Reality TV in the Classroom: a Model of Analysis and an Inquiry into a Spanish Talent Show

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Abstract

Reality TV has a strong presence on many TV channels in many countries. The multitude of reality TV shows, alongside their vast variety of formats and content, their influential presence on prime time slots and the high audience share they can boast of, require educators to reflect on this television genre and to work with it in schools. In addition, students are consumers of these programmes, thereby reinforcing the idea of the importance of introducing such programmes in our classrooms as an object of study. In this article a model of analysis of reality television will be presented for use in the classroom. This model of analysis intends to include the dimensions that define media competence: language; technology; interaction processes; production and dissemination processes; ideology and values; and aesthetics. A brief analysis of a Spanish talent show based on these six dimensions will be also presented in this article, sampling the questions included in the model of analysis.

Keywords: reality TV, media education, media competence, model of analysis, talent show.

1. Introduction
A brief history of Reality TV
Although there is no consensus on the origins of Reality TV, many researchers consider that this phenomenon has a long history. B. León (León, 2009: 16) explains that precursors of this type of programme can be found as far back as the 40s and 50s on some US networks. As examples, León (León, 2009: 16) mentions the programme Candid Camera, where people's reactions to difficult situations were recorded in streets; Original Amateur Hour, where amateur artists competed for a prize and viewers voted for the winner; or a similar programme called Talent Scouts. In Europe precursors of these types of programmes can be found in the 1970s television with the documentary series Seven Up! (Granada Television). This programme was based on following the lives of fourteen British children every seven years (León, 2009: 16).

Two programmes that are regarded as the main precursors or in fact as the first real reality shows in television history are: An American family, a documentary series broadcasted in 1973 on a free-to-air US public network; and The Family, a very similar programme broadcasted by the BBC in the UK. In An American Family, the lives of a middle class family were recorded daily for nine months and during its broadcast viewers witnessed the parents' separation and the son's announcement of his homosexuality (Maestro, 2005). A year later the BBC broadcasted a similar programme called The Family, where cameras followed The Wilkins, a working class family of six members.

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Throughout the 80s several reality TV programmes emerged, thereby extending their general presence on screen and offering a variety of formats and contents related to this genre. Amongst all of this what could be found were television versions of the tabloid papers; home videos family entertainment programmes; talk shows (including the famous Jerry Springer Show); or programmes about real life accidents and crimes, such as Crimewatch (BBC), and Cops, (Fox) (León, 2009: 17). However, it is from the 1990 onwards when reality television is seen to make a real impact on television viewing and when its greatest success could be seen with some of the highest audience shares in many countries. During this time one of the first to conquer audience share was The Real World (MTV). In 1997 Strix produced Expedition Robinson which became a huge success. The story was based on the survival of a group of people stranded on a Pacific island in which participants had to compete with each other to be able to continue in the programme (Maestro, 2005). This was the beginning of the global expansion of reality shows. In 1999 Endelmol premiered Big Brother, which is undoubtedly one of the most watched TV programmes in the world and in television history. In 2000, Survivors was broadcasted by CBS in the USA with a similar platform to that of Expedition Robinson, and in 2001 Operación Triunfo, a Spanish produced talent show, achieved great success among viewers and was subsequently exported to many countries. Nowadays, Reality TV still fills the television programme schedules of many channels. With ever-changing formats and contents, along with "thematic" channels and other programme types being influenced by reality TV contents, it can be said that reality television continues to evolve and dominate the television world.

Reality TV programmes mix and match and new programmes tend to emerge from these combinations. Consequently, experts talk about the hybrid nature of reality television in addition to various other terms that are also used to refer to these types of programmes. Authors such as A. Baladrón and J.C. Losada (Baladrón, Losada, 2012: 53) state that, more than a genre, Reality TV is a container that includes a variety of genres and formats. Within this variety, the following can be mentioned: tabloid talk shows – programmes where ordinary people talk about their lives with a presenter and usually with a live audience in the studio. Docu-soap or docu-shows – programmes where the lives of ordinary or famous people based around particular situations, events, etc., are followed and recorded; within this category, the so called coaching shows or makeovers can be also included – these programmes entail the following and recording of people with a particular problem that requires the intervention of a specialist. Infotainment, programmes involving a mix of news and humour. Reality games a format that includes different types of programmes such as cohabitation reality shows, survival reality shows, talent shows, dating shows, celebrity shows, strategy or activity-orientated shows, etc.

Reality TV is constantly evolving and one of the consequences of this is the appearance of so-called "Structured Reality TV". Structured Reality TV is understood to be any TV show that incorporates both elements of drama and reality programing. Producers work with a cast of real people together with scripted stories. The series feature real people who talk naturally, but who are put into situations that are pre-arranged by the producers. J. Bignell (Bignell, 2014: 108) explains that recent reality television programmes, talent shows, dating shows, makeover and coaching shows, are highly structured.

2. Materials and methods
A proposal of a model of analysis

After this brief overview of the history of reality shows, this section will present a model of analysis that can be used in the classroom in order to promote reflection and discussion with students about the Reality TV phenomenon. As C. Marta (Marta, 2008: 109) stated, television messages can be negative or positive depending on the use and consumption made by receptors, hence the importance of developing an adequate media competence. A research project conducted by seventeen universities in Spain between 2005 and 2010 with the objective of assessing the level of media competence among the general public there, showed media education to be necessary since participants demonstrated a lack understanding of media culture. Before carrying out this research, 50 renowned Spanish and foreign experts in Media Literacy defined what should be understood by media competence presenting a proposal which focused on six major dimensions: language; technology; interaction processes; production and dissemination processes; ideology and values; and aesthetics. Each one of them was structured in two areas; analysis and creation (Ferrés, Piscitelli, 2012).

These dimensions and indicators should be considered when attempting to introduce any proposals for media literacy education in schools and classrooms and a holistic, flexible and ludic approach should be adopted when teaching about the media. It should be holistic because any media literacy project should consider all dimensions, applying two areas to each: analysis and creation. As Ferrés and Piscitelli (Ferrés, Piscitelli, 2012: 77) say, "a person must develop media literacy by interacting in a critical way with the messages produced by others, and must also be capable of producing and disseminating his or her own messages".

Flexibility is necessary as proposals must be tailored to the students and the educational context, and also due to the constantly evolving nature of the media. Lastly, media literacy proposals should follow a ludic approach; media must be studied in an active, participative and enjoyable manner in order to encourage meaningful learning within the context of a participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2009).

Taking into account these six dimensions and indicators, the following analysis model has been developed in order to study reality shows:

Languages

1. Analysis of the audiovisual language codes (colours, shots, camera angles, camera movements, shapes, music, lighting, etc.) and the narrative structure within the gender conventions of Reality TV, in order to understand the values and messages conveyed.

Technology

2. An insight into a number of technological developments in television as well as some technological aspects of Reality TV.
3. An analysis of the transmedia communication strategies of the reality show and its presence in social media, and the capacity to interact in these hypermedia, transmedia and multimodal environments.

Production and dissemination processes

4. Research into who is behind the reality show in question: media corporations, TV channels, etc.

5. Research into programing techniques and broadcasting mechanisms of the reality show (casting, profits, workers' conditions, participants' conditions, advertising, audience share, etc.).

Interaction processes

6. An analysis of our own interaction with reality: why we watch it, why we like it, what we feel and think when we watch it.

7. An analysis of the reality show's target audience; why it is popular and what it transmits to audiences (satisfaction of the senses and emotions, cognitive stimulation, aesthetic and cultural interest, etc.).

8. An understanding of the cognitive effects of emotions.

Ideology and values

9. Analysis of the representation of the world the reality show projects, the social groups represented, the values transmitted and the stereotypes that are reproduced or contradicted.

Aesthetics

10. An analysis of how audiovisual language codes are combined to give the reality a particular "shape", in order to understand the values and messages conveyed.

These ten questions could help us classroom-based research into reality shows. Students could choose the reality programme they wish to analyse. They could work in groups deciding on the questions they want to investigate and conduct their research process. Debates could be held in groups or among all members of the class. Experts and people involved in reality shows and media, including contestants, could be invited to the classroom and a visit to a reality television studio or to a location of a reality show could be also organized. On the other hand, creative processes should also form part of Reality TV research proposal. For example, students could role play the production of a reality show, adopting decisions for all aspects of the programme and its underlying processes. The only condition would be to cross stereotypes and maintain respect for democratic values and human rights. In the creation process, all the six dimensions should be approached, thereby providing a deeper understanding and knowledge based on analysis and enhanced media skills.

In this study a content analysis methodology will be used based on the proposed analysis model. The intention is to show a sample of the analysis of a Spanish talent show and the debates that could take place in any Primary or Secondary-level classroom.

4. Discussion

Characteristics and critical views of Reality TV

Despite the diversity of reality shows, they tend to share certain common characteristics.

Among them we can highlight the following: 1) The objective is audience entertainment; 2) Intention of showing a scenario of reality; 3) The role of "ordinary" and anonymous people; 4) There are no trained actors; 5) Exposure of privacy; 6) Seeking to get viewers' empathy with the participants; 7) High profit margins; 8) Possibility of spin-off TV programmes; 9) Mixture of genres; 10) Key role of the presenter; 11) Spectacularization of information; 12) Long duration; 13) Seeking to arouse emotions of viewers; 14) Possibility of viewer interaction.

A. Peris (Peris, 2009) explains that reality TV is based on three myths: the myth of transparency, the myth of proximity and the myth of participation. According to Peris (Peris, 2009: 50), the myth of transparency has to do with the search for hypervisibility, to see and show everything, assuming that those images you see are real. The myth of proximity refers to the exhibition of intimacy, audiences become not only voyeurs, but they also end up identifying themselves with the protagonists of these programmes. And finally, the myth of participation has to do with viewers' interaction and influence on what happens in the programme, even though this power of participation is, for Peris (Peris, 2009: 54), more symbolic than real and effective. The "tight interactivity", as A. Hill (Hill, 2014: 119) calls it, is created by public auditions, by voting and/or by participating in social media and is a marketing strategy aimed at maintaining audience engagement. A. Hill explains this is attained, particularly in the case of talent shows, by offering a wide range of sensory and performative experiences. Recalling other authors, A. Hill (Hill, 2014: 120) stresses the fantasy of empowerment generated by reality programmes through participation in these kind of experiences.

These myths relate to some of the criticism of these programmes. Since the first realities were broadcasted they have had detractors and they have been subjected to different types of accusations and criticism. The main aspect of these programmes to be questioned is the term reality TV itself because it is considered that what these programmes offer is a constructed, manipulated and distorted reality. There are several issues that support this assertion. The first aspect has to do with the selection of participants, since many consider that the "ordinary" people who try to become protagonists on these programmes are carefully chosen based on how well their personality traits can work for the programme and, in most cases they are not representative of most people in society (León, 2009: 20). Psychologists involved in this selection processes affirm that, through the interviews and tests participants have to go through, they can predict how a candidate will perform under certain circumstances, even though the producer of the programme has the final say in the selection process (Osorio, Hernandez, 2012). For many, the simple fact of wanting to participate in these programmes shows certain characteristics of personality. Ontiveros, director of Big Brother in Spain, stated in the documentary Estás nominado: cuando la realidad supera la ficción (You are nominated: when reality overcomes fiction) (Martín, Catalán, 2005) that people who go to these castings and want to participate in these programmes exposing their lives to the public are usually exhibitionists and vain.

Another aspect that points to this false appearance of reality is the existence of a script, previously agreed storylines that turn reality into fiction. Reality shows are created by scriptwriters and edited in order to match their objectives, making big profits being one of them. As Cubillo, scriptwriter of La casa de tu vida (Spanish cohabitation reality show from Endemol productions aired from 2004 to 2007), stated in the above-mentioned documentary, producers of reality TV look for emotions (love, humour and hatred) and, like in classical narrative, they want a villain, a princess and a clown. C. Squires states that, of course, in reality television, the "cast members" are "real" people and the producers and editors work their video magic to reconfigure scenes, change the timing of events, and leak comments to participants to spark controversy just as much as they choose participants in terms of the entertainment roles they will fill – the villain, the vamp, the jock, the nerd (Squires, 2014: 268).

Although those responsible for these formats argue that what is broadcasted in these programmes is what actually happens, without any direction and script, some critical voices challenge these statements (Osorio and Hernandez, 2012). Furthermore, and as mentioned previously, in recent Structured Reality TV programmes the existence of a script is not questioned, despite the fact that both the producers' intention and the audience's perception is that of a realistic story. N. Williams-Burnett, H. Skinner and J. Fallon (Williams-Burnett et al., 2016: 10-11)

explain that Reality TV programmes aim to offer a more realistic portrait of people and places than fictionalized drama or scripted documentaries and many audiences seek authenticity in Reality TV programmes. However, these objectives authenticity and realism can also claim to be present in Structured Reality TV shows.

In addition to casting processes and scripts, another issue that sustains the arguments of a false reality are the conditions, contexts and situations the participants face. For example, in many reality shows based on cohabitation participants are shut away from society having to share their lives with strangers 24 hours a day for months. This situation of isolation and confinement gives rise to behaviour that would not take place in a natural context. In most reality shows the element of competition also influences the participants' behaviour, as does the simple fact of knowing they are being recorded. As I. Ramonet (Ramonet, 2003: 93-94) states and exemplifies, drama is inherent in the fact of being in front of a camera, all behaviour is affected by its presence. In the above-mentioned documentary, a member of the recording team of the Docu-series, Caesers 24, aired on a US network, explained that participants in this programme ended up acting in a television way because they aware that something more `exciting´ than normal life was expected from them, so they never behaved naturally, they were always an exaggerated version of themselves.

The values that these programmes reflect also have been criticized. Detractors highlight the morbid aspects of these programmes and people's exhibition of private facets of their lives. Reality TV has been changing, mixing formats and contents to attract audiences and some reality shows have taken sensationalism and morbidity to the limit with, what could be considered, aggressive and distasteful contents (León, 2009: 18).

The culture of success and immediacy, quick fame and the fast changes have been also questioned. For many scholars these programmes clearly contribute to the reproduction of dominant neoliberal values, such as consumerism, individualism and meritocracy (Oliva, 2009: 46). Samples of these dominant values and discourses are: presenting television as an agent that helps to improve citizens' lives through acting as a replacement for institutions and public administrations; engaging with social issues in sensationalist, frivolous, simplistic and superficial ways; reducing people's problems, changes, failures and triumphs to their individual talent and effort ignoring social contexts and conditions; associating people's life changes and improvements with consumerism and the acquisition of consumer goods; etc. (Oliva, 2009: 45). G. Redden explains that "reality TV is neoliberal, not in the sense that every aspect or variant of it can be explained through recourse to the concept, but that neoliberal logic is evident in both the main recurring textual features of reality programing and in the material conditions of their production. (Redden, 2018: 2).

Specific examples of this critical analysis can be found in McMurria's research into the programme, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* (ABC). Here, a team of designers rebuild someone's home in seven days. He examines how serious social problems such as housing, health, education, income, etc. are presented in these types of programmes which he terms Good Samaritan shows. McMurria (2008) states that the programme *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* reinforces the neo-liberal principles of privatization and individual responsibility without highlighting social inequalities or racial problems that exist in the US. This programme presents families which meet the neoliberal ideal of citizen and that do not complain about long working hours, low wages or lack of access to healthcare. Neoliberal solutions to their problems are offered to them thanks to the help of corporations. Thus the programme gives publicity to corporations which present themselves to the audience/consumer as being concerned and involved in improving citizens' lives though their corporate social responsibility.

G. Redden also offers examples of his claims in relation to a number of reality programmes such as makeovers, reality games or talent shows. Concerning makeovers, Redden explains that these programmes project the idea of consumption as the solution to everyone's problems, changing people's lives from worthless to valuable. Reality games are also an example of the way neoliberal values related to competition and teamwork are projected and legitimized. As G. Redden (Redden, 2018: 9) explains, participants are forced to cooperate, yet at the same time have to compete against one another. Cooperation is understood as what "I" can obtain for my own benefit rather than what "we" can contribute to the collective aims. Finally, talent shows, such as the one analysed in the final section of this article, are a further example of neoliberal rationalities; indeed, the key message transmitted by these programmes is that 'everyone can make it', regardless of their

socioeconomic condition. G. Redden believes that "they only need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, finding agency in the form of personal qualities that are brought out through pure motivation" (Redden, 2018: 10).

Together with the analysis of neoliberal values reflected in Reality TV programmes, researchers have also examined gender, class and race biased messages. A number of studies agree that many of these programmes project a sexist image of women, implicit and explicit racism and discriminatory visions of the working classes. For example, in a discussion of makeover shows such as *The Swan,* A. Press (Press, 2014: 210) draws attention to the fact that this programme highlights the importance of appearance to women in general and particularly the working class, and how makeovers are a means to achieving their life goals. For A. Press, in other programmes, such as *Wife Swap*, middle-class standards concerning marital relationships or parenting are privileged over working class ones, which are often criticized. She also analyses the programme *Jersey Shore* as an example of how 'lower-class' and non-white 'ethnic' sexuality is often depicted in a more explicit manner than in the case of middle class people.

On the other hand, C. Squires (Squires, 2014: 264) gives an interesting insight into racial stereotypes in Reality TV, claiming that these programmes are an example of post-racial assumptions in the USA and, according to neoliberal postulations of market individualism, show an image of a multicultural nation where race and ethnicity are reduced to individual choices. In reference to the programme Top model, she states that "celebrated as authentic and "keeping it real" one moment and accused of squandering their chances to succeed at another, reality television participants who are not white and middle class have to navigate an ever-changing minefield, it would seem, to stay "authentic" in the eyes of the show" (Squires, 2014: 275).

For C. Squires (Squires, 2014: 278), racial conflict and biological assumptions about racial identities are dominant discourses in reality shows.

Finally, one of the most criticized aspects of reality TV has been the production processes and the aim to make high profits at any cost. This genre has been described as McTele for its production mechanisms. V. Sampedro (Sampedro, 2002: 29) considers that McTele responds to the demands of a commercialized audience and Cubells understands that reality TV is just part of low cost television (Cubells, 2013: 52, 53). In the dominant business model of television the objective is to be profitable. Even scripted reality programmes are less expensive than other formats such as soap operas (Patie, 2016: 444). Producers see reality shows as profitable due to their low production costs, involving limited studio equipment and the absence of professional actors, in addition to the possibility of feeding other programmes with the reality contents. V. Sampedro (Sampedro, 2002: 35-36) gives a clear description of the reasons why reality shows like *Big Brother* or *Fame Academy* are examples of McTele. He refers to the working conditions of employees in these programmes, abusive contracts for the participants or the way these programmes are legitimized based on quantitative criteria such as audience ratings, broadcasting hours, etc. As G. Redden says: "Although talent show and gamedoc participants often have to give up paid work for filming, normally classified as "contestants" and not labour, they are rarely paid more than a stipend or accorded employment protections... But these are also the conditions of reality TV production workers, most of whom are in precarious below-the-line employment in one the least unionized but most profitable of television sectors" (Redden, 2018: 13).

F. Tucho (Tucho, 2007) also refers to the exploitation of workers and the commodification of the participants in these programmes. These participants are not only humiliated in front of the cameras, but are also treated as objects, exploited and discarded when they are no longer profitable.

Reality TV is also profitable because of the broad and diverse audience it attracts, the vast amount of advertising it generates and the multiple lines of business these programmes open up (Peris, 2009: 54; Tucho, 2007: 92). M. Ganzabal (Ganzabal, 2009: 90) refers to the lines of business created by the reality *Fame Academy* such as galas, records, films/DVDs, tours/concerts, official magazine, Internet connections, calls and messages, downloading tunes, multiple merchandizing, etc. A. Hill (Hill, 2014: 118) posits that reality show production companies have grown into powerful international businesses that sell the format to networks, broadcasters, and cable channels, which in turn are able to reduce their financial risks by acquiring shows with a proven track record rather than creating new ideas.

After presenting all these critical views it is imperative that we mention Dehnart's perspective. Dehnart is an American TV critic who has spent years studying the phenomenon of

Reality TV. At a conference in March 2013, Dehnart defended that people's lives are interesting and we can learn a lot from them. For Dehnart, this notion can be found in every one of the reality shows. Such views, in addition to the critical views already presented, reinforce the idea of the importance of introducing an analysis of these programmes in the curriculum and in the classrooms. Any media product can be a source of learning when students unravel the meanings conveyed through its various forms of representation. In addition, reality TV is consumed by a young audience and therefore should be an object of study in schools. If we want to educate citizens to be capable of critically analysing the media culture that surrounds them, media products themselves must be studied in schools and the experience of creating their own media products should be offered to students.

5. Results

An analysis of a Spanish talent show

Following the Collins Dictionary of English "a talent show, talent competition, or talent contest is a show where ordinary people perform an act on stage, usually in order to try to win a prize for the best performance." These programmes combine different elements of several Reality TV formats. Close interpersonal coexistence within the context of a contest, as in many reality game shows; observation and judgment of people, as in the case of docu-soaps; and transformation experiences, as in makeovers (Redden, 2018). A. Hill points out that "as with so many physical or vocal performances in reality talent shows, it is not so much the performer's technical skill or level of professionalism that is at stake but their ability to express something that feels authentic, to move us in some way" (Hill, 2014: 124).

Since the 9th of September of 2014 to the 21st of December 2015 the Spanish channel Telecinco (a private Spanish channel), which belongs to Mediaset España, aired a talent show called *Pequeños Gigantes* (*Little Giants*) (Pequeños.., 2014-2015). In this show, young talented children (from 4 to 12 years old) competed in five teams, called "pandillas" (gangs), of four in front of a jury. They competed by singing, acting, dancing, but also gave individual performances and five celebrity coaches supported them.

This programme was produced by La Competencia Producciones and it was an adaptation of the homonymous Mexican format that started in 2011 in Canal de las Estrellas (Televisa). Many similar programmes have been shown and continue to be aired on various Spanish channels and in a number of countries. *Pequeños Gigantes* debuted with a 25.1 % audience share, topping audience ratings, and its first season ended with a 23.3 % audience share, over three million viewers, and a 22 % in commercial target. In its second season, the number of candidates participating in the casting processes doubled, but the audience share was lower than in the first season, even though it still reached 15.7 % with more than two million spectators. The programme also had a huge following on social media, reaching 80 % of the social share in Spain with more than 115,000 comments that made the hashtag # pequenosgigantes trending topic, with 90,000 followers on Facebook and 12,000 followers on Twitter. It was, undoubtedly, a popular programme watched by many families.

The programme we have analysed the last one of the first season, being the seventh gala showed on the 22nd of November 2014. This programme is available online so it can be watched on demand (Pequeños..., 2014). It should be noted that this particular end-of-season programme has some peculiarities in comparison with previous programmes from this talent show. For instance, there were no performances by `gangs´ but only individual performances and the performers were those same twenty one who had competed in the last seven programmes in the "gangs". They competed in three categories: singing, dancing and `talent´ (the youngest kids performing in different acts). The godfathers/godmothers were not present. The programme was structured in three stages: stage 1 – five participants from each category competed and the jury chose three of them to go through; stage 2 – three participants from each category competed and two went through; stage 3 – the best singer, dancer and best "talent" kid won the competition along with entry tickets to the attraction park Portaventura as the prize. The presenter, J. Vázquez, is a well-known Spanish TV presenter, actor, and singer; he has been the presenter on several reality shows on Telecinco in recent years. The jury was made up of the Spanish comedian, J. Cadaval; the Spanish singer, actress and reality show *X-Factor* finalist, A. Fernández; and the Spanish singer and composer, Melody, who started her music career when she was ten years of age and has participated in TV programmes from that age. The contesters in this programme were all ethnically

white Spanish kids, with ages ranging from four to twelve years of age. The programme had a live studio audience. Programme duration was two hours and seventeen minutes.

Language

1. Analysis of the audiovisual language codes (colours, shots, camera angles, camera movements, shapes, music, lighting, etc.) and the narrative structure within the gender conventions of Reality TV, in order to understand the values and messages conveyed.

The audio-visual codes, structure and narrative of this programme could be analysed in the classroom with the objective of discovering what meanings are communicated. As was explained at the beginning of this section, this programme had three stages which were announced at the beginning of the programme. The main sections of the programme were the presenter's introduction of what we are going to see; the jury and contesters in the studio; flashbacks of the contesters' training moments and testimonies in a different scenario; the contesters' exhibitions in the TV studio; the jury's comments, assessment and selection; words of consolation to the participants who lost; talk moments and interviews between invited artists and contesters; and the grand finale – the prize being presented to the competition winners. Together with this explicit structure, the programme has a particular narrative as many other talent shows do. This narrative helps us to identify this type of TV format and genre, give sense to the story and reinforces some of the characteristics of reality shows that we have mentioned before. The narrative of this talent show follows the gender conventions of entertainment programmes with identifiable characteristics of reality programmes, musical programmes and TV game shows. This shows the hybrid nature of this gender which borrows aspects from a number of fictional and factual TV formats, as well as drama series and documentaries. As G. Redden explains, "the talent show combines familiar reality elements: the immersive interpersonal contest of the gamedoc, the docu-soap concern with observing and judging people, and the before–after personal transformation narrative of the makeover. Everything that can be said to articulate neoliberal rationalities around work, welfare, and fate in those subgenres applies, but in a heightened form that emphasizes opportunity and overcoming" (Redden, 2018: 10).

What is of interest here would be to analyse fragments of these sections in the classroom examining how this narrative aims to arouse the spectators' emotions and empathy with the participants, creating a sense of improvisation and scenario of reality, and at the same time the illusion of interaction through audience participation in intensive sensorial experiences.

Audiovisual codes such as the chosen music for each section, the use of different shots, colours, etc. can be also analysed in terms of their meanings. For example, if colours were to be examined, blue, yellow and red would appear as the dominant ones, which may help to transmit sensations such as greatness, trust, action, passion, happiness or enjoyment. We can also pay attention to the lighting, observing the various spotlights on stage, the use of warm, bright or dim light at various phases of the show, etc. As with colours, lighting helps to generate different sensations such as intrigue, sadness, cosiness, thrills and excitement, as well as focusing our attention or specific elements of the set. If we observe the predominant shapes on the stage and various sets, we can see that they are mainly circular and square, which could transmit meanings of perfection and sturdiness. In turn, music can create different effects such as expectation and intrigue when announcing the winners, whilst more melodious or melancholy music can coincide with the words of consolation directed at the losers. If we focus on the different types of shots, it is interesting to observe the abrupt changes, from long and medium to close up shots and vice versa.

These quick changes create a sense of movement, heightening the sensation of drama and emotionally charged messages. Extreme close up shots with pan camera movements are used when the selection process is taking place, focusing on each of the contestants' faces to increase our empathy and emotional attachment to them. Long and high angle shots are used when contestants go on stage, creating a sensation of grandiosity and empowering the viewer. Medium and low angle shots are often used when the jury is selecting the winners or during the contestants' testimony scenes. These types of shots lend importance and weight to the members of the jury as well as to the contestants, and their presence on the screen creates a sense of dominance amongst viewers.

Technology

2. An insight into a number of technological developments in television as well as some technological aspects of Reality TV.

3. An analysis of the transmedia communication strategies of the reality show and its presence in social media, and the capacity to interact in these hypermedia, transmedia and multimodal environments.

Most of our students are 'digital natives' since they were born in the digital age and they have grown up using the Internet, computers and mobile devices. However, this is a controversial concept and has recently been dismissed as a myth. Researchers are demonstrating that these 'digital natives' may use many technological devices but they are not able to use them in an effective, efficient and especially in a critical manner. P. Kirschner and P. De Bruyckere (Kirschner, De Bruyckere 2017) mention a number of research studies that show that their knowledge of technology is not deep and is often limited to basic office skills, browsing the Internet and using popular social media. It could therefore be interesting for our students to consider some key technological developments in television (Digital TV, High Definition TV, LED TV, Smart TV, OLED TV, Video on demand, etc.) and the technological aspects involved in the production of a reality show (camcorders, robotic cameras, editing software, etc.). Inviting experts to the classroom or visiting a TV studio would be a good way of learning about these things. Understanding the role of technology in our society and our lives, together with its economic, political, cultural implications and effects, is fundamental to foment critical thinkers rather than a mere passive use of technology.

In this sense, it is also important to help our students to effectively interact in multimodal, transmedia and hypermedia environments, enabling them to create their own online content (for example, through podcasting or video-casting, managing technology for recording, editing and publishing their own content). It would be also interesting to analyse the programme's website as well as its presence in social media such as Facebook and Twitter in the classroom. These virtual communities could be examined, stimulating classroom debate regarding their members, their messages in the community and learning how to interact and communicate when they use social media. These aspects could easily be connected with the following two dimensions of media competence.

Production and dissemination processes

4. Research into who is behind the reality show in question: media corporations, TV channels, etc.

5. Research into programing techniques and broadcasting mechanisms of the reality show (casting, profits, workers' conditions, participants' conditions, advertising, audience share, etc.).

The first stage of this section could consist of an analysis of the talent show production company. As stated previously, it is produced by La Competencia Producciones. This is an independent Spanish audiovisual company created in 2011, which specializes in entertainment TV programmes and films. In its early days, La Competencia signed a contract with FremantleMedia. This is a British subsidiary of the international television content, production and distribution of the RTL Group of Bertelsmann, which is the largest television, radio and production company in Europe. In 2013 they signed with Televisa, a Mexican media corporation and they are currently looking for a European partner. Mediaset is one of La Competencia's main clients. Mediaset is an Italian media corporation founded by S. Berlusconi. Its subsidiary company in Spain is Mediaset España, which owns TV channels, such as Telecinco, that broadcasted this talent show, radio stations, advertising agencies and publishing companies, etc. Researching the corporations behind this programme and social media companies is important if we wish to understand the role of media corporations in the world and the financial and political aspects of media production; including the power they yield, the market concentration of the sector, and their connections with politicians, banks, financial companies and other large corporations, etc. As G. Redden says:

"A starting point for understanding the 'neo-liberalization' of genres is acknowledging widespread restructuring of media systems themselves through neoliberal principles of privatization, deregulation, liberalization, and globalization. These reforms have effected greater commercial logic,..., such that management imperatives for profit dominate over other values in media production, journalism, and programing ...that reality TV is part of a shift toward 'constructive' media industries—ones less concerned with representing social life as it exists beyond media than with constructing media content directly in their own commercial interests" (Redden, 2018: 12-13).

In relation to the production processes, we could try to determine the cost of this talent show. Searching through the Internet we can find different sites which give information about this

programme. For example, in one of these sites* we can discover that the cost of this talent show was around 300,000 euros per week. It is clear that despite the high costs involved, it was a profitable venture as a second season followed the first. It would be interesting to analyse in the classroom the revenue sources of the programme such as sponsors (the attraction park Portaventura), advertisements, programmes that feed off this talent show, merchandizing and products, website advertising, audience share and social share profits, etc. It would be also interesting to invite an expert to the classroom who could provide an insight into aspects of Reality TV production, such as filming and editing strategies including the shooting script, frankenbiting, etc. Inviting contestants would be also a revealing experience as they could shed light on the casting process, the filming and editing, the script, their participation conditions and contracts, etc. In relation to this, it would be also useful to learn about media regulation and about child protection legislation in Spain and other countries.

Interaction processes

6. An analysis of our own interaction with reality: why we watch it, why we like it, what we feel and think when we watch it.

7. An analysis of the reality show's target audience; why it is popular and what it transmits to audiences (satisfaction of the senses and emotions, cognitive stimulation, aesthetic and cultural interest, etc.).

8. An understanding of the cognitive effects of emotions.

The way audiences and we as spectators interact with this programme should be analysed in the classroom. This programme had a lot of viewers and a high percentage share of the audience figures, so we should try to understand the reasons behind its success and what viewers like about this programme. We could begin our analysis by searching for information on the Internet about the show's audience share and social media statistics. We could also analyse the ways the audience participate in the programme, including live crowds, social media users, home audiences watching the televised show, etc. (Hill, 2017: 2). These modes of participation will help us to understand the ways producers create experiences that increase audience engagement. Many of these experiences are not only related to these forms of participation, but also to intensifying the audience's emotional bond with the show, generating a range of sensations.

We must keep in mind that this talent show was a family programme which attracts great variety in the type of audience that tunes in. It could be insightful to interview family members, friends, schoolchildren, etc. and ask them if they watched the programme and why they liked it. These analyses could help us to understand the emotions this programme provokes in us. The way we identify with the participants, how we like sharing their intimate moments when they express their feelings, fears, desires, etc. Emotional attachment and social affiliation maintain audience interest and loyalty to the programme (Lundy et al., 2008). Audiovisual codes are combined to play with our emotions, for instance and as we have said before, extreme close up shots with pan camera movements are used in the selection processes and, at the same time, we can hear a member of the jury saying: '…I am losing my voice because of so much emotion… I am talking with my heart… I do not want to end up crying…'. Other examples are the presenter's phrases like: '…emotion, nerves, laugh, this is *Little Giants*… they (the contestants) may be far away from you (live crowd and TV audiences) but they are close…' In relation to these comments, it is interesting to consider A. Hill's analysis of the Got to dance talent show:

"…when he performed his dance routine everyone was moved to tears; the studio audience, the presenter and judges, and viewers were invited to extend their own range of emotional engagement through responding to his dance… As with so many physical or vocal performances in reality talent shows, it is not so much the performer's technical skill or level of professionalism that is at stake but their ability to express something that feels authentic, to move us in some way" (Hill, 2014: 124).

Narration strategies used to create plots and suspense are other ingredients that make the talent show attractive and entertaining. As A. Blanco Maldonado (Blanco Maldonado, 2016) explains, in any talent show there are narrative structures, characters, specific contents and moments of climax with intense intrigue and suspense. For instance and as previously mentioned, the abrupt changes of shots and fast pace of the action in this talent show keep audience attention.

We must remember that, as J. Ferrés and A. Pisticelli (Ferrés, Pisticelli 2012: 78) state, media literacy education cannot ignore the emotional dimension of people's interactions with media. Therefore, any proposal related to media education cannot be based exclusively on the conscious processes of our interaction with media. Neuroscience is demonstrating the influence of emotional and unconscious processes in the conscious mind. Understanding this emotional dimension and all those aspects that influence our interaction with media must be part of our project to explore this talent show.

Ideology and values

9. Analysis of the representation of the world the reality show projects, the social groups represented, the values transmitted and the stereotypes that are reproduced or contradicted.

An important aspect to analyse in the classroom is the ideological meanings this programme carries. Here, we are referring to the stereotypes, values and counter-values represented in this programme. Many things can be examined. We could start by analysing our perceptions regarding authenticity and realism in this Reality TV show. This includes the way this sense of realism is created, for example, with the role of the presenter and the way he generates credibility saying phrases like: 'The programme is going to be very fast, with on the spot decisions, choosing, choosing, choosing... I give my word of honour that nothing in this interview is prepared... People are going to think that this is scripted...'.

We could also analyse the values represented in the programme, for example, the notions of talent and effort, cooperation and competition, etc. We could read online interviews with the programme's producers or the comments made by the show's director regarding the values they wish to transmit to children (Formula..., 2019). Teamwork was one such value. This could be an issue for debate, considering whether these values of cooperation are perceivable or merely used to mask a competition based on the notions of winning and losing. We can examine some scenes throughout the programme, for example in the sessions when the coaches give their advice on how to improve their performance. It would be interesting to examine some of the dialogues between the instructor and one of the participants, in which the contestant stated that he did not mind not winning and the instructor was criticizing his attitude and telling him: '...that is not the right attitude.' The boy was not chosen in the first selection made by the jury and the presenter reminded him about what he had said during the coaching session.

We could also open debates on issues such as equal opportunities; the weight of our own skills, choices, efforts, the psychological self, and that of social forces in progress and success (Redden, 2018: 7); neoliberal discourses and the idea that anyone can be a success regardless of their socioeconomic situation and conditions (Redden, 2018).

Stereotypes should be also focus of our critical analysis debating, for example, about some of the gender-biased messages which are broadcasted. For example, debates could open up in the classroom if we were to examine some of the comments made in the programme regarding the female participants' physical aspects and their physical attractiveness. Such comments can help to reinforce sexism and define women as an object of desire. It is interesting to analyse how these girls take on the roles of adult women, the way they are dressed, their movements, gestures, etc. We could also focus on some specific scenes, for instance, when one of the contestants, a four-year-old boy, interviewed the famous Spanish singers, Los Chunguitos, and said things such as '...your sisters... why are they so beautiful and you are so ugly? You must introduce them to me one day... you talk as if you had chewing gum in your mouth ... Do you speak my language? It seems to me that you are speaking Chinese'. These comments made the live crowds laugh and were rewarded by the jury, but we could question them in the classroom. We should also examine the role each contestant played, analysing if it was gender-biased.

Aesthetics

10. An analysis of how audiovisual language codes are combined to give the reality a particular "shape", in order to understand the values and messages conveyed.

The way the audio-visual codes are combined to give an artistic and aesthetical unit to this audiovisual production should also be analysed in the classroom. We could consider whether the programme aesthetics are reminiscent of vaudeville, a music hall or a circus, as well as other considerations such as their ability to stimulate, originality and quality. We could examine the set, costumes, etc. and debate if they produce sensations of cheerfulness or positivism in us, etc. We could see that the aesthetics of the programme is very similar to other talent shows, it can boast of

a certain level of quality but not much in relation to originality. The idea of a great spectacle is the main aim of the aesthetics of the programme.

5. Conclusion

Reality TV is a media and social phenomenon characterized by the existence of a wide variety of programmes that respond to different formats and contents with different mixes and variations. These programmes are consumed by children and young audiences and therefore should be studied in the classroom. Through the proposed model of analysis teachers and students could have a list of questions to encourage discussion and critical analysis of such programmes, taking into account all aspects that help us acquire adequate skills in media competence. However, we cannot forget the creative aspects of media education. Therefore, this proposal of analysis should always be completed with proposals of creation. Our students could embark on creating their own reality show, bearing in mind the commitment to values hat defend human rights, democracy and social justice, and that do not reproduce stereotypes. In this case we could start by asking: If you were a producer, which reality show would you create?

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