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Can Literature Motivate Students and Foster Communicative Development in the Foreign Language Classroom?

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1. Abstract

The aim of this study is to establish a literary teaching method that elicits student motivation and communicative development in ESL classes. The objective is to broaden student perspectives on word realities through literary texts and narratives and encourage them to relate these realities to their own personal experiences. Literature opens doors to different cultures and different times, but many stories can still be seen reflected in modern society. I believe that helping students to immerse themselves in a literary text and internalise and analyse these perspectives will improve motivation levels and participation in class.

Given that literary texts tend to be complex in nature, an effective methodology that considers both grammar and content will need to be designed to maintain the interest of students. Additional supporting material, such as audio and visual aids, will also help maintain the interest of students, especially those suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD or ADD).

Ultimately, this study will explore teaching methods that encourage students to take an active role, as I believe that increased participation fosters improved student communication. This can only be achieved by establishing a connection between the author and student.

Key words: Literature, experience, motivation, benefits, method.

El objetivo de este trabajo es establecer un método pedagógico donde el estudiante pueda encontrar en la literatura una motivación y que a la vez favorezca su desarrollo comunicativo en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera. El objetivo de este, sería ampliar la visión de los estudiantes de la realidad del mundo a través de la narrativa e hacer que esta visión se pueda relacionar con experiencias personales vividas para así incrementar motivación del estudiante. Implementar la literatura para abrir una ventana a nuevas culturas y costumbres e interrelacionarlas a los problemas actuales y así facilitar la comprensión de la misma ya que muchos temas literarios pueden reflejar la

temàtiques actuals. Asimismo, se intentarà que el alumno participe de forma activa en este proceso, después de haber asimilado y haberse sumergido en el contenido del texto.

Para llevar a cabo este proceso, se necesitará una buena metodología y instrucción para así mejorar la comprensión del estudiante en lo que se refiere a la complejidad de los textos literarios, en términos de gramática y de contenido.

Se proveerá también al alumno de material de soporte adicional, ya que también se tendrá en cuenta la atención a la diversidad y quizás este facilitaría la comprensión de ciertos estudiantes con déficit de atención, a través de material auditivo y visual.

Finalmente, se explorarán algunos métodos de enseñanza de cómo hacer que el estudiante tome un rol activo ya que queremos promover las situaciones comunicativas en clase y esto solo puede ocurrir si se establece una comunicación directa entre autor y estudiante.

Palabras clave: literatura, experiencia, motivación, beneficios, método.

L' objectiu d' aquest treball román en determinar un mètode pedagògic on l' estudiant pugui trobar en la literatura, una motivació i que a la vegada afavoreixi al desenvolupament del procés comunicatiu de l' estudiant en l' adquisició de l' Anglès com a llengua estrangera. L' objectiu d' aquesta recerca sería doncs ampliar la visió de l' estudiant del que fa a les realitats del món a través de la narrativa i fer axí que aquesta visió es pugui relacionar amb experiències personals viscudes per tal d' incrementar així, la motivació de l' estudiant.

Implementar la literatura per tal d' obrir una finestra als problemes de la vida real i facilitar així la comprensió d' aquesta ja que molts temes literaris poden reflexar temàtiques actuals. Tanmateix, s' intentarà que l' alumne participi de forma activa en aquest procés, d'expres d' haver assimilant i internalitzat el contingut del text.

Per tal de dur a terme aquest procès, es necessitarà una bona metodologia i instrucció per així poder millorar la comprensió de l' estudiant en la complexitat dels textos literaris, pel que fa a la gramàtica i al contingut.

Es proveirà també a l' alumne amb material de suport adicional, ja que també es tindrà en compte l' atenció a la diversitat i probablement també facilitaria la comprensió d' alguns estudiants que tinguessin dèficit d' atenció, a través de material auditiu i visual.

Finalment. S' exploraran alguns mètodes d' ensenyament per com fer que l' estudiant prengui un rol actiu ja que es volen promoure les situacions comunicatives a la classe i això pot ocórrer només si s' estableix una comunicació directa entre l' autor i l' estudiant.

Paraules clau: literatura, experiència, motivació, beneficis, mètode.

2. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyse how literature and reading can be used as an effective tool for fostering a more communicative approach in ESL classes. To do so, a general review of current reading habits in secondary education classes will be provided as an initial basis and to provide context. Subsequently, an alternative approach to literature will be proposed that encourages the idea of bringing the classics back to life again.

Literature is often said to be “the window to the world” (Sidhu and Fook, 2010). It is intrinsically connected with our language and culture and reflects a mirror image of real-life situations and social contexts. Sidhu and Fook (2010) believe that literature fosters an understanding and appreciation of cultures and ideologies, which are different from a learners' native culture. The inclusion of reading in the classroom would therefore help educate students on different cultures and worldviews so that they can approach global issues from a different perspective.

An innovative proposal will be presented in this assignment. The objective is to inspire students with a list of classic works of literature (preselected by the teacher) and encourage them to

practice their English language skills according to the proposed methodology. The theory is that this will help them to connect with the authors' real-life perspectives of events throughout history and motivate increased class participation. The methodology also aims to improve student critical thinking by providing contrasting perspectives, encouraging analysis, and promoting discussion and a more communicative approach to learning.

Literature provides learners with many linguistic opportunities. It also presents teachers with more stimulating material for activities that promote greater student interest and participation, compared to other non-literary texts (P.A. Llach, 2015; as cited in Duff & Maley, 1990:3). It would therefore be relevant to give a definition and explain the etymology of the word "literature" to help us understand how closely related motivation is.

"Literature, most generically, is any body or collection of written work. More restrictively, literature refers to writing considered to be an art form or any single writing deemed to have artistic or intellectual value, and sometimes deploys language in ways that differ from ordinary usage." (Wikipedia, n.d). Literature is an artform that encompasses not just form and content, but also a new type of dialectical discourse.

The Concise Dictionary of Current English (2011) defines literature as "writings whose value lies in the beauty of form or emotional effect.". The word itself dates to the early 15th century: "book-learning," from Latin *literatura/litteratura* "learning, a writing, grammar," originally "writing formed with letters," from *litera/littera* "alphabetic letter" also "an epistle, writing, document; literature, great books; science, learning" . (OED,n.d).

Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei (2011) postulated that literature represents an indispensable role in improving language development, cultural and pragmatical awareness, emotional intelligence, critical thinking and, ultimately, the motivation of students from high schools all around the world. The methodology contained in this assignment will reflect and promote this theory and seek to find learning solutions that encourage the development of language and communication in the ESL classroom.

Finally, this assignment will be divided into three main sections. The first section will discuss how literature can be used as an effective tool in the ESL classroom. The second section will analyse the role and relevance of literature in the classroom and explain several methods that can be successfully implemented in lessons. The final section will focus on conclusions and examples of activities that have been designed in line with the aforementioned objectives.

1.1. Justification

I selected this topic based on my own experience of the benefits of literature in terms of my education and world views. I believe that the literature I have studied in the past has helped me broaden my perspective of life and the world around me, as well as improving and reinforcing my critical thinking approach.

Based on this experience, I believe that the right instruction and guidance is vital to motivate students to learn. An effective teacher must immerse students in the material and help them form a bond with literature based on their own personal experiences. I believe this bond is necessary as it motivates students to study and learn more. Literature can also improve student language skills such as acquiring new vocabulary and learning new grammatical structures that they may not have come across with other sources, since literature contains varying texts structures and offers a great variety of literary forms.

To conclude, I believe this assignment will prove that literature can be used as an effective tool for improving communicative development in the ESL secondary classroom.

3. Research Questions and Objectives

This qualitative study seeks to analyse how literature can be used as an effective tool to motivate and inspire students to learn, and to foster the development of communication in the ESL classroom. Several questions have therefore been posed in order to evaluate the impact of literature on student motivation and comprehension levels:

- How could reading literature foster a communicative approach in the ESL classroom?

- How is literature currently approached in English classes?
- What teaching methods could be used to tackle any difficulties encountered whilst studying literature in the ESL classroom?
- How can literature increase motivation levels and have a positive impact on a learner's language acquisition?
- What materials could aid understanding of the complexities of literature?

The presented questions allowed us to explore and analyse the following objectives:

- To establish a close bond with the book, and to help students relate to it from a modern perspective. To help them understand the intrinsic message behind the story and feel comfortable participating in class discussions about the book where all students take an active role.
- To analyse the importance placed on literature in high schools, especially students from higher grades, and determine what aspects of learning need to be adapted or improved in order to increase student motivation levels.
- To provide complementary sources and materials, such as audios and visuals, in order to gain a broader range of perspectives and develop all areas of language learning. To source audio lingual resources, such as spoken poems, and use art as a visual aid for understanding the historical context surrounding an author.
- As a teacher, to find related topics to help students identify with and relate to the motives and values of a book. For example, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, can be linked to the topic of bullying. If someone is being bullied, they might feel like a monster: different, isolated from the world, completely alone.
- To implement different materials in class, such as music, spoken poems, relevant art, and magazines. Occasionally incorporating Netflix in classes could also be interesting, given that the platform is the main source of home cinema for many families. The objective here would be to source additional materials that help students identify with historical points in

history in which a book is based. For instance, if students are reading Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, they could watch the film *Queen Victoria* on Netflix to help them understand what life was like in Victorian times.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Why is Literature in the Classroom Important?

Literature can convert the future into a tangible concept that can be approached philosophically by forging a connection between the human dimension and the great ideas that animate history. Literature can be simultaneously hyper-current and transcendental (Hulst, 2017). It can evoke many different dimensions and transport the reader back in time. It can also provide more of a philosophical approach to learning with additional linguistic challenges compared to a more grammar focused approach. "Many high school students find it easier to relate to historical events and characters when they are introduced in a narrative form, instead of via the dry writing of a textbook." (Orinda Academy, 2019).

During the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) era, literary texts were considered a vital source of linguistic input in foreign language classes. Since then, however, literature has been downgraded to more of a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. Khatib, Rezaei & Derakhshan (2011) believe that the value of literature has been neglected due to a lack of empirical research.

The main focus of this assignment is to question whether literature can foster improved communication in language classes. Language is a form of communication, between the author and the reader, which conveys expressive meaning (Llach, 2007; as cited in Duff and Maley, 1990:6). It could be argued that there are three main criteria that justify the use of literature as a second language teaching tool (Duff and Maley, 1990:6). The first criterion defends the use of literature in the classroom as it provides students with authentic examples of language in use. Contrasting styles,

text types and registers can also benefit students as they push them to broaden their perspectives and question the concept of language.

The second criterion takes more of an interaction based approach as it perceives literature as being open to interpretation and debate. This generates more communicative approaches to language learning which is the ultimate goal of an ESL teacher as it results in active and motivated learners.

The third criterion is motivational, and it relies on the personal motivations and experiences of the reader. Activities that include the student in the learning process and provide additional cultural context help the reader identify with the text. Students are more motivated to learn if they can relate a literary text to their own personal feelings and experiences.

4.2. Difficulties that Could be Encountered in the Literature Classroom

According to Gómez (2012), the acquisition of grammatical rules and language fluency is not enough to establish meaning, to negotiate, and to communicate across cultures. Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei (2011; citing Maley, 1989) also argue that certain complex and unfamiliar literary texts could be perceived by learners as being too demanding.

Additionally, McKay (1982) believes that in order for a learner to interact with a text, they must receive substantial guidance and instruction, and they must be in the right frame of mind. This includes being cognitively, emotionally and psychologically prepared to embrace the book in the right way.

Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei, (2011) believe that, despite its potential weaknesses, literature can serve as a motivating force for language learning and teaching as it provides a range of contrasting styles and registers that are difficult to come across in different text types.

4.3. Literature as a Tool for Motivating Students

According to Vural (2013), there are two kinds of motivation; intrinsic motivation, driven by internal motives such as pleasure, interest or satisfaction; and extrinsic motivation, driven by external factors such as the desire to obtain a reward or avoid a punishment.

Moreover, the Pacific Curriculum Network (PCN, 2001) defends the belief that the study of literature goes far beyond the narrow scope of the English language since literature is, in fact, a social study which challenges students to exceed the scope of the text itself. The PCN also propose that when teaching literary texts, the primary focus should be on generating the interest of students and motivating them to explore the various genres to create a genuine interest in literature. Thus, teachers have a duty to be knowledgeable so they can teach literature as more of a social subject than the systematic analysis of a genre.

Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei (2011) believe that motivation plays a significant role in a student's learning and development. When a student is driven by a desire to learn more about literature, or any other field, it motivates them to delve deeper and question the topics that most interest them. Learning is more effective when students are exposed to subject matter that they are passionate about. Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei define literature “as a voyage of discovery” because it can be full of new experiences. They also cite McKay (1982), who further supports the concept of motivation with his claim that students who enjoy studying literature are more likely to feel motivated and interact with a text, which further increases their reading proficiency.

The final point to make regarding motivation is that literature can offer a broad range of varied content and it deals with a multitude of fundamental human issues. Both these factors can help students identify with a work of literature which, in turn, motivates them to expand their interest and learning. A student is far more likely to learn a language by studying topics that interest them, rather than more objective activities that they cannot personally relate to. “A literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to a reader in another country or a different time.” (Vural, 2013).

4.4. Teaching Literature: Approaches & Methods

Before I begin with my analysis of the various teaching approaches, I would like to highlight the relevance of the Socio-Constructivist Pedagogical Model for the Teaching of Literature in EFL. According to Gómez (2011), this model significantly encourages learners to read and discuss authentic literary texts.

The concept of socio-constructivism was developed by Vygotsky (1978) and it states that all knowledge is constructed rather than perceived through the senses. The knowledge a student acquires is therefore dependant on the socio-cultural environment in which they live and interact; it forms the basis of their learning experience. And students are no longer perceived as passive subjects waiting to receive information from the teacher. Instead, they learn through active involvement in the construction of knowledge and understanding of meaning.

Constructivism proposes several approaches for teaching literature in the English language classroom. In addition to these approaches, Mustakim, Mustapha, & Lebar have noted in the Malaysian Online Journal of Education that teachers must plan activities that include not only what students are capable of doing on their own, but also what they can learn with the help of others. This can include organizing classroom and cooperative learning activities and implementing scaffolding strategies. It also includes well-planned lessons based on Vygotsky's Theory of Learning (1986).

Truong Thi My Van (2009) published an analysis of how literature has been discussed over the years and the various teaching approaches that have been used, including the New Criticism approach, a movement that surfaced in the United States in 1940s. The theory proposed that meaning was solely contained to the text in question. Literature was a self-contained object and it was not influenced by the reader's opinion or the author's intention. The aim of the student was therefore to establish the objective intrinsic meaning in the text through close observation and analysis of form, rhythm, imagery, and theme. Unfortunately, this restricted the study of literature to finite meanings rather than the search for beauty and value in a literary text. It failed to focus on

the bond built by a reader's experience and historical and sociolinguistic influences on the reading process (My Van, 2009; citing Thomson, 1992).

Subsequently, the Structuralist approach gained momentum in the 1950s. This movement emphasized a total objectivity in examining literary texts and denied the role of the reader's personal response in analysing literature. My Van (2009; citing Culler, 1982, p20) agrees that Structuralism does not focus on the aesthetic value of literature, but rather on the different processes and structures that are "involved in the production of meaning". Structuralism fails to appreciate the value of literature and its connection with the spiritual and emotional lives of readers. It also fails to acknowledge the importance of exploring literary themes from different countries and to compare cultural differences during the learning process.

A new approach to teaching literature appeared in the late 1970s, known as Stylistics. The Stylistics approach analyses features of literary language to develop a student's sensitivity to literature. This approach focuses on the study of textual meaning and explores how readers interact with literary texts, connecting linguistic analysis with literary criticism. It also focuses on the unconventional structure of literature, especially poetry, as language tends to be less grammatical and hold more subjective meaning. The approach also encourages students to use their linguistic knowledge to make aesthetic judgements and interpretations of the texts. Language plays an important role here as linguistic understanding helps students decipher hidden meanings. Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei (2011; citing Maley, 1989) define the stylistic approach as focusing on literature as a text, and providing a description and analysis of language prior to making interpretations. They acknowledge that this approach is "closely in tandem with what ESL teachers need for their language classes".

The next method Truong Thi My Van (2009) explains is the Reader-Response approach, which focuses on the experience of the reader and how they have learnt to approach literature. This approach supports activities that get students to draw on their own personal experiences, opinions, and interpretation of the literary work. Dias and Hayhoe (1988, 15) point out that "it is precisely the role of the reader in the act of reading that has not been sufficiently and properly addressed".

Additionally, Barthes (1967) emphasizes the importance of focusing on the reader when he states that the essential meaning of a literary text depends on the impression of the reader rather than the “passions” or “tastes” of the writer. There should therefore be a somewhat transactional relationship between a reader and a literary text. The Reader-Response method is interesting because it connects with the individual experience of the reader rather than the content and style of the text.

A Language-Based approach incorporates language and literature skills, and it focuses on awareness of the elements of language contained within a text. Although similar to the Stylistic approach, this approach is more accessible for learners as it uses literature to elicit experiences and responses from students. It offers them the opportunity to improve their language skills through the critical study of literary texts. It also calls for a variety of language instruction activities such as brainstorming, making predictions, rewriting the ends of stories, summarizing plots, reading and comprehension activities, and cloze procedures for vocabulary building. Activities of this type encourage students to collaborate with each other, form opinions, and engage in debates.

However, Padurean (2015) mentions that this approach is often considered monotonous as texts are approached in a systematic and methodological manner, taking all the enjoyment out of reading a text. Moreover, Savvidou (2004) believes that this method causes the learner to only engage with the text linguistically, and that activities become mechanical and do not serve any real purpose. Furthermore, Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei (2011; citing Lazar, 1993) highlight that care should be taken not to let the linguistic focus destroy the pleasure of reading literature. However, My Van (2009) maintains an optimistic view of this approach since he believes that it fulfills student learning requirements for language and literature. It also helps students critically assess a text which enhances their enjoyment and interest.

The final method is the Critical Literacy approach, which has drawn from a variety of theories such as critical language studies, educational sociology, and feminism (My Van, 2009; citing Luke & Freebody, 1997). This approach has important implications for teaching both language and literature as it reveals the link between language and social power. Language teaching often ignores how texts deal with important issues such as ideology and power struggles in society

(My Van, 2009; citing Wallace, 1992; O'Brien & Colomber 1994; Cummins 2000). Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei, (2011; citing Maley, 1989) believed that instructors should be cautious about adopting this approach as learners need both intermediate language skills and previous experience in the study of literature.

Savvidou (2004) proposes an integrated approach to teaching literature, reconciling all the aforementioned approaches in a systematic way. This multidisciplinary method can improve language skills, critical thinking, and attitudes towards literature. This seem like a promising alternative approach for ESL classes. (Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei, 2011).

The separation of literature from language is a false dualism since literature is language and language can indeed be literary. An integrated model is a linguistic approach that relies on analytical strategies to explore literary and non-literary texts, as well as form opinions on style, content, and form. This involves a systematic and detailed analysis of stylistic features in a text such as vocabulary, register, and structure with the aim of understanding not just the meaning of a text, but also how it came to be (Saviddou, 2004; citing Short, 1966). Moreover, an integrated approach reinforces a learner's knowledge of lexical and grammatical structures and teaches them to analyse and interpret language in context. Savvidou (2004) firmly believes that literary texts are a potentially powerful and effective learning tool for the classroom.

4.5. The Benefits of Teaching Literature in the Classroom

Padurean, (2015; citing Parkinson & Thomas, 2000) suggests that the benefit of literature is that it provides great mental training, it extends linguistic competence, and it is culturally enriching. Literature is also open to interpretation which makes language acquisition more of an authentic learning experience. She adds that when literature is used as part of the linguistic model, it provides a diverse range of writing and linguistic benefits. These benefits are also supported by the Dutch Institute for Curriculum Development (2015), which describes literary education as an important value for developing citizenship since it broadens social and cultural horizons and develops empathic abilities (Schrijvers, Janssen, Fialho & Rulaarsdam, 2016).

Vural (2013) also argues that literature plays a powerful and beneficial role in ESL learning since it expands language awareness, encourages interaction and discussion, and educates through all aspects of a learner's personality (Vural, 2013; citing Clandfield & Ford, 2006). Literature can also be enjoyable as it has a magical ability to tap into a person's feelings, dreams, fantasies, and experiences that other texts cannot reach (Vural, 2013; citing Pulverness, 2007).

Literature can be used to teach and improve communication skills, language competence, discourse skills, and linguistic and cultural awareness. A fundamental reason for learning a foreign language is being able to communicate effectively in verbal or written form, including the reading of literature. Some might argue that literary language is superior to spoken language as it is more elaborate (Vural, 2013; citing Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

4.6. Literature and Pedagogy

Savvidou (2004) acknowledges that communicative competence is more than acquiring a mastery of structure and form. It also involves the ability to interpret discourse in all its social and cultural contexts. Gómez (2011) agrees that the teaching of literature in ESL classrooms should be common practice at advanced levels, and teachers should adopt a variety of consistent pedagogical approaches, such as those offered by the socio-constructivist theory, rather than attempting to study isolated texts without solid, pedagogical perspectives.

A student's level of motivation during the learning process is determined by many factors, including enthusiasm and interest, persistence, concentration, and level of enjoyment. Involvement of this type cannot be imposed; it must be elicited by the materials and activities that are incorporated in the classroom (My Van, 2009; citing Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei 2011 acknowledge that, although literature is not enthusiastically embraced by many teachers, it "enjoys a welter of merits from an increase in motivation, social or cultural awareness, linguistic development" (p.218) and can even serve an agent of change.

In the 80s there was a lot of concern surrounding the "Literacy Crisis". There was a big scandal when guests on the Oprah Winfrey show claimed that publicly funded schools were

graduating hordes of young people who could not read. This generated a lot of interest in the press and many magazines and articles dramatized the story. It was found that “many people clearly don’t read and write well enough to handle the complex literacy demands of modern society” (Krashen, 2004). According to Krashen, the initiative Free Voluntary Reading was the cure to this problem, as it provided students with the opportunity to improve their literary skills, at no cost. With opportunity and the right guidance, reading can be an interesting and rewarding experience for children.

Parents and teachers therefore have a responsibility to encourage regular reading habits, both in the classroom and at home. “It is difficult to be knowledgeable if one is not in the habit of reading widely” (Bamidele, 2018; citing Sisule, 2014).

The role of an effective English teacher is to see literature as more than just another comprehension and memorisation exercise. It should be perceived as a call to look beyond the text and to encourage students to step out of their shell and interpret the world around them as they see it (Vaka’uta, 2001).

5. Method

The methodical process used to gather data for this study will be detailed in this section. This methodology has been designed in accordance with the aforementioned research questions and objectives and aims to gather sufficient data to form a valid conclusion. Data was due to be collected using a qualitative research instrument which analyses non-quantifiable elements such as opinions, feelings, and emotions. However, due to the current pandemic, it has not been possible to conduct the research required for the Results and Discussion section. A number of assumptions have therefore been made in order to conclude this study.

5.1. *School Contextualization*

I decided to collect data from Abat Oliba Loreto, a private school in Sant Gervasi (Barcelona) where I conducted my internship. My choice of topic for this assignment was partially

influenced by my experience at the start of this internship when I discovered the linguistic and literary variety offered by the school. I was impressed by the methods the school used to teach literature, and I was particularly interested by their participation in national debate clubs, an activity closely related to my research topic. I participated in all English classes. Ages ranged from 12 to 17 and students had three hours of English classes each week.

I would like to gather data for Baccalaureate levels (16 – 18) only since older students are more likely to approach the study of literature and the English language with a mature perspective.

The Baccalaureate timetable consisted of three hours of English per week. Other classes were also adapted when the entire course was divided according to their English language levels.

5.2. Participant Description

The aim is to evaluate approximately 120 students, comprised of students from classes from each of the three educational levels. Ages ranged from 16 to 18. This will be a qualitative study as I am extremely interested to find out their interests and opinions. The study also needs to consider that all students are multilingual since Catalan, Spanish, and English is taught at a secondary level. Additional languages, including Italian, German and French, are also considered important, as is the study of literature from all cultures.

The English language level of Baccalaureate students ranges from a B1 level and higher. Students are placed in higher or lower levels classes according to their abilities.

Data will also be gathered from teachers since they determine the materials and sources used during classes. They also oversee curriculums and design lessons that incorporate literature. These factors influence whether or not a student successfully acquires knowledge. The aim is to interview all Baccalaureate English teachers from the school (4-5 teachers). The ages of teachers range from early thirties to early sixties. Age also tends to determine experience.

5.3. Instruments

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the data gathered from students and teachers through open-ended questionnaires and focus groups.

The instruments used in this study will aim to establish current teaching methods in English classrooms and analyse how successfully they have been implemented from the point of view of both teachers and students. They will also aim to determine if the process of learning a language differs from that used for learning other non-linguistic subjects.

Questionnaires and focus groups will also explore the role students take in class, whether classes are more teacher or student focused, and whether certain projects or role play activities might help students take a more active role and, in turn, improve motivation levels and develop a more effective communicative approach.

The reading preferences of students will also be explored as this is a key factor in determining the subject matter and theme of literary texts, such as books or quotes, to use in the classroom.

Finally, the reading habits of students, such as favourite books and literary preferences, would also be interesting to evaluate as it could determine what methods and materials would elicit the biggest improvement in communicative fluency and motivation levels.

5.3.1. Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire

This instrument will be used to establish the procedure and methodology implemented by teachers in ESL classes. It would also be interesting to find out the level of pre-existing knowledge that students have about literature since the Theoretical Framework mentions that one of the main difficulties encountered when reading literature is that “the complex unfamiliarity of certain literary texts and the lack of knowledge towards them may also cause the texts to be too demanding” (Derakhshan, Rezaei and Khatib, 2011; citing Maley, 1989).

Another objective would be to find out whether teachers implement any related games or activities after studying a text that improves student communication and motivation levels.

The final objective is to collect general feedback from teachers about their perception of their ESL classes with Baccalaureate students.

(Questions attached as Appendix A)

5.3.2. Student Focus Group

Each class will hold its own separate debate in a series of focus groups. The aim is to analyse the degree of knowledge that students have obtained throughout the academic year and assess their communicative skills and abilities. The focus group will try to ascertain the opinions of students regarding the literary approach being used, and their levels of motivation for the subject. Discussion and debate will be encouraged with a number of questions so that student fluency can also be tested. Students will be seated in a circle to aid the discussion format and particular focus will be placed on encouraging participation.

The questions that will be debated will mainly relate to their opinions on how literature classes are implemented and managed. Students will also be asked whether they enjoy the classes or not, and what areas could be improved.

(Questions attached as Appendix B)

5.3.3. Student Open-Ended Questionnaire

A second questionnaire will be given to participants. This one will be given to Baccalaureate students. The objective of this instrument is to evaluate the reading habits and preferences of students, including how frequently they read. The questionnaire will also enquire about the hobbies and interests of students so that appropriate supporting material can be designed to increase their motivation and enjoyment.

The fundamental aim of this questionnaire is to establish the needs of students and understand what improvements could be made to the literary teaching approach to aid the interest and understanding of students.

(Questions attached as Appendix C)

5.3.4. Classroom Management

Aside from the data I will collect using the aforementioned three instruments, I will complete my results by attending English classes, preferably those that focus on Literature. Ideally, I would like to attend all classes in order to observe the teaching approaches used at each educational level (top, middle, and bottom sets) of each school grade (Baccalaureate levels 1 and 2). This will help me gather sufficient qualitative data to reach a solid conclusion.

Having previously read about and observed the aforementioned instruments, I will try to observe whether there is consistency between participant answers and ESL classes.

6. Conclusions

I would like to begin the conclusion section by highlighting that recent disruption related to COVID-19 has prevented me from carrying out a full investigation. My internship was cancelled at the start of the pandemic, so I was unable to conduct research as planned or collect data and results. This data would have enabled me to draw clearer and more solid conclusions. I would also like to point out that, on a personal level, the physical restrictions which have prevented me from going to the library and consulting the range of books available there has also been an impediment. In the Theoretical Framework section, I have explained that I consulted online articles instead of books, my usual source of reference. Given the aforementioned, I have decided to focus on a more personal approach in my conclusions.

I decided on the idea for this assignment after attending a few literature classes at the school where I was undertaking my internship. I was initially very excited to participate in the classes so I enquired about their current reading list and prepared a little in advance to understand the historical context surrounding the literary works that I would be studying. After a few classes, I realized that classes were mainly structured around reading in class. No historical or cultural context was given, and no extra tools or activities were used to make classes interesting and motivating. And as students spent the whole time in class reading, there were no opportunities to communicate or instigate a discussion. I also found that that younger generations were often unaware of important

literary and historical figures, which surprised me as understanding who we are and where we come from seems important to me.

I became interested in this topic mainly because I have always been passionate about the classics and I believe literature has a magical ability to connect with everyday elements of the human psyche. At least that is how I have felt about every book I have read. I thought that teaching methods such as those detailed in this assignment might help literature “shine” again and help younger generations understand and connect with it. Perhaps I was lucky as I have found all the literature classes I have attended in the past to be fascinating and my teachers always made them interesting. In my own personal experience of studying literature as an ESL student, I felt that the way classes were designed allowed me to broaden my knowledge of the English language and improve my vocabulary and grammar skills. I also consider these classes to have enriched me at a deeper level as they helped me explore themes I related to at the time, such as love, despair, yearning, hope, and humanity. Reading has helped me gain perspective on world issues, and it has also helped me develop on a personal level and overcome conflict.

As I mentioned in my theoretical framework, literature can convert the future into a tangible concept that can be approached philosophically by forging a connection between the human dimension and the great ideas that animate history. “Literature can be simultaneously hyper-current and transcendental” (Hulst, 2017). Many authors acknowledge how beneficial literature can be as a tool for connecting students to the real world. By reinforcing their motivation with the right methods, you can awaken a student’s curiosity and encourage them to delve a little deeper in class when they analyse a text and their own feelings about it. A textbook, in contrast, is a much more superficial form of reading, and it is far less likely to elicit a connection between the author and reader.

During the era of the Grammar Translation Method, literature was used as the main source of input in language classes. This has since developed into much more of a communicative language approach (Khatib, Derakhshan & Rezaei, 2011). For this reason, I aimed to establish techniques that would make literature more assessable for students, using tools inspired by

Vygotsky's Learning Theory (1986). Activities would encourage students to work via cooperative learning, and they focused not just on what a student could do, but what they could learn from the other students, too. Activities would also encourage students to draw on their own vision and experience of the world and voice their opinions, rather than just memorising and repeating data. Some of these techniques can be found in the Appendix section, although it has been difficult to create a clear design as resources depend on the text being studied and the goals of the teacher and students.

The fundamental objective of the study is to open the door of literature to students and encourage them to take an active interest in the subject. Teaching literature can be difficult due to its use of formal language, complex vocabulary, and unusual grammatical constructions. Topics and literary texts should therefore be chosen based on the interests of students to help them identify with the text and establish a connection with the author. In my opinion, this is the best way to motivate students as it also encourages them to communicate more in class and form solid opinions about what they think.

Narratives can be found in many places, not just books. Sometimes a simple, well-explained quote can be enough to awaken students and encourage them to read books by certain authors. I would therefore not necessarily choose to focus on just one book or novel. By focusing instead on shorter narratives or quotes you can cover a much broader range of topics with students. My own personal advice would be that once a teacher has chosen a topic, they should work on improving their own knowledge of the subject and the context surrounding it. They should push the boundaries of traditional methods and explore more than just the author. They should contrast texts with the work of other authors from a similar era, as well as any related films and music. This will broaden an ESL student's cultural knowledge whilst improving their linguistic skills. It will improve their grammar and help them achieve more fluency as they learn to understand a target text.

For all these reasons, I believe that literature could definitely foster a more communicative approach in ESL classes. The main aim of this assignment was to find out what methods could motivate students to take an interest in literature and improve their communication skills, as I

believe that this increased motivation would have a positive impact on a student's language acquisition as well as helping them to identify with an author and text. And the more knowledge of a subject a teacher has, the more interest a student will have.

Personally, I was hoping that students would at least have a basic enjoyment of reading, as this would make the task much easier to implement. My plan was to enquire about student preferences, then design activities based on their interests to help students feel more at ease in the classroom. The opinions of teachers were also relevant as I needed a basic understanding of current teaching methods and success rates. This was the main focus of the questions included in my qualitative research instrument (see Appendix).

To conclude, this study was carried out with the aim of establishing a source and technique that made literature popular amongst younger generations and raised their awareness of notable figures in history. I believe this is important as our history has shaped the way we think today and contributed to who we are, to a certain extent.

I have personally acquired a lot of knowledge about the role of literature throughout history whilst completing this assignment. It has been remarkably interesting to study all the important aspects of language, including form, style, content and teaching approaches.

My fundamental conclusion is that the critical literacy approach should be highlighted as a method that combines elements of other techniques but does not solely focus on the importance of form and content. It also encourages students to consider context, personal opinions, and important issues in society. According to My Van (2009), this approach has far-reaching implications for both language and literary teaching since it reveals the interrelationship between social power and language.

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ANNEX

Appendix A

Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire:

Teachers are given an anonymous questionnaire and told they have a few days to think about and complete it. Filled up questionnaires are left in a box and collected the following week.

Teacher Open-Ended Questionnaire:

- 1) How much time do you spend teaching literature during English language classes?
- 2) Would you consider literature to be important in ESL classes? Why/Why not?
- 3) Do you enjoy teaching literature, or you prefer to teach grammar?
- 4) Which literary author do you most identify with and why?
- 5) What books have you read so far this year with Baccalaureate students?
- 6) What book would you say your students have been inspired and motivated by the most? Why?
- 7) Aside from reading the text, have you designed any complementary discussion games for your literature classes? If so, which ones?
- 8) Aside from the book, do you use any visuals or audio-lingual material to support your classes? Which materials do you use?
- 9) What feedback do you personally have about the use of literature in language classes?
- 10) Do you think students enjoy learning about literature, generally speaking? What impression do you get from your classes?
- 11) What comparative material, such as quotes from similar authors, do you use to help students gain a better vision of the target text? (if any)
- 12) Would you like to spend more time teaching literature during English language classes?
- 13) Do you believe literature broadens a student's perspective and improves their critical thinking skills?

Appendix B

Student Focus Group

My role will be the language facilitator. I will open the discussion by introducing myself and explaining that we will be holding a debate that everyone must participate in. If some students are shy or withdrawn, I will encourage them by asking for their opinions. I will focus on the questions below. This focus group will be primarily used to assess current literature classes from the perspective of students.

Student Focus Group
1) Do you believe literature is important for your personal and professional development? If so, what elements of literature would you like to focus on?
2) Do you enjoy reading literature in class? Why/Why not?
3) Do you find it difficult to understand literature?
4) What books have you enjoyed the most during your Baccalaureate studies?
5) Do you identify with any literary characters or situations? If so, which?
6) What techniques does the teacher use to help you to understand the books you study?
7) Do you also read quotes or comparative texts that contrast with what the author is saying?
8) Do you use any additional material in class or at home? (visuals, videos, additional websites, etc.)
9) Do you like how your classes are designed?
10) Would you change any element of your classes to improve the learning process?
11) Would you say your grammar, vocabulary, or communication skills have improved after studying literature in ESL classes?
12) What catches your attention or motivates you the most from these classes? Why?

Appendix C

Student Open-Ended Questionnaire

This questionnaire will be given to each student and, in contrast with the teacher open-ended questionnaire, it is to be completed in class. Questionnaires are anonymous. The aim is to enquire about student reading habits, motivations, and communication skills so that data can then be applied to the ESL literary approach.

Students Open-Ended Questionnaire
1) Do you like reading?
2) If so, how often do you read?
3) How do you feel when you read? Think of the first word that comes to mind (calm, peaceful, anxious, frustrated, etc.). Explain your reasons.
4) What do you hope for when you read? (distraction, learning, knowledge, introspection, etc.)
5) Where do you normally read? Do you have a favourite spot?
6) What films/TV shows do you like to watch? Do you like shows with an historical theme?
7) What genres are you moved by? (adventure, politics, history, war, sci-fi, etc.) Why?
8) If a topic motivates you, do you enjoy discussing it?
9) What books have had an impact on you and why?
10) Relate the books you read to a personal feeling. How do they make you feel in one word?

Appendix D

Theoretical Framework for Task Model

(May vary depending on the topic of study)

In this section, I would like to propose a literary teaching method inspired by Savvidou's integrated teaching approach (2004). I believe this method gives learners the opportunity to broaden their knowledge of cross-cultural experiences and enhances the language-learning process by encouraging them to elicit meaning whilst interacting with authentic literary texts (Gómez, 2011; citing Amer, 2003).

I would also like to use a critical literacy approach. Although this approach has not been specifically designed for the teaching of literature, it has important implications for teaching both language and literature because it reveals the interrelationship between language use and social power (My Van, 2009). A communicative approach that connects students with global realities is also beneficial for this reason.

These activities are aimed at Baccalaureate students since, given the nature and complexity of the subject matter, an intermediate level of English is required. They have been designed to practice listening, reading, grammar, and speaking skills, as well as encourage self-production activities which facilitate a stronger communicative approach.

To ensure a well-developed and interactive communicative approach that enhances student understanding and analysis, the method should be divided into three stages: pre-task, task, and post-task.

The pre-task stage would consist of designing a target reading scheme, preferably with the use of illustrations and videos so that students are able to familiarise themselves with the context surrounding the author, history and described events.

In my opinion, illustrations play a relevant role and they appeal to a broad range of students, including those suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD or ADD). Pictures can often help students visualise and reinforce certain concepts and motivate

them to pay attention. Cross-cultural elements could also be included at this stage. For example, if students are studying a romantic author, an activity could be designed around the painting “Wanderer above the Sea of Fog” by Caspar David Friedrich, 1818. This painting clearly portrays the vast landscapes detailed by many literary romantics and can help provide context and set the mood. A vocabulary glossary should also be designed at this point to help students overcome any potential comprehension issues with the text.

Once students have completed these activities, they could gather in varied groups of four to share ideas and perspectives about the social and historical background of the author and the period of history in which the text is set.

As a final activity at the pre-task stage, it would be interesting, where possible, to source an audio version of the text to play to students to help them practice their listening skills. This would be particularly suitable for short texts and poetry. In the case of longer texts, if a film based on the book is available, this could be played to students to help them internalize the story, familiarise themselves with the characters, and practice their audio-lingual skills.

Activities can be designed in line with the text being studied. The proposed activities may work better with short texts and stories, although they can be adapted to longer books and novels.

A copy of the text will be given to each student at the start of the task. Students could recite the text as a class and perform samples of the text in groups. They will be encouraged to analyse the structure of the text and instructed on any important aspects they need to keep in mind. After this, students will be given some time to read the text at their own pace. This gives them an opportunity to detect any new vocabulary. It also allows them to analyse the setting and background of the story and identify the perspectives of the various characters.

Once this has been done, students can form groups to discuss the issues raised in the text as well as the author's background and intentions. This brainstorming session should help them form conclusions about the plot, purpose, and theme of the story.

It would be interesting to end the task by developing the students' communicative skills with role plays and performance activities as these can help familiarise students with the text. Another idea would be to look for a similar text and present it in class, explaining any similarities in content, form, or style. This activity can help students acquire a broader range of knowledge and raise their cross-cultural awareness. For example, if we read a speech by Martin Luther king, we could relate it to Malcolm X who was a source of great inspiration during the Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968).

This stage would be concluded with a summary of the text before students gather in groups again to summarise the story from their perspectives. Guidance will be provided to ensure ideas are well-formed and constructed.

Post-task activities will include asking students to identify the ideas and experiences of the author and relate them to modern day examples and personal experiences. The aim here is to establish parallels with literature and reality to help students understand and identify with the text on a personal level.

Post-task activities will also include a written assessment of the text where students express their opinions and justify their arguments. Writing should be informal and focus on personal critical thinking. For example, in the case of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, we could analyse how the novel gives voice to the voiceless and compare it to themes of bullying discussed in previous classes. Students are free to choose whatever topic they consider most relevant in the story and they are encouraged to include ideas from other texts where they have detected similarities. They are also encouraged to relate concepts from the story to present-day examples of voiceless communities to show how the past shapes the present.

This activity has been designed to be implemented in an average of six to eight sessions. If a book is being studied, home reading will also be required to maintain momentum in classes and allow more time to be spent on complementary activities. A self-evaluation chart could be provided so students can assess how their knowledge expands and evolves throughout the sessions.

Some interesting quotes and readings that can be used in class to encourage discussion.

Includes a variety of contrasting topics.

On Love

If the aim is to study the topic of love in literature, a few quotes could be selected which summarize the concept of love during different points in history: “Doubt thou the stars are fire; Doubt that the sun doth move; Doubt truth to be a liar; But never doubt I love.” (Shakespeare, 1600). In this quote, we can observe how love was expressed in plays during the tail end of the medieval period. Its form and content are completely different from current times, so historical context would also play an essential role in understanding the specifics of the topic.

If we think of expressing love through poetry, we can find inspiration from metaphysical poems such as “Break of the Day” (Donne, n.d):

*“’Tis true, ’tis day, what though it be?
O wilt thou therefore rise from
me? Why should we rise because
’tis light? Did we lie down because
’twas night?
Love, which in spite of darkness brought us hither,
Light hath no tongue, but is all
eye; If it could speak as well as
spy,*

*This were the worst that it could
say, That being well I fain would
stay,
And that I loved my heart and honour so,
That I would not from him, that had them,
go.*

*Must business thee from hence
remove? Oh, that's the worst
disease of love, The poor, the foul,
the false, love can Admit, but not
the busied man.
He which hath business, and makes love, doth
do Such wrong, as when a married man doth
woo."*

In this poem, Donne, compares love to the essence of life: the contrast between night and day. He positions love as a basic need and describes it as a sublime feeling.

This last example of love in literature also supports my theory that perspectives and approaches are influenced by time, culture, folklore, and traditions. In the novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God", the author, African American writer Zora Neale Hurston, deals with the topic of love and intertwines it with concepts of gender and class. She addresses her beloved by saying "You have the key to my kingdom." (Hurston, 1937). In this quote we can see how the form of love has shifted into a deeper and more powerful statement compared to the first two quotes.

If we compare all three quotes, students get a much broader definition of the topic of love. And by pre-selecting different authors from different time, we can guide the differences and similarities we want students to focus on and give them a more varied and contrasting definition of love.

According to Koya Vaka'uta (2001), "The study of literature goes far beyond the narrow scope of the study of the English language, which looks only at grammar and the

technicalities of the spoken and written language.”, and, in fact, “literature is, in a sense, a social study”. A factor that fuels this issue is that teachers are required to finish a syllabus by the end of the academic year, and this makes the class “[better] equipped to become professional students than they are to be creative, innovative or critical thinkers”.

On Discrimination

If we want to highlight the topic of discrimination in a class, we could start by taking a look at minority groups throughout history. For example, we could discuss texts written by African American slaves such as Frederick Douglas, one of the first slaves to publish an autobiography:

“I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit. The nearest estimate I can give makes me now between twenty-seven and twenty-eight years of age. I come to this, from hearing my master say, some time during 1835, I was about seventeen years old.” (Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, 1845).

It would be interesting for students to observe these opening lines from his autobiography in order to understand and familiarise themselves with the concept of slavery. I believe this quote exemplifies how power can be represented in literature, and how

gruelling the life of a slave really was. Supporting material could include a playing of “Slave Song” by Sade, which reinforces the ideas presented by Douglas and conjures powerful and vivid imagery.

The following quote could be used to reinforce this point: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” (Nelson Mandela, 1990). Mandela won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 and he was elected president of the Republic of South Africa in 1994 during a time of universal suffrage. He had a big impact on 400 years of black slavery.

A written activity and debate could also be implemented, comparing the life of Frederick Douglas to the Black Lives Matter marches and protests. What similarities are there? What has changed?

On Feminism

If you are looking to address the concept of feminism in literature, aside from reading the text, you could also watch a film with similar themes and hold a discussion on the role of women over the past 200 years.

Jane Austin used a very daring opening line in *Pride and Prejudice*, something which was common amongst 19th century female authors. Helen Fielding using a similar line almost two centuries later when she talks about life’s misfortunes. The similarities and differences between these quotes would be an interesting topic for debate in class:

“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.”: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that when one part of your life starts going okay, another falls spectacularly to pieces.” Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001).