located and categorised.

Where do you go, Alfonso XII? / Where do you  
go so sad?  
I am in search of Mercedes, / I didn't see her  
yesterday.

But Mercedes is already dead, / she is dead, I  
saw her.  
She was carried by four dukes / down the streets  
of Madrid.

Her little face was made of wax, / her little hands  
of ivory,  
And the cape that covered her up / was made of  
a beautiful crimson.

The street lamps of the Palace / do not want to  
light anymore  
because Mercedes is dead / and they want to be  
in mourning.

The horses of the Palace / do not want to ride  
anymore  
because Mercedes is dead / and they want to be  
in mourning.

- First element "Where do you go, Alfonso XII? / Where do you go so sad?": it is referred to the monarch's mood; the sadness. → Sadness
- Second element "Mercedes is already dead, / she is dead, I saw her": the death of his lovely wife is notified to the monarch. → Death
- Third element "she was carried by four dukes / down the streets of Madrid": it describes the burial. → Death
- Fourth element "Her little face was made of wax, / her little hands, of ivory, and the cape that covered her up / was made of a beautiful crimson": it is an explicit description of Mercedes' corpse. → Death
- Fifth element "The street lamps of the Palace / do not want to light anymore, because Mercedes is dead / and they want to be in mourning. The horses of the Palace / do not want to ride anymore, because Mercedes is dead / and they want to be in mourning": it details the sadness after Mercedes' death, even the mourning of the horses and street lamps. → Death and sadness

### 3. Results

After conducting a mixed content analysis of the songs that are the object of this study and identifying the tragic elements they present, the categories of "Fear", "Death", "Violence", "Sadness" and "Heartbreak" are inferred as the main ones. Besides, a sixth miscellaneous category is added: "Others". This is a consistent discovery, which has been generated after conducting a content analysis, along with other interpretative studies, which look into textual passages; for example, Fernández-Cano (2010) illustrates inferred evaluation patterns of a biblical passage from Judge Gideon's book.

It is worth mentioning that the songs that show tragic elements and that are found in more than one songbook have been counted as a single piece. It is expected that in the total of analysed songs that do not present tragic elements, there are also some of them that can be found in more than one songbook of those analysed.

Thus, of all the songs analysed, a total of 155 songs have been found, in which appear at least one tragic element of any of the categories considered. The total of tragic elements detected on the 155 songs is 407 elements. These songs with tragic elements, in turn, are a 22.93% from the total of analysed songs.

Table 1 contains a summary of the results obtained after the content analysis. On the lines, the titles of some analysed songs with a higher number of tragic elements are shown; on the columns,

the 5 inferred categories. Next, the presence of collected elements is counted with an X. Therefore, each X means an element found in the song named on the line, which belongs to the category

that marks the column. This way, we can find more than 1 element in the same song and/or more than one element belonging to the same category.

**Table 1. Categorizing according to the tragic elements on Spanish popular children's songs**

	Fear	Death	Violence	Sadness	Heartbreak	Others
<i>Al milano</i> [To the white-tailed Kite]		XX	XX			
<i>Bordando casacas</i> [Embroidering Dress Coats]		XX	XX	X		
<i>Do, Re, Mi; Do, Re, Fa</i>		XXXX	X	XX		
<i>Don Gato</i> [Mr. Cat]		XXX	XX			
<i>Don Pedro o La muerte ocultada</i> [Don Pedro or The Hidden Death]	X	XXXXX XX		XXXX		X (disease)
<i>Dónde vas Alfonso XII</i> [Where do you go Alfonso XII?]		XXXX		XX		
<i>El marinerito</i> [The little Sailor]		XXX	X			
<i>El puñal de oro</i> [The golden Dagger]		X	XXX	X		
<i>El ramito de arrayán</i> [The smallbranch of Myrtle]				XXXXX X	X	
<i>El rey-conde</i> [The Count-King]		XXX		X	X	X (disease)
<i>Elisa de Mambrú</i> [Elisa of Mambrú]		XX				
<i>En Cádiz hay una niña</i> [There is a girl in Cádiz]		X	X	XXX		
<i>En el valle, valle</i> [In the Valley]			XXX	XXXX		
<i>En la calle Anchica</i> [On Anchica' Street]	X	XX	XX			
<i>La asturiana</i> [The little Asturian]	X	XXXX	XXXX	XX		
<i>La cautiva</i> [The Captive]			X	XXXX		
<i>La esposita</i> [The little Wife]			X	XXXXX	XX	
<i>La Sinda</i> [Sinda]			X	XXXXX		

	Fear	Death	Violence	Sadness	Heartbreak	Others
<i>Me casó mi madre</i> [My Mother gave my hand in marriage]	X		XXXX	XX	XX	
<i>Un padre tuvo tres hijas</i> [A Father had three Daughters]		XXXXX	XXX			
<i>Vicentito</i> [Little Vincent]		XXXX	X		X	
<i>Yo me quería casar</i> [I wanted to get married]			XXXX	XX		
<i>Yo tenía 10 perritos</i> [I had 10 Doggies]		XXXXX XXX	X	XX		X (enfermedad)

As we have said before, Table 1 shows some of the analysed songs in which a huge variety of tragic elements have been found. It is worth

mentioning that between the PCSs, the romances are especially tragic. Table 2 contains the results on total data classified by categories.

**Table 2. Total results by categories**

	Songs and elements found	% Regarding the total of songs with elements	% Regarding the total of analysed songs	% Regarding the total of detected elements
Violence	78 Songs 111 Elements	50.32	11.54	27.27
Death	73 Songs 127 Elements	47.1	10.8	31.20
Sadness	56 Songs 98 Elements	36.13	8.28	24.08
Heartbreak	21 Songs 26 Elements	13.55	3.11	6.39
Fear	16 Songs 20 Elements	10.32	2.37	4.91
Others	18 Songs 25 Elements	11.61	2.66	6.14

Once the numerical data regarding the presence of tragic elements in PCSs are obtained, it is also necessary to interpret (content analysis at a dormant or qualitative level) these elements to

delve even more into their tragic content. We offer as an example the romance called “The Hidden Death”. The tragic elements found are underlined, following by an interpretation of them.



### The Hidden Death

*Here comes Don Pedro from the war, wounded, and he comes running to see his son:*

*- How are you Teresa after giving birth?*

*- I am very well, Don Pedro, if you come healthy...*

*- You end with those reasons, Teresa, because the King is waiting for me in Court.*

*And when he left the room, Don Pedro passed away and his poor mother full of pain...*

*- Mother-in-law, my mother-in-law, my always friend: What is that noise coming from the kitchen?*

*- I tell you Teresa, my always friend, that is a card game of new birth.*

*Teresa had already completed forty days; she was getting ready to go to church:*

*- Mother-in-law, my mother-in-law, my always friend: What clothes should I wear to go to church?*

*Should I wear the white one? If not, the yellow one.*

*- You should dress up for mourning, it interests you.*

*- Mother-in-law, my mother-in-law, my always friend: I will wear the white one, I will look splendid.*

*She dresses in white and goes to church, and as she was entering the church, people were saying:*

*"The little honest widow, the cute little widow".*

*- And why were they saying that?*

*- For you, my Teresa, for you, my life; Don Pedro is dead, and you didn't know it.*

*She closed the windows and the curtains, and she fainted and died heartbroken.*

### An interpretation of the elements found

In this song, several features of the Spanish culture can be seen. It is about the death of a marriage. The man (Don Pedro) dies after returning home with war wounds, and his wife (Teresa) dies of sadness because of her husband's death.

The different roles assumed in marriage according to gender deserve to be analysed. The woman's live and state of mind depend entirely on the man's one. Teresa, who has just given birth, says she is fine if her husband is healthy. If Don Pedro feels good, so does Teresa, despite the pain and discomfort of a *postpartum* state.

It is the woman who remains continuously at home, at the mercy of the husband's actions. She will wait for his return faithfully. However, the husband has absolute freedom to decide his future. What is more, despite being father, he decides to attend the war leaving his pregnant wife alone. It is clear that women and men took responsibilities in different ways in order to take care of a child. It is much more a woman's "issue" than a man's one. Another detail would be that the man is called by the word "Don" (title of honour derived from the Latin "Dominus" which means "Sir") while the woman is called by her name, Teresa.

In the song, the innocence of the women is clearly emphasized by the lack of "lucidity", not being able to connect facts nor obtain conclusions by themselves in spite of the evident facts. When she entered dressed in white to the church (the colour white is a symbol of purity in Western culture), people refer to her as "the little widow". She is still not aware of her husband's death, despite hearing all these comments while she attends ignorant and submissive to church. It is her mother-in-law who informs her about Don Pedro's death about a month ago. To make clear once again that Teresa did not suspect anything, when she finally knows the announcement, it is such bad news that it provokes her own death.

Related to that, we can finally draw conclusions about the triangular relationship: son / husband-wife / wife-mother / mother-in-law. The hidden intention of the mother-in-law is to humiliate her daughter-in-law, who is dressed in white despite her husband's death (even though Teresa was not aware of it). The mother-in-law tries to hide his death to humiliate Teresa in the church with the purpose of keeping her grandson (the fact that the mother-in-law wanted to keep the child remains unclear, although she finally does because of his parents' death).

## 4. Conclusions

A series of conclusions are presented regarding the achievement of objectives and verification of the study hypothesis, as well as the plausible advances and openings of this study.

### 4.1. Achievement of objectives and verification of the study hypothesis

After analysing a considerable sample of popular children's songs from our popular Spanish children's songbook, we observe a significant percentage (22.93%) of songs in which at least one

tragic element can be identified, understanding this element as a passage that refers to the tragic nature of the human condition, such as violence, death, sadness, fear, heartbreak and others.

This percentage of 22.93% of Spanish popular children's songs with tragic contents is considered to be important for three reasons. First, that percentage exceeds the usual and universally accepted level of significance of the 5% ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) that could be expected by chance. Second, there is a criteria evaluation by experts' judgement (these two researchers) that consider such percentage as significant. Third, comparative studies like the one by Kirmizi, Saygi and Yurdakal (2014) do not infer tragic elements in Turkish children's popular songs but 19 content categories among which stand out the love of the land, the love for animals and the enjoyment of life. Therefore, we deduce certain degree of habituation when talking about the tragic element in this type of children's songs. It is something that clashes with the taboo that characterizes the topic in other areas and in our current time (Arriaga, Riano, Cabedo & Berbel, 2017).

The order of tragic content categories, regarding the total of PCSs with tragic elements, is the following: violence (50.32%), death (47.1%), sadness (36.13%), heartbreak (13.55%), fear (10.32%) and others, as a miscellaneous category (11.61%).

It could be said that the PCSs usually capture everyday aspects of life of that time. They were transmitted from generation to generation, almost always accompanying children's games. Accordingly, these songs are typical of childhood, they connected with children's interests, independently of whether they were created specifically for them or not.

We conjecture that the messages of the PCSs lyrics were repeated a huge number of times by the childhood and they ended up leaving a mark on them, like a way of persuasion and education at the same time; since with the help of the PCSs, a generation was educating their children and grandchildren for life (and for death). In this way, PCSs are a quality pedagogical tool used for centuries. In their messages, the tragic element was included (such as pain, death, heartbreak for the loss of the loved one), sometimes in a very intense way, and the generations continued to use them to educate their descendants; we can deduce a certain familiarity with the tragic element, that differs from the consideration as a taboo topic that we have nowadays.

There is a consensus regarding the idea about the tragic element being a taboo topic in our society, and more specifically in the education of new generations (for example, through children's

songs). For example, authors such as Sánchez-Sánchez, Serrano & Martínez Segura (2017) conclude that, being associated with pain, the topic of the tragic has been hidden from new generations and has become a social taboo. Colomo (2016) states that currently, death has become a taboo topic which we omit in order not to feel close to it. It is still an issue that causes great concerns in many people's lives and therefore solutions usually do not focus on addressing the issue in a straightforward way.

Consequently, the distinction between traditional and current PCSs is relevant, although it escapes from the scope of this study. There are opposed approaches. Thus, Díaz & Arriaga (2013) emphasise the value of delving into the responsibility of conserving the inherited heritage in the traditional children's songs field. Molinari (2010, p.122) is even more explicit when rejecting current children's songs when he says: "Some of the proposals of children's songs 'in fashion' [quotes in original] chosen by a pre-school education teacher, many of the children 'get tired' [quotes in original] of chant with voices, often distempered, what they listen in the media". However, this differentiation between the traditional and the current is controversial, because other studies point to the therapeutic power of current songs; for example, Giore (2016) and Roberts & McFerran (2013), especially in pre-adolescents.

As a final conclusion, the hypothesis of the study is then confirmed due to the significant percentage obtained from PCSs, that present at least one tragic element. Therefore, it is inferred a certain habituation to the tragic in these traditional songs.

However, we must not conclude a unique and tragic idea of the Spanish PCSs lyrics; in our study, about a quarter of them do contain tragic elements. The rest of the lyrics expose very diverse topics. There are songs that combine happy and loving topics with the tragic one at the same time. For example, the song "Estaba la pájara pinta" [There was the hen Goldfinch], typical in Hispanic culture and very popular in Mexico, gives us these happy verses of a girl who waits anxiously for her love.

*Oh, Lord!*

*When would I see my love?*

*Give me one hand, give me the other one,*

*Give me a little kiss from your mouth.*

Another song like "Tres pelos tiene mi barba" [My beard has three hairs] is an exposition of logical argumentation, combining implication and negation. It sounds like this: *Three hairs (A) has my*

beard (B); *my beard (B) has three hairs (A)*: If A implies B, B implies A [ $A \rightarrow B$ ;  $B \rightarrow A$ ].

*If it hadn't three hairs (denial of A), then it wouldn't be my beard (denial of B)* [ $\neg A \rightarrow \neg B$ ]

The fact that the tragic topic is not addressed completely normal in current education (both formal and non-formal), has a negative impact on the comprehensive development of a person, since the school and the family must educate children for life, in all its senses; and this cannot be developed if, when speaking about the tragic, we do it with reservation, nuancing it excessively, hiding it selfishly, not accepting it and, in short, with fear. A quality education for death and tragedy will prepare learners much more consistently for the challenges that life will provide them.

One of the first steps to take is the inclusion of education for the tragic, and the PCSs as a teaching resource in our curriculum. Death and tragedy must be considered as a cross curricular subject that can be treated from a vast number of subjects, and from any stage. In turn, the PCSs are presented as an ideal tool for education for the acceptance of tragedy through music, for the familiarization of the topic that characterizes their messages, and for the pedagogical potential that they have by nature.

In addition, another essential duty is the appropriate training of teachers, since to educate for tragedy, at first it is necessary a process of self-training and reflection by themselves. Teachers must be the ones who educate themselves in death and tragedy in the first place, since we all are imbued, in one way or another, with the taboo that characterizes them today.

More specifically, in terms of education for death, to treat properly and without taboos the mourning period of the student is as important after the loss as it is prior to the loss, preparing the student for their own and the losses of loved ones, that will inevitably have to experience. If a student

has been properly educated for the death, he/she will suffer and feel pain for future losses, but he/she will be aware of it. If this has not been the case, it will cause doubts, improvisations, irrational thoughts, lies and bad practices, with negative consequences of all kinds.

Education for death and tragedy can be considered as an awareness educational field. A child properly educated in death, without taboos or reservations, will have a fuller awareness of his/her condition as a human being and his/her finitude. The student will feel more part of humanity and, therefore, more responsible for its improvement.

#### 4.2. Advances and openings of the study

More PCSs from other songbooks can be analysed in order to increase the sample and with that, the strength of the results obtained. Besides, more complex methods can be used, for example the clusters analysis with information regarding the categories.

It would be very interesting the analysis of PCSs belonging to other countries, languages and cultures, focusing ourselves on the sense of the tragic of these songs. Therefore, we can compare this sense of the tragic with the one found in the Spanish popular children's songbook.

We have deduced that the PCSs are ideal for teaching for death and tragedy through music. Therefore, a huge number of possibilities are opened in order to design educational programs for all kind of ages or subjects.

Our Spanish popular children's songbook is very rich, and as we said before, its educational potential is excellent to teach people the tragic aspect or any other field. This type of studies, teaching proposals focused on the songbook, ...all these actions would help to preserve and value it, apart from offering us the chance to understand way better our nature and inner-history.

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