



THE USE OF NARRATIVES IN SCIENCE COMMUNICATION: An example of the use of comic strips (narratives) in communicating scientific information about sustainable development.

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Abstract

It is quite reasonable to claim that narratives can include, explain and recreate science and that this means of science communication is generally popular. This idea seems to be supported by the fact that many contemporary authors who include science as a theme in their work receive a good reception among the public (at least in Britain). Novels like *Fermat's Last Theorem* by Simon Singh, *Longitude* by Dava Sobel and *Neuromancer* by William Gibson stayed on the best seller lists for weeks. Plays like *Copenhagen* by Michael Frayn, *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard, *Oxigen* by Carl Djerassi and Ronald Hoffmann, *Diary of a steak* by Deborah Levy as well as *Blue heart* by Caryl Churchill enjoyed complete sell-outs in London and other cities in Britain.

The explanation for this popularity seems to be that narratives are amusing, attractive, and interesting. Therefore, we can maintain that they are popular. But are they also a long-lasting way of transmitting knowledge? Do people remember scientific information conveyed by this means better than they remember the traditional formats like paradigmatic textbooks? These are questions that need to be addressed.

To understand how narratives organize, represent and convey information, it is an important task to evaluate the advantages that this media offers for the communication of science. Narratives include several characteristics that make them memorable, understandable, enjoyable and a good way to present and communicate knowledge. Some of these attributes are achieved through narrative structures, including literary devices.

In this research I discuss how the general public is familiar with the narrative structure of a story, how schemas for these narrative structures allow identification, induce emotions and promote understanding - important elements for the learning and memory process. I also look at how individually the narrative resources (or literary devices), in addition to their aesthetic value, can also work as mnemonic structures and as conceptual models that enable us to perceive, apprehend, construct and communicate meaning out of reality. Finally I present an example of the use of comics (narratives) in communicating scientific information about the sustainable use of the Mayan Nut in rural areas in Mexico.