
Breaking down the barriers between literature and language in the EFL classroom

M. LOURDES VÁZQUEZ GARCÍA

MÀSTER FORMACIÓ DEL PROFESSORAT UPF – UOC. ESPECIALITAT ANGLÈS.

MENTOR - ROSA ALMANSA

ADVISOR - NEUS FIGUERAS

1ST JUNE 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My commitment to the writing of this final paper for the teaching masters has been as enriching and interesting as hard and stressful. During my time of writing, as well as throughout the masters, I received the unconditional support and help, both direct and indirect, of many people.

I am grateful to my mentor, who encouraged and inspired me to believe in myself as a teacher; to my advisor, for her efficient guidance during the writing process and for providing so valuable resources for this paper; to the teachers of my practicum centre, *Alexandre Satorras*, as well as to the APAC community, for their selfless collaboration in my paper. I would also like to thank the colleagues in the masters, with whom we have shared worries, doubts and mutual support.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my beloved best friends, for their humour, encouragement and understanding throughout the course year; to my family, for their endless support and love no matter the circumstances; and above all, to my partner-in-life, for her love, care, patience and unconditional trust in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
ABSTRACT AND JUSTIFICATION	4
INTRODUCTION – IDENTIFYING THE BARRIERS AND THE MOTIVATIONS TO BREAK THEM DOWN	5
▪ THE BARRIERS.....	5
▪ THE MOTIVATIONS FOR THE BREAKING DOWN.....	5
THEORETICAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK – WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “LITERATURE” IN THE EFL CLASSROOM?	7
▪ REFERENTIAL VS. REPRESENTATIONAL.....	7
▪ TEXT SELECTION.	7
▪ APPROACHES IN HISTORY TO USING LITERATURE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM.....	9
▪ LITERATURE BLENDING IN THE CURRICULUM: DEVELOPING COMPETENCES.....	10
METHODOLOGY – PRACTICALITIES AND RESOURCES	11
▪ HOW CAN WE APPROACH LITERATURE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM? – THE “LITERATURE” IN LITERATURE. .	11
▪ STUDENT’S PERCEPTIONS AND TEACHER’S BELIEFS – BLOG AND QUESTIONNAIRE	12
DEVELOPMENT – WHY AND HOW TO USE LITERATURE?	14
▪ THE UNIT AND THE BLOG	14
▪ VALUABLE AUTHENTIC MATERIAL – PROVIDING A CONTEXT	15
▪ CULTURAL ENRICHMENT – PROMOTING MULTICULTURALISM	16
▪ LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT – DEVELOPING PROCEDURAL ABILITIES	17
▪ PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT – MOTIVATING STUDENTS	18
▪ TEACHERS’ OBSERVATIONS AND REACTIONS.....	19
CONCLUSIONS.....	21
▪ HOW IS LITERATURE IN OUR SECONDARY EFL CLASSROOMS?	21
▪ WHY SHOULD WE BRIDGE THE LANGUAGE LITERATURE GAP?	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	24
ANNEXES	25
▪ QUESTIONNAIRE.....	25
▪ RESULTS	27
▪ BLOG ADDRESS.....	33
▪ SAMPLE ACTIVITIES	34

ABSTRACT AND JUSTIFICATION

The relationship between literature and language could not be more intimate: literature could not exist without language, and language richness exploits to its full potential through literary discourse. However, there is a tendency to look at language and literature as two independent subjects that need to be taught separately. The language-literature divide in modern foreign language departments, especially in universities, is widely known and has existed for long time. But research on the value of literature as a conducive element for language acquisition (Tseng, 2010), aims at bringing both subjects closer together.

During my practicum experience I developed and put into practice a unit focused on literature, with Dickens' 200th anniversary as a starting point. The students I taught were much more interested in literature and had a much larger literary background than sometimes teenagers are given credit for. I talked extensively with the language teachers in the practicum centre about the positive reaction of students to the approach of my unit and the viability of introducing more literature in the English syllabuses. Ultimately, I decided to choose the controversial issue as the topic of my project: the suitability and appropriateness of using literature in the EFL classroom.

But, what do we mean by *literature*, when thinking in terms of the EFL classroom context? This is a key question to the issue and to which McRae proposes an answer in his book *Literature with a small "l"* (1991): "any text whose imaginative content will stimulate reaction and response in the receiver" (McRae, 1991, preface). This answer suits the purposes of this paper: on the one hand, to show that literature helps developing crucial skills for successful communication, referring to the curriculum and the different approaches to literature in the EFL classroom; on the other hand, to show that literature is not only viable but also highly motivating for students, examining teachers' opinions, explaining the development of the unit, the student's reaction to it and their interaction with the topic by means of a blog.

INTRODUCTION – IDENTIFYING THE BARRIERS AND THE MOTIVATIONS TO BREAK THEM DOWN

▪ *THE BARRIERS.*

Although the many positive contributions that literature can make to the language learning process are openly acknowledged, they are usually perceived as secondary. That is the first barrier we encounter to introduce literature in the EFL classroom. Literature is not perceived as a tool, but as a subject per se, which furthermore “will contribute nothing to helping our students meet their academic and/or occupational goals” (McKay, 1982, p. 529). Literature is often claimed, as I could myself acknowledge during my practicum, to be necessarily taught as an independent subject, only accessible for highly competent speakers of English or high level students with more interest in literature than in linguistics.

The present era of mass communication is urging learners to aim a certain level of communicative competence in the target language to communicate in international contexts and in a culturally neutral language (Ferradas, 2011). Such concrete communicative purposes lay the basis for raising another barrier between literature and language. Literature is perceived as a rather specialised area of the language far beyond the learners’ real aims and with little practical application in the actual teaching of the language. Moreover, literature connection to specific cultural contexts is not seen as a positive contribution to the learning process, but rather as an obstacle to the learning of a “neutral” language.

The idea of literature being a field of expertise blocks the motivation to introduce it in the EFL classroom. This idea makes many teachers of English build up their own internal barriers and fears to use literature in their classrooms. Some think they are not experts and consequent they consider themselves not qualified to cope with the use of literature in the classroom. Some others think it is students that do not have enough literary background as to be able to “read” and use authentic literature in a foreign language (McRae, 1991).

In brief, we have mentioned the most usual barriers avoiding literature to enter the EFL classroom: considering literature to be a subject per se and therefore time wasting in the language classroom; thinking that literary discourse is far beyond learners’ aims; believing that contextualisation of literature blocks neutrality of language; teachers’ fear of not being literary qualified and lack of trust on student’s literary background.

▪ *THE MOTIVATIONS FOR THE BREAKING DOWN.*

There are many motivations that should encourage teachers to bridge the gap between language and literature. Literature affords meaningful and memorable contexts for language acquisition processes (Ferradas, 2009). The use of literary texts in the classroom provides opportunities for interpreting new language and thus helps developing procedural abilities to interpret discourse (Ferradas, 2009). Besides, the connection of literary discourse with specific social contexts nourishes cultural enrichment and fosters cultural tolerance and sensitivity (Fernández, 2011).

Nowadays, teenagers grow up over stimulated by technology and it is necessary to use thought-provoking materials which incentive imagination. Literature is a valuable tool to introduce imaginative content in the EFL classroom. It furnishes a context that comes from and seeks for imagination. The presence of imaginative content stimulates critical response and therefore helps an ultimate primary aim: education rather than teaching (Ferradas, 2009). Research shows that literature's worth as a "basic component and source of authentic texts of the language curriculum rather than an ultimate aim of English instruction has been gaining momentum" (Hismanoglu, 2005, p. 1). However, the traditional vision of literature is against the complete integration of it in the EFL classroom.

Teachers' internal barriers about their literary qualification should be broken down by presenting literature as something enjoyable, which aims at promoting students' interest in reading and understanding the world. Teachers should let the text speak for itself, moving away from academic interpretations and allowing students enjoy the delight of reading, analyzing and trusting their own interpretations (Del Castillo, 2007). Using literature allows students and teachers to benefit from their diverse appreciations of texts, enhancing respect not only for teachers' but also for student's cultural and literary background (McKay, 1982). Ultimately, helping students trust their own interpretations will make their motivation increase. The lack of motivation of students, especially in the secondary stage of their education, worries the teaching community. Researchers agree that there are some goals that education has to fulfil in order to motivate students in their learning processes, and helping students feel they are acting autonomously according to their own decisions will eventually motivate them (Tapia, 2000).

THEORETICAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK – WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “LITERATURE” IN THE EFL CLASSROOM?

▪ REFERENTIAL VS. REPRESENTATIONAL.

Reading is considered a competence itself in the language learning context and the positive impact it has on language learning process is out of the question. However, there is no agreement about what texts are to be read in the ELT and whether literary works are appropriate and relevant or not. This reflection leads us inevitably to discuss about the different types of language within different types of texts, and which ones maximize the benefits of reading in the language classroom.

Taking Jakobson's work (1960) on the functions of language as a starting point, McRae (1991) establishes a dichotomy between referential language and representational language. This distinction provides McRae the opportunity to define some of the natural characteristics of literary language, which back up its adequacy to be used in the language classroom.

On the one hand, referential language aims for literal meaning and “is language which communicates on only one level, usually in terms of information being sought or given, or of a social situation being handled” (McRae, 1991, p. 3). Thus, referential texts basically inform and do not seek for the reader's imaginative engagement. On the other hand, representational language and representational texts engage the reader's imagination to decode the full potential meaning encoded in the text (McRae, 1991). “Where referential language informs, representational language involves.” (McRae, 1991, p. 3)

McRae's definition of representational language demystifies the idea of Literature, moving away from the academic concept of it. In fact, the idea of literature being representational texts makes literature accessible for EFL learners of all levels. Representational language helps developing crucial abilities which are equally necessary for all learners, no matter the degree of competence they aim at. Using McRae's words, that is “*what we might call the fifth skill, thinking in English*” (McRae, 1991, p. 5). The lack of imaginative engagement of referential language and its focus on the *how* rather than on the *what* (McRae, 1991), makes the use of it a mechanical procedure that might even block real communication. In contrast, representational language engages imagination and involves the whole complexity of communication.

The challenging nature of representational texts makes them much more motivating than referential ones, and yet referential texts are still being used at a much greater degree in the EFL classrooms. It is in this context that literature, bearing in mind McRae's approach, can become not only a viable but an optimal tool, since it is an inexhaustible source of representational materials.

▪ TEXT SELECTION.

McKay (1982) states the importance of undergoing a careful text selection process if literature is to be successfully used in the EFL classroom as a means of language learning and not as an object of study. Difficulty and accessibility are two key aspects that need to be examined in order to select an appropriate

text, bearing in mind that interaction with an imaginative text takes place on two levels: language decoding and conceptual comprehension (McKay, 1982).

The selection of a literary text has been traditionally determined by its linguistic complexity, the difficulty of its vocabulary, its syntactic arduousness and measures such as sentence length among others. This has led to the common tendency of selecting simplified texts, which solve the problem of readability but have disadvantages such as information being diluted (McKay, 1982). Moreover, the simplification of a text might imply the loss of valuable representational language, which in the end gives value to the usage of literary works in the EFL classroom.

Determining difficulty according only to linguistic terms does not indicate complexity in terms of conceptual comprehension (McKay, 1982), and it is the imaginative content of a text that gives more value to use a literary work in the EFL classroom. It is there that style and theme of a text plays a key role for many researchers, because "it is important to select themes with which the students can identify" (McKay, 1982, p. 532). Such themes are usually found in literature written for young adults, which often deals with the struggles teenagers go through their growing up (McKay, 1982). Still, the fact that reading is an interaction and affective process between text and reader makes the theme appropriateness a rather personal choice.

Determining the level of accessibility and appropriateness of an imaginative text is difficult and pretty subjective, but "accessibility depends more on how the reading text is presented than on any of the multiplicity of linguistic and cultural factors which may render it inaccessible" (McRae, 1991, p. 45). Teachers have to foster the usage of students' creativity and own cultural framework to be able to get through the text, and as long as the text is coherently embedded in the course, presenting it as a relevant part of the subject (McRae, 1991), the problem of text selection will be lightened up.

The role of publishing houses in text selection is also important to be mentioned. The open debate of what literature is and how it can be approached in the EFL classroom has favoured the prevalence of "canon" as one of the determining factors to decide what literature should be used in the classrooms (Carter, 2006). "Certain texts are 'set' for study by examination boards, syllabus designers and teachers of particular courses." (Carter, 2006, p. 5) Publishing houses confer the category of canonical to certain texts (Carter, 2006) and consequently it is publishing houses that have the ultimate responsibility in deciding what is then worth being taught. Little by little, a greater variety of texts are being introduced in course books. However, not many of them being authentic literary works, but texts from the media flood such as advertisements, magazines, song lyrics and all types of internet discourse texts (Carter, 2006).

Allowing the publishing houses to have so much power in deciding what literary works should be taught impoverishes the pedagogical potential of literature richness and variety. As it has been already argued, the imaginative engagement that literature involves is determined by representational language, which builds literary discourse and which is common to a large variety of literary works and not only the ones regarded as canonical.

Besides, there is an urgent need for teachers to take advantage of the golden opportunities given by students themselves in the classroom. Going back to the idea of trusting students' cultural framework, the teaching community should pay more attention to the particular literary tastes of each particular group of

learners, when selecting the texts to use in the EFL classroom. In fact, many theories, such as Thornbury's (2000) Dogme, argue that if the material that learners use isn't relevant to them they'll unlikely retain any information.

According to my experience, some secondary students have a rather large literary background and have a great interest in using literary texts as long as their own appreciations of the text are taken into account. This takes us back to McRae's (1991) idea of the importance of teaching not only *how* to communicate but how to communicate *what* the learner wants to. Students enjoy reading literature and the creativity it entails, but it is important for them to feel that all their different tastes and concepts of literature are relevant. Within the spectrum of literary tastes of teenagers there is a huge variety, from classic novels to comics and from poetry to biographical works, all of them being imaginative texts from which the EFL classroom can benefit from.

▪ *APPROACHES IN HISTORY TO USING LITERATURE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM.*

Research in literary and cultural theory over the last 30 years has lead to the consideration of the importance for education of the relationship between literature and language (Carter, 2006). But the controversy of using literature in the EFL classroom is not new and has been dealt with in many different ways through different periods in history.

Early century theories focused foreign language learning on the deep accurate study of the canonical literary works (Carter, 2006), but during the 1940s – 1960s, with the appearance of structuralism, literature stopped being taken into consideration as a tool for language learning. During that period, the transactional vision of language learning left no room for literature in language classrooms (Carter, 2006). It was not until the arising of the Communicative approach in the 1970s – 1980s, that literature regained consideration as a valuable tool for language learning, due to its imaginative content and representational uses (Carter, 2006).

Already in the late eighties and nineties, some practitioners such as Widdowson, Brumfit, Long and Carter among others, started proposing the use of literary texts as a valuable tool in the EFL classroom (Del Castillo, 2007). These proposals appeared in the framework of new approaches to language teaching such as task-based approaches or CLIL, which are more concerned with cognitive development, multicultural studies, meta-linguistic consciousness and learner autonomy.

There is still a big gap to bridge between literature and language in the EFL classroom. The debate about why and how literature should be a part of language teaching is an ongoing one. The pedagogic power of literature in the EFL classroom needs being fostered and many of the questions already posed are still unanswered (Carter, 2006). Constant questioning, reflection and reconsidering are a necessity for the evolution of education, and even more in the present age where technology accelerates changes in society in general. Prensky's statement "today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach" (Prensky, 2001) reflects the urgent need for the educational system in general, and language teaching in particular, to reconsider the ways in which involves and motivates its students. That is where literature's power to stimulate imagination and creativity has a role to play.

▪ *LITERATURE BLENDING IN THE CURRICULUM: DEVELOPING COMPETENCES.*

The curriculum frames its vision of language learning within the Common European Framework of Reference, which fosters the multilingual and intercultural competence. The CEFR promotes an attitude of openness and respect towards languages and cultures and enhances the importance of reflective usage of language, especially when it comes to foreign language learning, for the language becomes both means and object of study.

The curriculum for secondary education considers the linguistic area to have a key role in the learning processes of all competences, because it is the means by which teaching and learning take place. Oral discourse is given special relevance, especially for foreign language learning, but literary competence is considered basic since it helps students comprehend the world and stimulates creativity and student's critical awareness. The curriculum argues the importance of making students appreciate different literary genres and using all platforms available, especially internet, to boost reading and writing.

Taking the curriculum as compulsory reference, it is clear that literature has a place in the EFL classroom, for it helps students develop competences. It develops the artistic and cultural competence, by helping students comprehend the world; the learning to learn competence, by promoting interaction with language; the autonomy, initiative and decision taking competence, by promoting critical awareness; and even the information handling and digital competence, by helping students learn to decode the different styles by which written language presents information, especially in the internet platform. The curriculum reflects the importance of literature within the linguistic area by the way it structures the contents of linguistic subjects in three big dimensions: communicative, multilingual and intercultural and literary.

Literature is therefore clearly considered a valuable tool which suits the secondary education curriculum. Assuming that literature are texts with representational language that stimulates students imagination, and that "where referential language informs, representational language involves" (McRae, 1991, p. 3), the validity of literature as a tool for language learning can't be denied. Personal involvement of students in their own learning processes proves to be substantially beneficial, and representational language helps involvement hence development of linguistic competence.

The curriculum gives literature a key role in language learning, but reality in the EFL classrooms shows that teachers are still reluctant to include in their course plans literary works as language materials to work with. They still use literature for strictly separated reading activities. The focus on literature as a valuable tool for developing competences and active language learning has to be fostered in order to definitely break down the ill-founded barriers between literature and language.

METHODOLOGY – PRACTICALITIES AND RESOURCES

- *HOW CAN WE APPROACH LITERATURE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM? – THE “LITERATURE” IN LITERATURE.*

To maximize the benefits of authentic literary works as a tool to improve language learning in our EFL classroom, it is important to select an appropriate approach to the text. There are different approaches to the integration of literature in the EFL classroom depending on what we focus on and what is more relevant for us and our students. The three main approaches to literature teaching described by Carter and Long (1991) (Savvidou, 2004) serve different purposes, some of them more useful for EFL students.

The cultural model refers to the traditional way of approaching literature. This model looks at the text as a cultural object and explores it from a social, political, historical and literary point of view (Savvidou, 2004). This approach does not promote communicative language teaching, because it is rather teacher centered and it does not provide many opportunities for language work, so it has been usually rejected by EFL teachers (Savvidou, 2004).

The language model is the approach that has been most widely used by EFL teachers. This model approaches the text by examining its linguistic features. The text is used to serve purely linguistic goals and there is no personal engagement of students with the literary goals of the text. It is considered a rather mechanistic and reductive approach to literature (Savvidou, 2004).

The personal growth model approaches the literary text by looking at both the use of language and the cultural context, schemata and content. This approach promotes personal involvement of students with the text by encouraging them to express their own opinions based on their own cultural framework. Students interact with the text and they construct their own interpretation of it (Savvidou, 2004).

These three models place the focus on different aspects of the text, but what is needed is an integration of all these models in order to make literature accessible, enjoyable, valuable and stimulating for our EFL students (Savvidou, 2004). An integrated approach promotes “student’s personal development and it enhances their cultural awareness and develops their language skills.” (Fernández, 2011, p. 3)

When approaching literature in the EFL classroom it is also important to pay attention to the methodology used and the stages we are going to follow in the actual class. Teachers have to make the text fit coherently in their lesson plans as to present it in an accessible way for students. Of course, the literary genre we choose will also determine the way we approach the text in class. For example, reading a novel over a long period of time requires a different methodology than using a poem or a short story. Teachers will need to adapt the stages of their lesson plan (pre-reading activities, text understanding, language comprehension, follow-up activities) to the selected genre.

Nowadays, there are many resources that help teachers approach different types of literature in their classrooms efficiently. Global resources like the Britlit project, started by the British Council in Portugal, specific books on the topic, such as Collins and Slater work (1990) as well as endless online resources, outline activities that want “to put fresh momentum into the teaching of

literature, to stimulate students' desire to read, and to encourage their response" (Collins and Slater, 1990, p. 9).

▪ *STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS AND TEACHER'S BELIEFS – BLOG AND QUESTIONNAIRE*

Teachers and students are the nexus of the teaching-learning process and yet they have different perceptions of literature and its use in the EFL classroom. The different ideas on literature that students and teachers have are of interest to the purpose of this paper. They were examined during my practicum experience and collected using a blog and a questionnaire. Yet, I must state that since the exact content of this paper was established after the development of the unit, I was not able to elaborate a more appropriate sequence of activities focused on the topic of the paper. Therefore, the analysis carried out in this paper is based on the activities and materials¹ I used during my practicum, which aimed at motivating students through literature and not at backing up the ideas I support in this paper. In other words, the success of the unit motivated the election of the topic of the paper and not the other way round.

The unit based on literature I developed helped me to collect the students' perceptions on what literature is, how it can be used in the EFL classroom and what it is helpful for. I experienced their reactions in class and their degree of involvement. I also created a blog² to motivate them to participate actively in the construction of the final contents of the unit and examine their creative engagement with the topic. The results were highly satisfactory and accomplished the expectations. Students reacted enthusiastically and they interacted with each other sharing their experiences and opinions about learning English and literature.

The blog was originally created for students to talk about literature and more specifically about Dickens, but as students participated more and more in the blog I decided to give them freedom to use it as a means to express their opinions on several topics, literature being included among them. The blog was also used to collect their compulsory writings on a piece of literary work they liked. Students' were so engaged with the task that they spontaneously commented each other's literary election and gave their opinion about it. Ultimately, the blog was built up by students' and it helped me prove the viability of the development of my unit and the ideas supported in this paper.

As regards teacher's beliefs on the topic, it is important to bear in mind that EFL teachers build up their opinions about using literature in the EFL classroom according to their own experience, so their perceptions on the topic might vary a lot. Generally speaking, all teachers see the benefits that literature can bring to the EFL classroom, but they find its usage not always viable because of lack of time for proper preparation and lack of interest on the side of the students. This shows that teachers still perceive literature as a separate object study, an idea that corresponds to the traditional approach of the cultural model. I decided to develop a short questionnaire³ to examine if this traditional vision of literature was shared by the majority of the teaching community or not, and to have more accurate information on my concrete questions.

¹ Some sample activities are included in the annexes

² <http://englishsatorras6b.blogspot.com.es/>

³ Included in the annexes

The questionnaire consisted on eight simple questions. It was deliberately short in order to encourage teacher's participation and narrow down the focus of attention. The questions ask about what literature is included in their classrooms, who selects it, what selection criteria they follow and how they value literature in the EFL classroom. It was originally designed to be answered by the English teachers of my practicum centre, since the development of my paper is based on my experience during the practicum. I had the information from my students' reactions to the way we used literature in class, and I was interested in the opinion of the teachers that have been teaching them through their secondary education. However, the questionnaire was finally sent to APAC and launched to a broader audience of teachers in order to have further feedback from the perceptions of the teaching community in Catalonia.

DEVELOPMENT – WHY AND HOW TO USE LITERATURE?

▪ THE UNIT AND THE BLOG

During the last phase of our practicum we had to create two didactic units and put one of them into practice. As a literature lover I decided to develop a unit on literature that integrated literary texts as material, which later allowed me to explore the students' reaction to the use of literature in the EFL classroom and compare them to the pre-existing ideas on the topic.

The group was a second of *batxillerat* with 29 students of different specializations (14 of arts, 11 of science and 4 of technology). The starting point of the unit development was Dickens' 200th anniversary. Dickens' was the main topic of the didactic unit and his literary works were going to be looked at from two different perspectives: linguistically; as context to the grammar point of the unit, relative clauses; and thematically, debating on the social reality that Dickens describes on his novel.

Taking Dickens as starting point made it easy to approach literature using of visual materials together with written texts, because of the many film adaptations made of his novels. This combination of visual and written materials aimed at presenting literature in an accessible way for students and helping them enjoy their experience with such classic works.

In order to foster students' involvement in the unit I also created a blog for students to work with during the unit, especially outside the classroom. As it has already been argued in this paper, it is crucial to take advantage of new technologies to engage students with their own learning processes and continue their learning experience after class. This is especially important in foreign language learning, since students do not have many opportunities to receive input or produce output, also using the blog would maximize students' opportunities in that sense.

Students had to use the blog on a regular basis and they were asked to accomplish different compulsory tasks: they had to write posts about resources they found in the web to learn English; they had to keep a group record of new vocabulary they learnt through the unit in a section we named *vocabulary wall*; they had to do some activities that involved different skills and reading different styles of texts; they had to interact with other students giving their own opinions about other students contributions.

Despite the planned scheme for the unit, supported by the blog, the particular interest in literature in a broader sense of students changed the original objective of it. Students reacted enthusiastically to the activities related to literature and to the use of the blog, so the topic of the unit was changed from Dickens to how literature helps us learn. It is important to pay attention to the golden opportunities that students provide in the EFL classroom, and this particular group of students showed a large literary background that had to be taken advantage of.

Throughout the unit, I examined the attitudes of students towards literary issues. These are further analyzed in the following lines as proof of the validity of the different reasons that, according to Collins and Slater (1990), support the use of literature in the EFL classroom: valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and motivation. The opinions of the teachers

that observed the development of the unit will be also examined, as well as the results⁴ of the questionnaire, which was ultimately answered anonymously by 66 EFL teachers in Catalonia, thanks to the collaboration of APAC.

▪ *VALUABLE AUTHENTIC MATERIAL – PROVIDING A CONTEXT*

“Literature is ‘authentic’ material. By that we simply mean that most works of literature are not fashioned for the specific purpose of teaching a language.” (Collie and Slater, 1990, p. 6) Literature nourishes the EFL classroom with an authentic use of English that sometimes the materials used for teaching purposes lack. Using literary works allows integration of real English in the classroom context.

In the language teaching context it is important to use materials that are perceived as relevant by students. Teachers and sometimes publishing houses, as argued earlier in this paper, are usually the ones deciding what is worth being taught, but the important issue is what students think relevant to be learnt. If students do not find what they are being taught relevant, hence meaningful, they won’t learn. This apparently obvious statement leads us to the assumption that meaning is then important. As McRae (1991) claimed, it is not only *how* we communicate, the mechanical use of language, but also *what* we communicate, the meaningful usage of language. Literature brings relevance to the EFL classroom in the sense that “it says something about fundamental human issues, and which is enduring rather than ephemeral” (Collie and Slater, 1991, p. 6).

The value of authenticity in literature was the point of departure of the unit I put into practice. The first activity of the unit was done during a half group lesson, something that helped the activity election. It consisted on a debate out of a questionnaire⁵ on literature that students had to previously fill in. The questionnaire, which was downloaded from one of the many online sources of materials, consisted on answering questions on general knowledge on literature both in English and in their mother tongue. They also had to provide a list of their favourite books and write a short justification for their answers.

Most students answered correctly the majority of questions regarding general knowledge on literature and they all wrote at least two books they considered to be their favourites. Their answers on their literary preferences varied a lot and their favourite readings as a group included poetry, classic novels, biographies, theatre and comics amongst others. However, they all selected their books according to the same criteria: they found the topic relevant for them and their personal growth. Of course, if they were to be used as materials in an EFL classroom, the pedagogical appropriateness of some of the books students regarded as their favourites should undergo the selection process we have already talked about in this paper.

As Collins and Slater (1990) claim, the relevance of the issues dealt with in literature allow literary works to transcend time and culture and interact personally with every different reader. The perceptions of the value of literature that students in the group showed the first day helped me introduce Dickens literary works naturally, as something relevant for them. Having respectfully

⁴ Included in the annexes

⁵ Included in the annexes as a sample activity

Source www.onestopenglish.com, webpage with downloadable materials

listened to their own literary tastes, students accepted the introduction of authentic literature in English as something that might well be relevant for their interests as well.

Great Expectations was the first of Dickens works referred to in the unit and it was the inspiration for the name of the blog: *Let's have Great Expectations!* The name provided a coherent link between blog and unit and gave relevance to the title of the blog in terms of language, theme and meaning. This novel by Dickens was approached in the classroom using the last of the film adaptations based on it and students reacted with a surprising enthusiasm. The contemporary nature of the topic of the novel, despite the 19th century contextualisation, and the differences in speech they could notice when reading some parts of the transcript we worked with, raised their interest not only on the historical reality but also on some linguistic matters. Moreover, the perception of being able to cope with language that is originally intended for native speakers engaged them even more with the task.

Literature can also provide valuable authentic contexts for the more theoretical grammatical aspects explained in the classroom. Placing the theoretical points of the unit in authentic contexts relevant for students, helps their understanding of both syntactic structure and meaning of texts. The election of Dickens novels as material to work with in the class was also motivated by Dickens' writing style which allowed for the contextualisation of the grammatical point of the unit, relative clauses. They were presented to the class as a tool to make their discourse and writings in English more fluent, and fluency is definitely a skill that needs being developed in order to achieve a level of competence where real communication can take place. It is important to present relative clauses in a context where fluency is a key element and Dickens novels are a good example of the importance of fluency. Unfortunately, the circumstances did not allow for more extended linguistic analysis on Dickens novels, in fact, exploring the benefits of long term readings could well imply having to develop a whole paper on the issue.

■ CULTURAL ENRICHMENT – PROMOTING MULTICULTURALISM

This paper has already explored how the curriculum argues the importance it has that education promotes respect for other cultures, especially when it comes to teaching a language spoken by communities culturally different from one's own. Although many teachers still think that the link of literature to a specific cultural context makes it of little practical use to language teaching, authentic literature nourishes the EFL classroom with a deeper understanding of the context where it is used.

Visiting or staying in the country where the foreign language is spoken is clearly the best option to understand the cultural context of a language, but that is not possible for many of our students. Literature affords then an alternate way to acquire such understanding and give students "a feel for the codes and preoccupations that structure a real society" (Collins and Slater, 1990, p. 6).

Dickens depicted 19th century London in all of his novels, which in the end are valuable material for us to imagine how life was at that period in history. As regards the unit developed during my practicum, *Oliver Twist* was the novel selected to talk about the English society described by Dickens. *Oliver Twist* was easily introduced to students using the cinematographic resources of two of

the film adaptations⁶ of the novel, the most recent one by Roman Polanski (2005) and the musical filmed in 1960. Students were very easily engaged with the task of analyzing Dickens' depiction of English society. They made immediate connections between the 19th century reality described and the present age. They could establish similarities and differences between both historical periods and both cultural contexts. Besides, there were different cultural backgrounds within the class group and students immediately engaged themselves on a debate about differences on child labour, for example, in their own countries of origin.

Literature was not used as cultural enrichment directly through the literary texts. Literature was used as the starting point, as the tool which enabled the classroom to deal with cultural topics in a way that engaged students' imagination. Students were fascinated by how Dickens described and reported the reality of children, they praised his attitude of protest and they claimed it to be very up to date. Despite the general prejudices about students' taste for 19th century novel topics, students were very much interested on what Dickens talked about and they were so motivated that they could have gone into the actual reading of some texts by Dickens. However, the limitation of time of the practicum, which had to fit in a fixed course plan, made it not possible to include all the activities desired.

All in all, students' attitude towards the cultural context afforded by Dickens proved the validity of the selected materials. Besides, it fostered students' interest to look at literature as a tool, not only to learn but also to report and explain one's opinion about a social reality.

▪ *LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT – DEVELOPING PROCEDURAL ABILITIES*

Literature provides students a great variety of vocabulary and syntactic structures within a memorable context. It is out of the question that literary works furnish the EFL classroom with a language richness that otherwise is not easily managed with. However, it is important to refer back to McRae's (1991) ideas at this point, because not only the variety of language that literature provides is important, but also the representational nature of it.

Literature is often claimed to give students vocabulary they do not actually need in their everyday communication, but again the perception of what is needed in everyday communication is rather subjective. Furthermore, the figurative language used in literature opens up new dimensions to students, who are very receptive to the challenges presented by representational language.

During the practicum experience, students claimed to feel frustrated by not being able to produce a logical and fluent discourse that helped them express what they wanted to, when they wanted to. In other words, they knew what they wanted to say but not how to say it. Most of the students knew the grammatical structures and had an acceptable level of vocabulary knowledge, but they lacked fluency and logical discourse. Using literary texts helps students produce more fluent language sequences when writing, because they receive input from a real context. That context provides them with structures, samples of different sentence formations and ways of connecting ideas that they can then use as basis for their own writings.

⁶ The videos used are available in the blog

Not only as using literature as a model, but also as a prompt for their written works fosters students' willingness to develop fluent discourse, using the features of the written language and ideas they read through as a reference.

However, once again the limitation of time of the practicum made it necessary to compress all the activities and it was not possible to invest the required time for more extensive readings. As Collins and Slater (1991) point out, it requires a lot of effort from students to appreciate within literary discourse features that help them develop their competence in the foreign language. Yet, again taking advantage of the adaptations of Dickens films, I transcribed the dialogues in the trailer of *Oliver Twist* by Roman Polanski and we worked with that transcription⁷. This activity served as an introduction to some linguistic aspects of Dickens novels, such as vocabulary and accents. First, students viewed the trailer and tried to understand what it was about and then they were given the transcript to read what the characters actually said. Students made very coherent inferences on the meaning from their first listening and they were eager to read what was actually said in the trailer. They were very engaged with the activity and they examined the transcription with detail. The activity and students' engagement to it proved that students can clearly benefit from the language richness of vocabulary in literature. Of course, the activity did not allow for a deep analysis of an actual text, but it showed students' capability and willingness to learn from and with literature.

Being able to cope with the richness of the language requires a careful text selection, a proper preparation and planning of activities and an appropriate presentation of the literary work. Ultimately, students will be rewarded with the satisfaction of being able to express what they want the way they really want to.

▪ *PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT – MOTIVATING STUDENTS*

Motivation is one of the key elements for the success of the language learning process and motivation entails personal involvement of the students with their learning. Therefore, it can be argued that literature motivates students because of the interaction and personal involvement it demands on the readers. Literature promotes readers' own interpretations and as long as those are considered to be relevant for the language classroom students will feel encouraged to participate actively.

Collins and Slater (1990) assert that "above all, literature can be helpful in the language learning process because of the personal involvement it fosters in readers" (Collins and Slater, 1990, p. 7). Literature requires interaction and consequently an emotional response on the reader. A literary work establishes a sort of relationship with the reader by engaging imagination and students are clearly more motivated when imagination and creativity are part of their learning process. Materials in the EFL classroom tend to focus on the mechanical aspects of the language, but it is necessary to include materials that nourish the classroom with the benefits of creative involvement.

It has already been pointed out in this paper that students in this particular group had a very enthusiastic and positive reaction to the topic of the unit from the very beginning. The starting point of the unit was the already mentioned questionnaire and it proved to be an excellent prompt for an oral activity, a debate about their literary preferences, which was an unexpected success. That

⁷ Included in the annexes as a sample activity

particular introduction of literature in the class already established a motivating learning environment, where their personal opinions were taken into consideration. Motivation was the main objective of that first activity, where the literature that was being discussed was not even written in English.

Literature was not used during the development of the unit only as a source of textual materials, but also as a major tool of motivation and a prompt of activities. Students of the group produced a piece of creative writing⁸ explaining their experience with their favorite literary work and they posted it in the blog. Although none of the works selected by students was originally written in English, the objective of the activity was to motivate their writing by allowing them to talk about their personal experiences with literature. Students produced pieces of writings longer than usual and according to the conventions and features of the written language, paying attention to aspects such as the structure of the text and logical connections of ideas. Student's personal involvement to the task was fostered by their emotional response to the text they were referring to.

In the same way, students reacted enthusiastically to the literary works referred to throughout the unit. Literature was the basis and main topic of the unit and the literary references used in class and in the blog proved to motivate students and their willing to participate actively. The blog helped me to collect students' reactions to the election of Dickens and his works as the starting point of the unit. Their engagement with the themes of Dickens' novels, as it has already been argued, proved to me the validity of literary works as a tool to motivate students. Of course, teachers have the responsibility to present literature in an accessible way to students and maintain the literary experience "sufficiently interesting, varied and non-directive to let the reader feel that he or she is taken possession of a previously unknown territory" (Collins and Slater, 1990, p. 8), because students appreciate both guidance in reading and freedom of interpretation.

▪ *TEACHERS' OBSERVATIONS AND REACTIONS.*

Teachers' beliefs on the validity of using authentic literary texts in the EFL classroom are very much influenced by their own experiences in the teaching world, but also by many aspects that are not directly related with the teaching practice, such as the loads of paperwork or the scarce amount of English teaching hours.

As regards the teachers of my practicum centre, there were three main reactions to the way I approached authentic literary works in my unit: First, they believed I could cope with the preparation it entailed because I could focus exclusively on one unit for one group; second, they believed that momentary novelty for students helped their positive reaction to the amount of work they were confronted with; third, they claimed that my topic was very interesting but it would not easily suit the actual course plans. To take a deeper insight into teacher's opinions we can analyze the results⁹ of the questionnaire answered by 66 teachers, members of the APAC community. These results back up the ideas held by the teachers in my practicum centre and show that there barriers between literature and language in the EFL classroom are still a reality. The

⁸ Students writings are available in the blog

⁹ The results of the questionnaire are included in the annexes

overall results of the questionnaire show that including or not authentic literary works in the EFL classroom is still very much of a personal choice.

According to the answers given to question 1 (see Graphic 1), 54% of the polled teachers do sometimes use literature in their classrooms, but a majority answered to question 2 (see Graphic 2) that literary works are not included in their course plans. We could infer then that literature is still not included in the majority of English course plans in Catalonia, yet teachers use literary works in their classes whenever they consider it viable.

When asked about who selects the texts, both teachers and department are given the same responsibility (see Graphic 3). It is also interesting to notice on the comments made by some teachers, how they share the idea claimed by Carter (2006) of publishing houses having a determining weight on the selection of texts. From these answers and comments we can argue that literature is still looked at from a traditional perspective: the literature used in the classrooms is determined by the established canon and it is mainly conceived as an independent reading activity rather than an integrated tool for language teaching. However, when selecting the texts themselves, the polled APAC members seem to be changing the text selection criteria from the traditional grammar focus to a more student centred one (see Table 1). Although vocabulary difficulty and syntax complexity are still given a high degree of importance, it is well-balanced with the importance given to the theme of the text and the addressee characteristics.

According to the answers in question 6 (Table 2), teachers perceive literature as pretty motivating but not that much helpful. Where there seems to be no agreement is on the viability of using literature in the EFL classroom. We can find the reasons why if we take a closer look to the personal comments made on question 9: on the one hand, teachers seem to agree on the advantages of using literature and they are aware of the fact that it has been left out of the syllabuses; on the other hand, they point out that the pressure of time and the high number of students per class make it difficult for them to include literature in their classrooms. Also, they still find the syntactic difficulty of literary texts and the lack of relevance for everyday communication of literary vocabulary an obstacle for the use of authentic literature in the EFL classrooms.

Nevertheless, 81.25% of the polled teachers say they would like to have more authentic literary works included in their syllabuses (see Graphic 6), and although they have the perception that not many students really like reading (see Graphic 5), most teachers agree that there is a need to foster not only literature in the EFL classroom but reading in general.

On the whole, most teachers find authentic literature valuable for the teaching of English and they would appreciate having more literary texts included in their syllabuses. However, despite these being a majority, a number of the polled teachers still find it difficult to introduce literature in their classrooms for different reasons, such as time pressure, the focus of the class contents (in Batxillerat the class contents are almost completely focused on the selectivity exams), the lack of interest of students in reading, or texts being out-dated. Yet, the questionnaire shows that the issue still brings about some deal of controversy and that it needs further discussion.

CONCLUSIONS

▪ *HOW IS LITERATURE IN OUR SECONDARY EFL CLASSROOMS?*

During my practicum experience, I could check for myself how the barriers between literature and language in the EFL classroom are still a reality. McKay (1982) claimed that with the focus of language teaching “on meeting the particular academic and occupational needs of the students, it is easy to view any attention to literature as unnecessary” (McKay, 1982, p. 529). In my experience in the practicum centre, 30 years after McKay’s statement is still perfectly valid.

As asserted in this paper, using literature in the EFL classroom requires a considerable effort of students and preparation on the side of the teachers. The shortage of English teaching hours and the overload of paperwork that teachers are faced with are two of the main reasons that discourage teachers to undergo the selection and preparation of authentic literary works to use in their classrooms. Teachers also believe that students are not interested in literature because they have not built up a reading habit in their own mother tongue. However, the teaching community clearly acknowledges the richness and advantages that literature can bring to the EFL classroom and in fact, according to the questionnaire results, many teachers do include literary texts in their classrooms whenever they have the chance to. Yet, they tend to use adapted texts rather than authentic literary texts, again due to practical reasons since they find adapted texts easier to be included in their lessons. All in all, teachers seem to agree there is a need for promoting literature in the EFL classroom, but that it would require time for selecting the texts and designing the appropriate approaches. Although literature is still being very much left out of the English syllabuses, my experience showed that it can be successfully introduced in the classrooms as a tool for language teaching. Teachers acknowledge the benefits that literature can bring to their classrooms, but they claim to need more time and accessible resources to use literary works in an appropriate and interesting manner.

I developed a unit which aimed at fostering the reading of authentic literature. I approached literature using different formats, such as film adaptations and working with transcribed dialogues, in order to make the literary work accessible and attractive for students. Despite the pre-existing ideas of students showing little interest in literature, the experience proved to be an absolute success for motivating students. Students in the group showed a particular interest in literature and they proved to have a literary background of their own, which was even used as the basis of some of the activities carried out in class. Students were motivated by using literature in a way that was relevant for them and took into account their own opinion and perceptions.

Furthermore, literature was the means by which I and the students I taught established a personal relationship of respect and esteem. Using literature and sharing personal appreciations helped me to know better my students and them to know me, keeping always a safe distance that allowed for a professional relationship teacher-student. The emotional response that literature entails helps personal involvement without getting intimate, something that in my opinion has to be clearly distinguished and separated in a class.

▪ *WHY SHOULD WE BRIDGE THE LANGUAGE LITERATURE GAP?*

We have already pointed out in previous sections of this paper which are the different reasons and motivations to bridge the gap between literature and language. Literature is valuable authentic material for language teaching, since it provides meaningful and memorable context, nourishes the classroom with imaginative content and motivates students by engaging their creativity and personal involvement. However, it can be argued that an EFL classroom still works without including any literature in it and that in fact, students can first learn the mechanics of language and benefit from the richness of literature afterwards, once they master the language. Then, why should we bridge the language-literature gap in the EFL classroom?

The educational system provides our students with the necessary tools to learn a foreign language. Without including much authentic literature in the EFL classrooms, the system has managed to teach the mechanics of English as a foreign language. But on the other hand, there is the feeling that unless they have attended extra-curricular classes or they have a particular ability at learning languages, by the end of secondary education students lack successful communication skills. It can't be denied that something has to be done on that respect. Public education should ensure equal opportunities for successful learning. Hence all students should have the possibility to acquire successful communicative competence within the public education, without needing to attend extra-curricular classes. Of course literature is not the solution to all problems, but it could definitely help to improve success of our students in the EFL classrooms.

During the development of my didactic unit, literature became an effective tool to motivate students and that motivation was the key for the success of their learning. The pressure of time of the practicum experience made it not always possible to approach literature directly through written texts, but rather through other formats like films. Ultimately, the circumstance made me approach literature from a broader perspective and literary works became the main source of motivation of the classroom rather than the object of study per se.

The unit presented literature as something accessible and relevant for students and they reacted enthusiastically to all the activities which implied their personal involvement, such as debates on topics of literature, writings on literary tastes or posting on the blog about literary recommendations. The timing of the unit did not allow for a deeper analysis on literature or more extensive readings of authentic literary works, but the increasing motivation that students showed proved to me that using authentic literature would have been entirely possible in following lessons. The unit was taught during the last trimester of the course, but it would have also fit perfectly at the beginning of the course, as an introduction to the use of literature throughout the course.

Still, as some of the teachers in my practicum centre claimed, the fact that the practicum experience focused on a single unit to be taught to a single group enabled me to cope with all the effort and preparation that the unit entailed. I could manage all the ongoing changes on the topic and activities according to the reactions I observed in students. Of course, teachers have to follow a predetermined course plan and all those changes are not always possible, also because of the previously mentioned time pressure and overload of paperwork. Moreover, during my practicum I had plenty of time to look for resources and I

attended classes at university that helped us designing activities and lessons that were attractive for students. Teachers are not always presented resources so accessibly and they have to look for extra time to find those resources. Likewise, different learning styles and cultural backgrounds of students might hinder approaching literature in the class and might again require considerable effort to select suitable literary texts and design appropriate approaches.

However, the benefits that literature can bring to the EFL classroom can't be overlooked and ignored. In my experience, students are eager for being really competent at English as well as teachers are to improve their teaching strategies to help students learning. So if literature helps providing both students and teachers opportunities of improvement, the true question is then not why *should* we, but why *shouldn't* we bridge the language literature gap?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alonso Tapia, J. (2000). Motivación y aprendizaje en la Enseñanza Secundaria. In A. C. (coord), *Psicología de la instrucción: la enseñanza y el aprendizaje en la educación secundaria*. (pp. 105 - 136). Barcelona: Horsori: ICE UB.

Carter, R. (2007). Literature and language teaching 1986 - 2006: a review. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* , 17 (1).

Collins, J., & Slater, S. (1990). *Literature in the language classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities*. Cambridge: CUP.

Council of Europe. (n.d.). *Common European Framework of Reference*. Retrieved 2012, from [www.coe.it: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf)

Del Castillo Negrete, Y. (2007). Why and how to use literature in the EFL Classroom. *Congreso estatal de idiomas*, (pp. 145-149). México.

Fernández, A. (2011). Light up your classes with a bit of lit. *APAC magazine* (73).

Ferradas, C. (2009). Enjoying literature with teens and young adults in the English language class. In *Britlit: Using Literature in EFL classroom Special Monographs*. APAC - British Council.

Generalitat de Catalunya. (2007). *Curriculum Educació Secundària Obligatoria*. Retrieved 2012, from [www.xtec.cat: http://phobos.xtec.cat/edubib/intranet/file.php?file=docs/ESO/curriculum_eso.pdf](http://phobos.xtec.cat/edubib/intranet/file.php?file=docs/ESO/curriculum_eso.pdf)

Hismanoglu, M. (2005). Teaching English through literature. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* , 1 (1).

Jackobson, R. (1960). Linguistics and poetics. In D. L. (ed), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (1988). London: Longman.

McKay, S. (1982). Literature in the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly* , 16 (4).

McRae, J. (1991). *Literature with a small "l"*. London and Basingstroke: MACMILLAN PUBLISHERS LIMITED.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon* , 9 (5) . MCB University Press.

Savvidou, C. (2004). An integrated approach to teaching literature in the EFL classroom. *The Internet TESL Journal* .

Thornbury, S. (2001). Teaching Unplugged. *It's for teachers* .

Tseng, F.-p. (2010). Introducing Literature to an EFL Classroom: Teacher's presentations and Students' perceptions. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* , 1 (1), 53-65.

ANNEXES

▪ QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Using literature in the EFL classroom

1. Do you use literary texts as material in your EFL classroom?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Comments

2. Are authentic literary works included as material in your course plans?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Comments:

3. Who selects the texts you use in your EFL classroom?

- ☐ The teacher
- ☐ The department
- ☐ Teacher and department together
- ☐ Comments

4. When are the texts selected?

- ☐ Beginning of the course
- ☐ Beginning of the unit
- ☐ Throughout the course
- ☐ Comments

5. What selection criteria do you follow?

Please rate your answers. 1 (less attention paid) 5 (more attention paid)

	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulty of vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Syntax complexity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing style	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Theme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Addressee characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Do you think the using authentic literature as a tool for language learning is:
Please rate your answers. 1 is very little and 5 is very much

	1	2	3	4	5
Viable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Useful?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helpful?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Necessary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Motivating?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Do you think students like reading literary texts?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Some
☐ Why do you think it is so? Please justify briefly your answer according to your personal experience.

8. Would you like to have more authentic literary works included in your syllabuses?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Why ? Please justify briefly your answer.

9. Please add any further comments you wish on the topic:
Using literature in the EFL classroom.

RESULTS

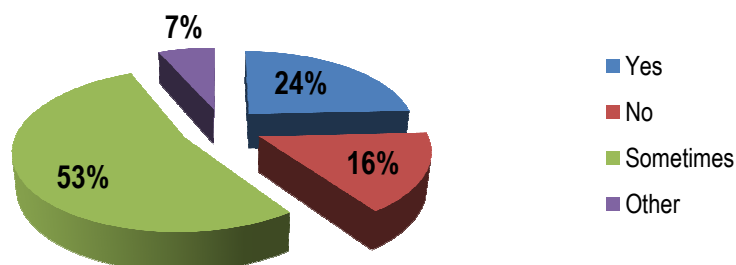
PARTICIPATION

Total participants	66
Ended (Clicked on "End of questionnaire")	65
Partial (Not clicked on "End of questionnaire")	1
Visits to questionnaire with no answer	7

The questionnaire was published on www.e-encuesta.com and it was answered by members of the APAC community from 9th to 27th may 2012.

QUESTION 1

Do you use literary texts in your EFL classroom?



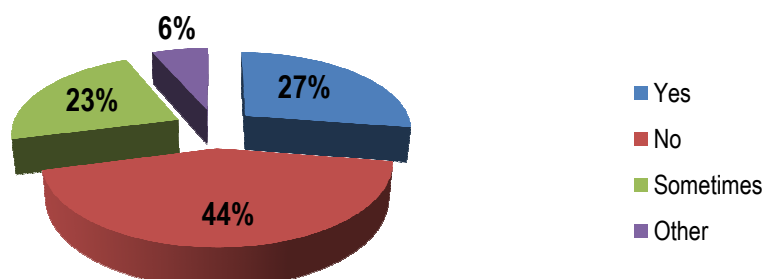
Graphic 1

Comments¹⁰ on question 1

1	adapted readers
2	I use adapted literary texts
3	They help to acquire the grammar and bring emotions into the language
4	on eper year

QUESTION 2

Are authentic literary works included as material in your course plans?



Graphic 2

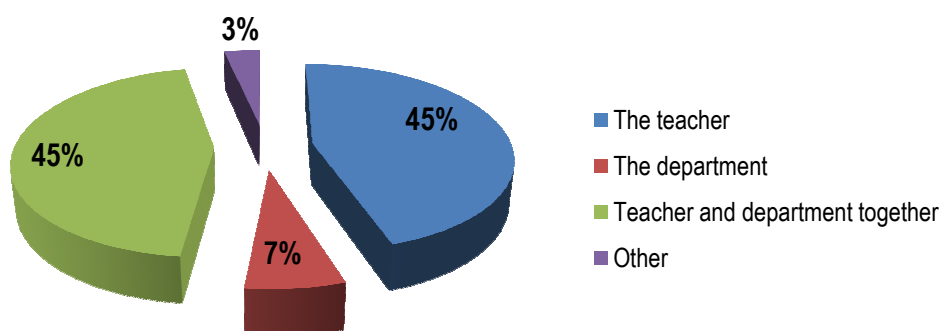
¹⁰ Teacher's comments have been literally transcribed. Neither grammar or spelling have been corrected as not to alter the least the content of the comments

Comments on question 2

1	I teach 1st level students so I cannot use authentic literary works
2	in Batxillerat
3	The course books we use in class from MacMillan publishers do not include authentic literary texts.
4	Depending on SS level
5	only in upper levels

QUESTION 3

Who selects the text you use in your EFL classroom?



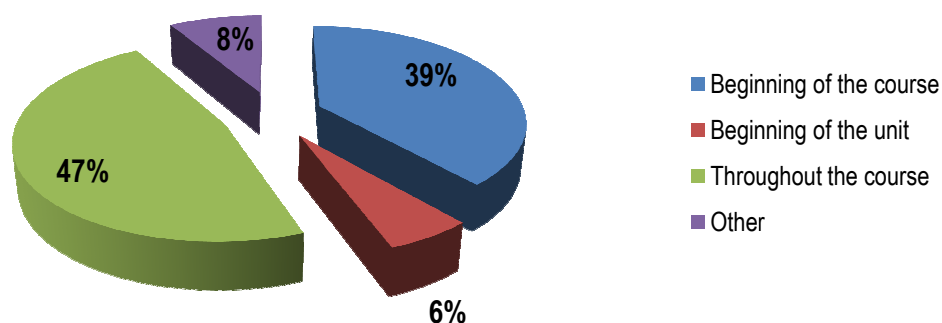
Graphic 3

Comments on question 3

1	The texts are not selected per sé, the teacher and the department select the publisher and the publisher selects the text.
2	N/A in my case; I choose sometimes w Ss
3	whoever wants to do it

QUESTION 4

When are texts selected?



Graphic 4

Comments on question 4

1	June in the previous year
2	beginning & throughout
3	we make a course plan together

4	end of previous course
5	End of course
6	Taking into account the students' preferences.

QUESTION 5

What selection criteria do you follow?

Please rate your answers. 1 (less attention paid) 5 (more attention paid)

	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulty of vocabulary	6,15% (4)	6,15% (4)	23,08% (15)	43,08% (28)	21,54% (14)
Syntax complexity	6,15% (4)	10,77% (7)	18,46% (12)	43,08% (28)	21,54% (14)
Writing style	6,25% (4)	14,06% (9)	39,06% (25)	34,38% (22)	6,25% (4)
Theme	1,54% (1)	1,54% (1)	12,31% (8)	32,31% (21)	52,31% (34)
Addressee characteristics	1,59% (1)	9,52% (6)	12,7% (8)	38,1% (24)	38,1% (24)

Table 1

QUESTION 6

Do you think the using authentic literature as a tool for language learning is:

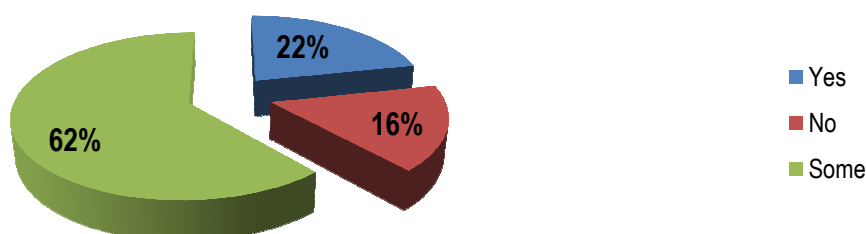
Please rate your answers. 1 is very little and 5 is very much

	1	2	3	4	5
Viable?	9,76% (4)	24,39% (10)	29,27% (12)	21,95% (9)	14,63% (6)
Useful?	14,81% (4)	0% (0)	18,52% (5)	44,44% (12)	22,22% (6)
Helpful?	9,38% (3)	34,38% (11)	34,38% (11)	15,62% (5)	6,25% (2)
Necessary?	16,67% (7)	14,29% (6)	26,19% (11)	28,57% (12)	14,29% (6)
Motivating?	6% (3)	14% (7)	14% (7)	20% (10)	46% (23)

Table 2

QUESTION 7

Do you think students like reading literary texts?



Graphic 5

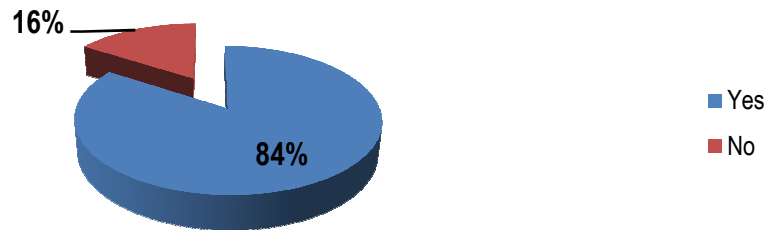
Comments on question 7 – Answers justification according to teachers' own experience.

1	Some students thoroughly enjoy reading in general while others do not.
2	Those who enjoy reading in general enjoy reading literary texts. The key is to find something motivating and the activities proposed.

3	That depends on the students you have. At the EOI you can have a wide range of students within the same level, so that depends on them.
4	Because there has not been a habit built up in Catalan or Spanish.
5	The majority don't like reading, they have to make an effort to do so and making efforts is not on their list of priorities. Even audio books or podcasts are not very motivating for them, even though you always have some students who love books and reading.
6	Some might find it difficult
7	They enjoy them if they understand them. They may be useful to understand compulsory reading in class
8	Because they relate to a part of a culture and history, and they love knowing more about our context and past.
9	They say they don't understand the whole text, they waste/spend too much time looking for words up in their dictionaries and get tired and bored
10	Because most of them haven't been exposed to engaging texts or engaging tasks about literary texts.
11	It's something very personal.
12	We just like reading about trendy topics
13	It depends on their being used to reading literary texts in their own language
14	Just some of the Batxillerat students. It's quite inviable to use them with ESO students.
15	It depends on the topic. I think they like it because those are real texts, I mean, they are not only created for a text book.
16	Depends if they read in Catalan.
17	They usually see them too far from their experience. Sometimes the topic is not really of their interest.
18	Most of my students show little interest in reading
19	Some may find it very motivating because their level is good and they are mature enough. Some may think it's too difficult and may give up.
20	They find them too difficult and in general motivation is low.
21	Literary texts make the lessons more real. They reflect the culture of the country.
22	I think students enjoy reading literary texts because they see it as a challenge and a way of appreciating their level of comprehension
23	It all depends on whether they can relate to the texts and/or author
24	Texts are generally boring and out-dated. Not of interest for the common student of ESL
25	I think it depends on their habits and on the type of texts they have access to.
26	because they realise then how much of the language they know.
27	It has proved to be successful in higher levels (batxillerat)
28	Although it would be really interesting to learn through literature, I think students find original literary texts too difficult.
29	We spend too much time reading in the class and we shouldn't read the whole book in the classroom.
30	Generally speaking, the students who like reading are interested in many kinds of reading texts.
31	If they understand it and it is motivating, I think they enjoy it.
32	They normally don't like reading at all if they read it should be something really interesting for them.

QUESTION 8

Would you like to have more authentic literary works included in your syllabuses?



Graphic 6

Comments on question 8 – *Answers justification*

1	Approaching literature means you approach culture, history knowledge and language
2	I like literature. I read a lot, but I know it is a torture to read literary works that are too difficult for learners. Also, adapted literary texts often destroy them and become a bad approach to literature.
3	Everybody should be exposed to great literary works.
4	It provides useful material for real language as well as intercultural awareness.
5	I'd really like to, but this is not possible for my 1st level students.
6	Firstly, because it is general culture for our students and secondly, because texts are not difficult per se. We can tune up or down the level of difficulty of the tasks.
7	It would save me time to look for them, it would show families and students that it's important to read all kind of texts.
8	Using authentic material is always motivating.
9	To deal with real language and with cultural issues
10	Yes, the problem is that you need time to choose texts that are suitable to our students.
11	Because children could expand their knowledge about English language as they do with the other languages (Spanish, catalan). They are eager to find out more about what is related to the subjects they are studying. That implies knowing about great writers and understand what they are writing about.
12	It's very difficult, regarding we focus the contents towards a Selectivitat examination
13	Actually, I include them in my lessons
14	Authentic texts are a great source of good material.
15	My students have a low level of English
16	Literature broadens the mind, but students should be able to decide up to a point what to read
17	I prefer "adapted" literary works because the level of the syntax and the vocabulary is more adapted to my students.
18	I think it would be good, and especially because they allow us to work about culture and other aspects.
19	Difficult to know what to do with the text sometimes. Hard work.
20	They are more challenging and motivating
21	Yes, because they are good examples of language.
22	I think that it depends on the level, for higher levels something like the Harry Potter novels would be interesting. However, I think that nowadays there are few students who are really interested in literature, they prefer songs and websites rather than reading thik books.
23	From my point of view, for students of higher levels, it must be very motivating. I read the original "Anna Frank" book with a group of good students in a "reading optativa subjecte" and it was great but I know that you can't do it with everybody.
24	Because authentic material can be very motivating. Also the English is very vibrant.
25	Because any authentic material is highly necessary to create a real learning

	atmosphere.
26	A short authentic text used at the appropriate moment can add depth to a unit.
27	Especially those that help language and 'cultural acquisition' because of rhyme and reason
28	because sometimes it is difficult for teachers to find the appropriate works by themselves (not enough resources)
29	However I usually worry about the level of English of the text. If it is too demanding, students might refuse it.
30	It's always interesting and helps to learn a language.
31	I like literary works as I love reading myself

QUESTION 9

**Please add any further comments you wish on the topic:
Using literature in the EFL classroom.**

1	Stories are powerful. There should be more stories in my lessons :-)
2	I find difficult to create/make/invent motivating/funny/informal activities based on literary work.
3	I think it's quite difficult to use authentic literary texts in class, unless they're very motivated students.
4	Literature should be integrated in the language syllabus.
5	In primary is difficult to work with literature given the difficulty of the vocabulary and syntax.
6	I've always thought that if you're interested about any topic, you can read it in any language because you really want to know what it is written.
7	I don't think that unless the class rates are of a maximum of 15 students, all these will be inviable. Students in 2n BAT have got too much to do and don't feel comfortable enough reading "real" texts in English.
8	short stories are better than complete texts.
9	Using authentic Literature in the English lessons can be very motivating for the students. You can teach all sort of things with real texts not only vocabulary and grammar but also intonation and rhythm. You can get a good inside of the country's culture. It is crucial to choose the texts carefully. I am using authentic material with young learners with good results.
10	Through literature it is possible to teach every single English skill. However EFL teachers find it difficult to implement it in their classrooms.
11	I have started to use literature CONSCIOUSLY this year but by working on it I've realised I had been doing so for a long time. I plan to use it every year and constantly as it is very interesting and it can be a very motivating way to learn.
12	You need to take into account the students' interests first.
13	literary texts are useful for descriptions of places, people and emotions and a good source for conversations in a different scale.
14	Year ago I published an article entitled 'Learning from L1' in which I detailed some of the advantages of using literature (especially poems and stories) ... I would warn against overuse - 'analysis can kill the pleasure of reading!'
15	I think there's a problem in question 6. If you rate 5 for an item, it won't let you mark any other 5. I'd mark 5 for every item.
16	In question number 6 I wanted to rate all answers 4 or 5, but the program would not let me.
17	I use short poems because they make the students think. I also use short tales or stories that may attract the student's attention mainly in higher levels (Bachillerat). Besides, I use short unabridged texts taken from novels which students have to read in class (examples Rebecca, the Great Gatsby, Passage to India....)

18	<p>On the topic of extensive reading: Most teachers "punish" students with set books and long useless exams about them. Students should be allowed to choose the books they want to read and there shouldn't be "exams" about those books. Class discussions or reading clubs would be more appropriate.</p> <p>I use short literary text in the classroom as entry points to novels. If the students like the text, they'll read the whole novel.</p> <p>Question 6 is not working properly: I would rate them all as 5</p> <p>NB: I teach upper-intermediate students</p>
19	<p>We're really pressed for time and it's not easy to get students to read extensively unless we blackmail them or threaten them with an exam or something the like.</p>
20	<p>Item number 6: you cannot give the same marks to two or more adjectives, so your results there might not be accurate. To enjoy literature you must have a high level of the foreign language. Often the vocabulary used there is not relevant for everyday</p>
21	<p>I am very dissapointed that in some (maybe most) secondary schools, readers have been substituted by teen magazines. I believe that the latter have a role in the classroom but should not displace literary readers completely.</p>
22	<p>Sometimes it's very difficult to find good texts for my students (Primary Education) because their English level is so low that the text they can understand are not about interesting topics.</p>
23	<p>I think literature is a very important part of EFL teaching and sometimes it has been left out. I try to include as much as possible in my courses.</p>

▪ *BLOG ADDRESS*

<http://englishsatorras6b.blogspot.com.es/>

The blog *Let's have great expectations!* is still active. The activities included in the blog, videos and writings of students mentioned in the paper are available following the link to the blog.

■ SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

Books Books Books

THE ENGLISH BOOK QUIZ

Part One: Your teacher will show you or describe different things associated with a book. Can you name them all in English?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Part Two: Here are some famous authors who wrote in English. Can you name a book they have written?

CHARLES DICKENS
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
JRR TOLKEIN
AGATHA CHRISTIE
ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Part Three: Here are some titles of famous books. Can you name the authors?

THE NAME OF THE ROSE
THE SATANIC VERSES
TALES OF MYSTERY AND HORROR
ALICE IN WONDERLAND

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Books, reading and literature

A. BOOKS AND READING IN GENERAL

- 1) Do you read a lot? How many books do you read a book every month? Or every year?
- 2) What are you reading at the moment? Do you like it?
- 3) Do you have a favourite book or books? What is it about?
- 4) What kinds of books do you like to read?
- 5) If a movie is made of a book, do you prefer to read the book first or see the movie first?

B. THINKING ABOUT LITERATURE

- 1) Who are some of the most famous authors from your country?
- 2) Think of the most famous piece of literature from your country. What is it about?
- 3) Did you have to study books by these authors at school? Do you think everybody should read national literature at school?
- 4) Do you think literature can only be studied at university? Is it difficult to understand famous literature?
- 5) Does literature have to be old?
- 6) What English literature do you know? Have you read any?
- 7) Have you ever read a simplified reader of some English literature?
- 8) Literature is sometimes divided into three categories: poems, short stories and novels. Which do you prefer reading? Why?

Books Books Books - Teaching Notes

The aim of this activity is to introduce the topic of literature. Students learn some vocabulary associated with a book and talk about their reading habits. They then discuss what they understand literature to mean.

The first activity, the Book Quiz, is optional.

Stage One: The Book Quiz *Material needed: One novel*

Explain that in today's class you and your learners are going to talk about literature. But before you do, you want to make sure that they know some things about books and authors in English. Give them the English Book Quiz. Learners should do this alone or working with a partner.

1. Take out the novel and show it to them. Point to the following items and ask them to write down what it is: the front cover, the back cover and the title. Then give a description of the following: a chapter (a book is divided into different _____); hardback (a book with a hard cover); paperback (a book with a soft cover); a review (what critics say about a book)
2. (sample answers) Great Expectations, Romeo and Juliet, Lord of the Rings, Murder on the Orient Express, The Old Man and the Sea
3. Umberto Eco, Salman Rushdie, Edgar Allen Poe, Lewis Carroll

Stage Two: Discussion

Use the first set of questions to warm students up to the topic of books and literature. Then move on to the second set of questions. With smaller classes, the second set of questions could be done as a group discussion.

OLIVER TWIST

(TRAILER)



Please sir, I want some more.

What?

Oliver Twist has asked for more.

For more?

That boy will be hanged.

You know you've got no father or mother. And that you were brought up by the parish.

Yes sir.

You have come here to be educated at a method and useful trade.

Tie down the shutters!

Clear the office.

Say your prayers.

Let the boy alone.

Let him alone? Well, everybody has let him alone. His mother, father and all his relations has let him alone. So he needs someone who don't!

My name is Jack Dawkins, better known as the Artful Dodger.

Oliver Twist.

Why are you known as the Artful Dodger?

That's why!

Oliver Twist! I hope I have the honor of a more intimate acquaintance!

Common Oliver! Join us!

Put yourself under Fagin and you'll be able to retire and do the gentle.

Police are engaged in searching for Fagin and William Sikes a well known dangerous villain.

Do you know what this is?

Fancy that! You're famous Fagin!

Cool!

Thank you sir, for your kindness. I'll always remember it!