

LITERATURE IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: STUDENTS' AND
TEACHERS' VIEWS ON LEARNER MOTIVATION, READING HABITS AND SKILLS,
AND THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

by

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Abstract

Although many scholars have emphasised the value of literature as authentic and motivating material to be deployed in the FL (foreign language) classroom, it seems that a sense of unease still exists amongst practitioners. Literature is often absent in FL courses based on the claim that it is too linguistically and culturally difficult. Proceeding from the recognition that a difference exists between the theory and the practice of integrating literature in FL courses, this qualitative study investigates practitioners' views about literature's role in motivating learners, promoting their reading habits and skills in the FL and about the role of the teacher when literary texts are deployed. Findings confirm the potential of literature to enhance motivation, promote the development of reading skills and boost students' desire to read further in a FL; however, they reveal that such potential often remains unrealised in the FL classroom. The role of teachers in terms of beliefs about, knowledge of and approach to using literary texts for FL learning emerges as crucial. Findings also highlight the relevance of FL extensive reading skills for students' positive response to literature, suggesting that a deeper understanding of how these work and can be taught should complement teaching practice.

Dedication

Dedicated to Costanza, Vania, Alessandra and Michela

whose support has been so precious to me.

To their friendship,

to our dreams.

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List of abbreviations

CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CLTs – Creative Literary Texts

CO – Classroom Observations

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

EN – Extra Notes (from classroom observations)

ER – Extensive Reading

ESL – English as a Second Language

L1 – First Language

L2 – Second Language

LAP – Language for Academic Purposes

LSP – Language for Specific Purposes

FL – Foreign Language

FN – Field Notes (from classroom observations)

PSQ1 – Pilot Student Questionnaire 1

PSI – Pilot Student Interview

PTI – Pilot Teacher Interview

RQs – Research Questions

RQ1 – Research Question 1

RQ2 – Research Question 2

RQ3 – Research Question 3

S1, S2, S(...) – Student in the non-experimental group

SE1, SE2, SE(...) – Student in the experimental group

SF1, SF2, SF(...) – Student in the follow-up group

SI – Student Interview

SP1, SP2, SP(...) – Student pilot

SQs – Student questionnaires

SQ1 – Student Questionnaire 1

SQ2 – Student Questionnaire 2

SQ3 – Student Questionnaire 3

T1, T2, T(...) – Teacher

TESOL – Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

TI – Teacher Interview

TM – Teaching Materials

TQ – Teacher Questionnaire

Introduction

The present research is based on the hypothesis that literature is an adequate tool to teach a second/foreign language (L2/FL) and is beneficial for language learning at any level of proficiency. The alleged power of literature to motivate students more than any other texts, and its value as authentic material to be deployed in the L2/FL classroom have been recognised in theoretical discussions (e.g. Lazar, 1993; Llach, 2007; Aghagolzadeh and Tajabadi, 2012); however, confusion still exists about the relationship between literature and language learning and most of the assumptions and arguments on the topic are not backed by empirical data (Abukhattala, 2014). Moreover, only a few studies have explored the *role* of literature in L2/FL contexts from the perspectives of those who are involved in classroom experiences – i.e. teachers and students – taking into account their perceptions of literature and its impact on them (Chapter 1.3). If we look at classroom reality, we notice that a gap exists between the theory and practice of integrating literature in L2/FL contexts: teachers hesitate to use literary texts to the same extent as they use other types of text, and students do not seem to derive enjoyment automatically from reading literature in language courses. The perspective of the practitioners *is* therefore relevant to understanding why this happens and how to bridge the gap between research findings and pedagogical practices.

My study seeks to do so by looking at the use of Creative Literary Texts (CLTs) as tools for L2/FL teaching, in terms of investigating practitioners' current views on two main topics: the impact of CLTs on learners' motivation and on L2/FL reading habits and skills. Furthermore, a third aspect is analysed: I believe, in fact, that enquiring about the role of CLTs in the L2/FL class necessarily implies reflection on the role of teachers, in terms of what they actually do with

literature and how they relate to it. The study, conducted primarily in a British university, aims to investigate the following research questions (RQs) (explained further in section 4.1):

- RQ1: Does the use of CLTs influence university students' motivation in the FL classroom?
- RQ2: Does the incorporation of CLTs in the FL classroom have an impact on university students' reading habits and skills in the foreign language?
- RQ3: What role do teachers play in the use of CLTs in the FL classroom?

In order to achieve the aims outlined above, I designed a qualitative study which also involved an experimental phase (Chapter 4) during which a selection of literary texts were used with two groups of university students of Italian FL. In my role of teacher of said students and of researcher who designed and conducted the study, I was – just like any researcher – “the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data” (Merriam, 2001, p. 20) but also a participant in the experiment. Being the teacher and the researcher in the experiment allowed me to be “close to the matter at hand” and “to develop the perspective that comes from a degree of distance” (Hobson, 2001, p. 8). This dual role guided me through methodological choices such as participant-observation of experimental classes (see Chapter 4.2.1.1 for the justification of this research role) and engaged me in a process of self-observation and self-evaluation, which allowed me to acknowledge my actions/reactions to classroom events and to critically reflect on them (Chapter 4.7). My beliefs, perspectives, background and possible biases are reported in the study: this allows for a more complete picture of the role of the teacher (RQ3) and helps readers understand the extent of the researcher's subjectivity, which is almost unavoidable in qualitative research (Chapter 4.7).

On a theoretical level, my study will help broaden knowledge of teachers' and students' views about the relationship between literature and L2/FL teaching/learning; more practically, it will have an impact on L2/FL pedagogy, as (a) it will raise instructors' awareness of the potential role of literature in the L2/FL classroom, and (b) it will provide an example of deploying literary texts with FL university students¹.

In the following sections, I will describe the way in which literature's role in L2/FL teaching has changed over time, I will review the main theoretical assumptions in support of using literature in L2/FL contexts, and I will take into consideration possible differences between theory and classroom practice. However, before moving onto a fuller analysis of the issue, it is useful to define some key terms that will be used in my research: *first* language (L1), *second* language (L2) and *foreign* language (FL). A *first* language is the learner's 'mother tongue': people learn their L1 "both at home and at school and use it for day-to-day communication in the society in which they live" (Punchihetti, 2013, p. 2). People who speak a language as their L1 are 'native speakers'.

While it is easy to distinguish L1 from L2 and FL, the difference between L2 and FL is not as clear; sometimes the terms overlap and are improperly used as synonyms, though they indicate two very different teaching/learning contexts. In the case of Italian language, for instance: Italian as a FL indicates the learning/teaching of Italian in a non-Italian-speaking country, whereas Italian as a L2 indicates the learning/teaching of Italian in Italy (Diadori, 2001) In general terms, we might say that learners of a L2 are constantly exposed to the target language (TL) in a variety of settings; by contrast, learners of a FL are rarely exposed to the TL outside the classroom and, consequently, they have few, if any, opportunities to use it with native speakers apart from their teacher. In such

¹ For detailed outcomes and recommendations see Chapter 6.5.

a context, students tend to develop good grammar knowledge but may have difficulties in developing oral proficiency and communication skills (Diadori, 2001).

Even though studies conducted in both L2 and FL contexts are presented here, my investigation will be conducted primarily in a FL context, specifically the teaching/learning of Italian language in a British university.

0.1 The role of literature in the L2/FL teaching context in historical perspective

The presence of literary texts in L2/FL teaching is not new. However, the ways in which literature has been integrated in the L2/FL classroom have changed over time and have originated a rich theoretical debate on what is the *role* of literature in L2/FL teaching/learning. In their comprehensive survey of how literature has been used in L2/FL education, Kramsch and Kramsch (2000) distinguish between some key periods over the past century, identifying specific trends and pedagogies for each period. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the era of the grammar-translation method, literature, selected and integrated in the L2/FL curriculum for its prestige and educational value, assumed a central role in the study of a language: reading literature was considered “the most effective way of acquiring and the most useful way of using a foreign language” (p. 560). The way canonical literary texts were used in the traditional L2/FL classroom caused some problems: the TL was seen as a means of accessing the texts and of gaining accurate understanding, which implied a focus on form and style and a time-consuming translation (word by word, sentence by sentence) into the students’ L1. Teaching involved critical and stylistic analyses of literary classics, but did not help students develop a communicative competence in the L2/FL (Carter and Long, 1991). In the subsequent period, i.e. the aural-oral period (1940-60), literature was almost absent from the L2/FL curriculum: the focus of language pedagogy having

shifted from reading to speaking, literary texts lost their predominance and were not considered relevant. The interest in literature increased again in the 1970s and 1990s with the communicative method – which is still very popular in these days – where literature is seen as authentic material that enhances students’ language and cultural competence. This approach emphasises the study of a L2/FL for practical purposes (i.e. being able to communicate in different sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts, Bagarić and Djigunović, 2007) and considers literary texts like all other types of text; the same pedagogic procedures are adopted to work on them (Carter, 2017). As a consequence, the role of literature is marginalised whereas priority is given to authentic texts related to specific semantic areas, such as dialogues and conversations about family, free time, work etc., or news articles, interviews, recipes etc., which are considered to be more effective in meeting the learners’ immediate communication needs (Magnani, 2009).

It emerges that literature has served many different purposes in L2/FL pedagogy but its role seems to be still unclear. Thus, it has been an object of study, *studied* mainly to acquire biographical information about the author and literary critical views, to study interpretations given by the teacher or by a course book; then, it has been a ‘mere’ text to be translated and analysed word by word; finally, it has been ‘just one of many’, equivalent to any other source of written input in the L2/FL classroom. I believe that what was lost in the meantime is the ‘nature’ of literature², i.e. its creativity, its imaginative power and its richness as a form of art. The nature of the reading

² Magnani (2009) says that “the voice” of literature (i.e. its emotional power) needs to be brought back into the L2/FL classroom and describes a method that, theorised by Hunfeld in 1990, has been developed and adopted in the Bolzano Province, a bilingual province in north Italy, to teach German as a Second Language. This method is considered post-communicative and is based on a theory of correctly understanding the discourse of others – “*scienza dell’esatta interpretazione del discorso altrui*” (Magnani, 2009, p. 112); it is therefore called the *hermeneutic approach* to language teaching. Within this approach, literature has been given a central role in the process of learning a foreign language. As this is not the object of the present study, for a detailed description of the hermeneutic approach see Magnani (2009, 2006 and 2005), and also <http://www.provincia.bz.it/intendenza-scolastica/sistema-scuola/sistema-approccio-ermeneutico.asp> (in Italian and in German).

experience was lost, too: the scope of reading literary texts in the L2/FL classroom extends far beyond their aesthetic qualities and their functional use for language learning, as what is at stake is also the readers' emotions, involvement and personal interpretation of a story.

0.2 Reasons for the integration of literature in the L2/FL classroom

Many scholars have investigated and outlined the reasons why literature is beneficial to L2/FL learning. From a *linguistic* point of view literature, thanks to its richness in linguistic forms and style, contributes greatly to vocabulary expansion and strengthens grammatical knowledge (McKay, 1986). Furthermore, it allows for the improvement of students' writing skills by providing them with a "model of 'good writing'" (Parkinson and Reid-Thomas, 2000) and provides excellent practice of intensive and extensive reading (Khatib, Derakhshan and Rezaei, 2011).

Literature is also an excellent source of *culture learning*: by reading it, students experience the culture and the way of thinking that go with the TL (McKay, 1986)³.

From a *methodological* point of view, literature has been shown to be very useful for two main reasons: 1) it creates opportunities for discussion and real practice of the L2/FL because it allows for learners' different and personal interpretation; 2) it involves learners and makes them central to the learning process, stimulating their interest and participation (Llach, 2007). Both

³ However, Edmondson (1995) argues that the type of cultural access offered by literature to language students remains very unclear, and provocatively assumes that other sources – more direct than literature - may be consulted to understand the culture of a TL. A possible answer to Edmondson's argument may be found in what Carter (2007) says about culture in his review article on literature and language teaching:

culture is best seen as something that is not a thing but an active and negotiated entity, a 'verb', a process in which learners do not simply learn new labels for what they already have but directly engage with and participate in a new reality. In such an environment, literature has a place in fostering self-awareness and identity in interaction with a new language and culture. (p. 10)

aspects are relevant to the communicative approach to L2/FL teaching, according to which the aim of any activity in the classroom is to promote authentic use of the TL.

The use of literature in the L2/FL class is also supported by the *motivational* criterion. According to Hanauer (2001), literature's motivational power is to be considered the predominant argument for its integration in the language classroom. The stories of literature are non-trivial, encompass human experience and stimulate readers' personal response based on their own life experience (Parkinson and Reid-Thomas, 2000). Consequently, they have a strong appeal to students who not only are involved "in the suspense of unravelling the plot" (Lazar, 1993, p. 15), but are also stimulated to reflect and to discuss. In fact, often the literary text has a hidden meaning to be discovered, so that a dialogue with the reader is created where the reader interprets the text, negotiates its meanings and feels involved.

Motivation is closely related to the concept of *authenticity*, which is of great importance in L2/FL learning. Many scholars in the field (e.g. Tseng, 2010; Aghagolzadeh and Tajabadi, 2012; Daskalovska and Dimova, 2012; Bobkina and Dominguez, 2014) have proposed that literature is motivating because it is authentic material. Literary texts are real-life texts, not written for pedagogic purposes; in them language is used in a real and meaningful context, so that when students successfully work with a literary text they feel what Berardo (2006) calls "a sense of achievement": a feeling that is enhanced by the fact that literary texts are written for readers, not foreign learners.

Scholars in the field have claimed that literature also plays an important role in the development of *academic skills*: on the one hand, literature's ambiguity enhances the students' critical thinking, which is the kind of thinking expected from university students at an academic level (Khatib, Derakhshan and Rezaei, 2011); on the other hand, university students exposed to

literary narrative are familiarised with writing styles other than scientific and expository (Kramersch, 1993) and consequently can improve their writing ability⁴.

Another relevant aspect to be considered is literature's contribution to the achievement of *educational goals* (Paran, 2008): literature 'educates' in the sense that it has the potential to enrich students' lives (Shanahan, 1997). The stories of literature usually deal with universal topics, such as love, friendship, death, values and beliefs, human experience, and nature (Khatib and Nourzadeh, 2011): reading about them implies thinking, comparing them with our own experience and beliefs, it increases our knowledge of the world and sometimes it changes our mind. Literature "wants to influence the attitude of the reader, persuade him, and ultimately change him" (Wellek and Warren, 1949, p. 23): this, I believe, is what makes literature a formative experience for our thoughts and actions. Moreover, literature develops cultural awareness (McKay, 1986) and learners' intercultural competence because "it fosters awareness of cultural, ethnic, religious, racial etc. diversity and sensitizes the young to contrasting perspectives, concepts and world views, such sensitivity being vital to life in community in the global village." (Sell, 2005, p. 90).

0.3 Theory and practice: some issues

In an article published in 1995, Edmondson challenges the assumptions of those who advocate the use of literature in L2/FL classes. While he does not argue against the value of literature *per se*, he emphasises that most assumptions supporting the prominence of the literary text as a teaching resource in L2/FL contexts are only theoretical and expresses scepticism about the possibility of proving the issue empirically (p. 44). Edmonson (1995) argues that it is not only the type of text

⁴ This interpretation may be considered a reply to the objections of some opponents to the use of literature in language classes, who claim that literature does not have a practical, utilitarian use and has no value for students' future careers.

we use but also the way in which we use it that makes a difference in terms of effects on L2/FL learning, and concludes that literary texts have nothing special distinguishing them from other texts.

While I do not agree with Edmonson's arguments but rather support those who think that literature has indeed something special that is helpful to L2/FL learning (section 1.2), it is nevertheless remarkable that twenty-five years later, his objections have neither been proved nor refuted by empirical studies. In fact, empirical evidence to prove what the theory has been saying about literature's contribution to L2/FL learning is still needed.

In their article examining the role of literature in composition classes, Belcher and Hirvela (2000, p. 34) concluded that:

[...] the most complex variable in the lit-comp [literature-composition] debate may be the powerful yet elusive nature of literary experience itself. That experience does not lend itself to easy description or quantification. Debates over the advantages and disadvantages of literature in composition instruction are, therefore, made more difficult because the subject of the debate is not as visible or tangible as some other components of language instruction may be.

If this might explain the existing gap in L2/FL acquisition research on the topic, it does not justify it. One is left with the impression that theory and practice – by practice I mean the act of teaching and learning a L2/FL, that is to say *all that happens* in the language classroom – are parallel universes. Many studies have shown that there are several and valuable reasons to support

the introduction of literature in L2/FL courses (section 1.2). However, if we look at language classroom practice, we realise that literature is often an ‘avoided subject’, dreaded by both language teachers and students. Therefore, research has not adequately explained or understood the difference between *what is said* and *what is actually done*. My investigation does not intend to debate the value of the literary experience in the language classroom, but rather to find evidence to support the use of literature and to bridge the gap between scholars’, teachers’ and students’ perspectives on it.

Shanahan (1997) points out that literature is intuitively valuable and relevant as language teaching material, but “data-based rationales seem completely inapplicable to that intuition” (p. 166). Moreover, he argues that the evocative power of literature and the way it involves the reader emotionally are undervalued aspects:

These are aspects of the study of literature that we take for granted. However, because they involve experience that is heavily laden with emotion – “affect” in psychological parlance – and because that may make them suspect when scrutinized in a formalistic research setting, we often fail to see them for what they are: “data” – albeit of a different kind than the word normally implies – that is, clear evidence that there is a feature of the literary experience that goes beyond aesthetics, at least in its more narrowly defined sense. (Shanahan, 1997, p. 166)

In light of the above arguments, it seems appropriate to ask: if literature is so beneficial, why do L2/FL teachers so rarely use literary texts in the classroom? And, at the same time, why do

L2/FL textbooks make such limited use of literature? It seems to me that a literary text has indeed something special that no other text has.

In the following chapter, I will clarify what makes the literary text *so* different from other types of text 1) by evaluating its positive and negative features as a resource for L2/FL teaching and, 2) by taking into account teachers' and students' perspectives on literature and on its motivating power.

Chapter 1

Literature in second- and foreign- language teaching and learning

Introduction

Does the literary text have special features that distinguish it from other types of text? Or, does the literary text not differ significantly from other texts? The reason why it is relevant to ask these questions is that both theory and practice treat the literary text differently from other types of text available for L2/FL teaching. While many studies have shown the unique nature of the literary text, language teachers and students seem to have a negative attitude towards it. This chapter will first define the word *literature* and then describe features of literary texts and practitioners' views about literature in the L2/FL context.

1.1 What is literature?

Defining literature is not as easy as it seems. From the beginning of this controversy on literature as a teaching resource in L2/FL education, various authors have given different definitions. In Edmondson's view, literature is a body of "written texts which have a certain aesthetic value and some perceived status in the culture of which they are artifacts" (Edmondson, 1995, p. 45). Though nobody can deny that literature is indeed perceived as a highly valued product of a specific culture and part of that culture's heritage, I believe that defining literature only in terms of its 'status' within a specific culture is quite reductive. In my opinion, literature has not only an aesthetic function but also a communicative one, both of which are particularly relevant in the L2/FL learning context. A literary text results from artistic expression of oneself and is communicative as it conveys ideas, beliefs and values, and evokes emotions, through the stories it tells, engaging

readers in a dialogue. In this sense, we could say with Jacobson (1960, quoted in Sivasubramaniam, 2006) that literature is a “discourse” on real-life that makes the writer’s mind accessible to the reader. This literary discourse may be either imaginative or factual, but it is made out of words and consequently represents “language in practice” (Ihejirika, 2014, p. 86). Gordon, Zaleski and Goodman (2006) adopt Britton’s (1982) wider definition of literature, according to which literature is seen as “a particular kind of utterance that a writer has ‘constructed’ not for [practical] use but for his own satisfaction”, and “satisfaction” is considered as something that “comes when readers assume the role of “spectators” and reflect on their lives” (p. 59). Defining literature by drawing attention to readers (i.e. “spectators”) and to their reactions to what they read (i.e. “reflect on their lives”) is quite significant and expands Edmondson’s definition. Literature is a cultural artifact, it is an object of aesthetic study, it is language in practice, but it is *art* in the first place, so that its essence lies in the desire to express oneself and to communicate a message. In so doing, literature also “provides entertainment, information, education and excitement to its audience” (Onuekwusi, 2013, cited in Ihejirika, 2014, p. 86) and stimulates, I would say, not only reflections but also emotions. If we think about literature’s value and about what literature was before becoming ‘teaching material’ we could say with Morgan (1993) that “[b]ooks made us think, feel, and reflect, gave us the joy of discovery and the pleasure of testing and articulating our own beliefs. The good ones made us different, stirred us, engaged our imagination, contributed to our moral development” (p. 492).

With regard to the above arguments, I think that when a definition of literature is attempted, the readers and the effects that literature has on them need to be considered, as they are essential elements of the literary experience itself. Literature may stimulate the affective-emotional sphere in multiple ways: by moving or amusing the readers, by making them reflect on ordinary and

extraordinary things, by stimulating personal growth and finally, in the case of L2/FL literature, by gratifying the readers when comprehension and enjoyment of a literary text in a non-native language are achieved. As Lott (1988) pointed out “very little is ever said about the pleasures that literature can bring to the reader. Literature is taken overwhelmingly as an object of study, and not only in the educational environment” (p. 3).

For the purpose of my investigation, a definition of literature that takes into consideration all the above aspects will be used. Literature is a text of both aesthetic and cultural value, as it is the product of a specific culture at a specific time. It is a form of art that uses language creatively, as the means of artistic expression. Like all forms of art, literature generates a dialogue with its readers, involving them naturally and directly, i.e. without any mediation, in the experience. Moreover, literature implies reading, which, in Alderson’s (2000) words, is “an enjoyable, intense, private activity, from which much pleasure can be derived, and in which one can become totally absorbed” (p. 28).

In an attempt to better understand what literature is and what its role in the FL classroom is, there follows a review of the features of literary texts. The definition of literature provided here and the alleged features of literary texts will then be compared to teachers’ and students’ perspectives (sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.3) in order to gain an insight into their opinions and to consider possible divergences.

1.2 An analytical comparison of criteria for choosing literary texts in the L2/FL classroom

Why should teachers use literary texts to teach language? As a teacher, I often asked myself this: it helped me identify not only the specificity of literary texts but also their ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ features in terms of what makes them either exploitable or not in the L2/FL classroom.

Positive features:

- a) The literary text features rich language and provides learners with authentic examples of language use: it exposes the reader to a *literary* use of *ordinary language* since the language of literary texts, though not specific to literature, is characterised by a higher incidence of metaphors, poetic lexis and unusual sentence structure (Brumfit and Carter, 1986).
- b) The literary text offers a model of how to use appropriate language in different authentic contexts, allowing students to develop awareness of language use. An example of this is found in McKay's (1982) as he says that literature "presents language in discourse in which the parameters of the setting and role relationship are defined" and consequently "language that illustrates a particular register or dialect is embedded within a social context, and thus, there is a basis for determining why a particular form is used" (p. 530).
- c) Literature enhances communication and interaction in the classroom, providing learners with many opportunities to practise the target language (TL). The nature of communication changes as literature's figurative language allows for what Daskalovska and Dimova (2012, p. 1183) call "self-expression" and "imaginative involvement", which is not mere utilitarian communication. At the same time, learners' ability to infer from the text is also enhanced by reading literature, as they need to interpret and to decode textual meanings (Brumfit and Carter, 1986).
- d) Collie and Slater (1987) claim that the "relevance" of literature "moves with the passing of time, but seldom disappears completely" because the themes treated are

about “fundamental human issues” (p. 3). This, I think, makes the literary text potentially always exploitable in the classroom as it inspires thoughts and imagination transcending time and culture, which is not true for all texts (e.g. news articles).

- e) When learners read a literary text their attention is not focused directly on language structure or vocabulary, but rather on meanings: they do not approach a literary text with the intention to *study* the language, but rather to understand and ultimately to enjoy it. While they do this, learners naturally use the TL to accomplish understanding and they acquire new vocabulary and grammar (Krashen, 1989). In fact, L2/FL learning may be intentional or incidental, explicit or implicit (Schmidt, 1995): the literary text “does not focus on forms intentionally” (Nafisah, 2006) and this gives students the opportunity to learn the language by unconscious means.
- f) Its creative and imaginative power allows for emotional engagement with the TL (Sivasubramaniam, 2006) as learners are encouraged not to look for literal reading but instead, to personally and creatively interpret literary language: in Lazar’s (1996) words “unravelling the plot of a novel or decoding the dialogue of a play is more than a mechanical exercise” (p. 773); by doing so, learners start to *feel* the L2/FL and its power to communicate the same thing in many different and creative ways.
- g) Stress, characterised by anxiety and frustration, may occur when students learn a new language: the fear of making mistakes, intrinsic language difficulties and a sense of “insufficient command of the TL” (Hashemi, 2011, p. 1813) are some negative aspects of the L2/FL learning experience. Such feelings can be overcome

when students are fully immersed in meaningful tasks (Caon, 2006) which involve them emotionally, allowing implicit use of the L2/FL and, consequently, implicit learning. Literature provides a meaningful context – it portrays “every human experience/dilemma” and “elicit[s] strong emotional reaction from learners” (Lazar, 1996, p. 773) – and contributes to making the process of learning a L2/FL less stressful.

It seems to me that, taken together, all the aspects mentioned above actually distinguish the literary text from any other text, making it *unique* in the L2/FL teaching context. This is not to say that each feature identified characterises only the literary text. One could argue for instance, that all authentic texts promote examples of language used in real contexts (point a) and that no authentic text focuses on forms with the intention of supplying grammar to the L2/FL students, so that they learn the TL subconsciously (point e). However, the occurrence of *all* these positive features together in a text characterises it in a way that is exclusive to the literary text.

However, the decision to deploy literature in the L2/FL classroom requires teachers to consider ‘what can go wrong’, too.

There follows an analysis of what I believe are the negative features of the literary text, i.e. features that may make it unsuitable for L2/FL learning.

Negative features:

- a) The creative language of literature may be extremely challenging for L2/FL students. Critics of the integration of literary texts in the L2/FL classroom, summarised in Or (1995), contend that poetry and prose are “misleading models”

of language, in that they often manipulate grammar and lexis “in the service of literary artifice” (i.e. figures of speech, manipulation of syntax for purposes of rhyme, extensive lexical range, sometimes obscure lexis, etc.) and they have “the potentiality always to violate principles of ‘correctness’” (p. 184). This may discourage learners (especially at lower levels of proficiency), who may need to rely heavily on dictionary work and on the help of the teacher to accomplish understanding⁵.

- b) A literary text is often ‘culturally charged’: the concepts might be difficult to decode as they contain cultural references (Bagherkazemi and Alemi, 2010) and may be distant from students’ L1 culture. Kramsch (1996) addresses the question of cultural difficulty, affirming that students’ greatest challenge when reading L2/FL texts is “to position themselves as readers” (p. 162) as they are outside the “discourse community” of the native speakers, to whom texts are addressed. Moreover, it is my belief that the cultural content of a text (e.g. the ideas and values it portrays) may sometimes be perceived as very far from students’ everyday experience and, therefore, irrelevant. This may be the case especially with non-contemporary literature.
- c) Lazar (1994, p. 116) claims that teachers have “very limited time in which to complete a syllabus, and consider including literary texts in the lesson an

⁵ Parkinson and Reid-Thomas (2000) further explain that critics of the use of literature in the L2/FL context consider it “not only (often) difficult” but also “often ‘odd’ and ‘deviant’ in various ways” (p. 12) to the extent that it does not help to learn the grammar.

unnecessary and time-wasting distraction”⁶. In my experience, this has often been the object of informal discussions with colleagues: ‘lack of time’ is indeed perceived by many teachers as a crucial deterrent to introducing literary texts. Due to its length, a literary text imposes both time and curriculum restrictions and, unless courses are explicitly designed to include reading in L2/FL teaching programmes, many teachers do not feel comfortable in allowing in-class reading and interaction time as they feel the pressure to cover the required material and to prepare students for exams.

- d) Selecting literary texts is usually difficult and time-consuming for teachers as it implies a careful evaluation of students’ needs and tastes, as well as of the author, the genre of the work, the literary school it belongs to and other similar factors (Khatib, Derakhshan and Rezaei, 2011).
- e) The literary text does not have functional authenticity because it is not written for teaching purposes, its aim being “to entertain, to move, to amuse and to excite” readers (Parkinson and Reid-Thomas, 2000, p. 12)⁷, not to encourage them to write about or comment on it. Moreover, considering the functional dimension of literature in the L2/FL context, it has been argued that it is irrelevant to students’ academic and occupational needs (McKay, 1982); it is especially so in the context of teaching a L2/FL for academic purposes (LAP) or specific purposes (LSP), where

⁶ Macalister (2010) notes a concern which many teachers share about incorporating reading time into the L2/FL course syllabus, because silent in-class reading is not perceived as learning, both by the students and the school administrators.

⁷ I would argue that this emotional impact of literature is what makes introducing it in the L2/FL classroom worthwhile, as discussed in Chapters 1.5, 3.2, 5.1.1 and 5.2.2.

priority is given to educational goals much more than to the “aesthetic values” of literary texts (Khatib, Derakhshan and Rezaei, 2011).

- f) It implies ‘literary competence’. Such competence is described as “an implicit understanding of certain conventions of interpretation which skilled readers draw on when reading literature” (Culler, 1975, quoted in Lazar, 1994, p. 115); it implies not only knowledge of ‘formal properties’ of the literary text as, for instance, meter and rhyme scheme (Lazar, 1994) but also the ability to recognise and use literary notions to achieve proper interpretations of a literary text. It has been argued by a few scholars that a lack of familiarity with literary concepts, such as text genre and conventions, makes a literary text particularly complex and inaccessible for students, who may not be able to interpret and infer messages, especially when their level of language proficiency is low (Savvidou, 2004).

From a teacher perspective, acknowledging these potentially challenging features of a literary text is fundamental: these traits should not, however, discourage from using literature but rather should be the object of critical reflection with the aim of improving teachers’ ability to select the appropriate text for their students. Firstly, it is worth asking whether all of the negative features mentioned apply exclusively to literature or not. The purpose of doing so is to clarify what Parkinson and Reid-Thomas (2000) call “ambiguity [...] between perceived and actual problems” (p. 11) when literature is used in the L2/FL learning context. I would argue that many of the identified problems concerning the literary text apply to all types of text used in the L2/FL classroom. All types of text – narrative, journalistic, descriptive, expository, to name just a few – may be too difficult (in lexis and/or in syntax) or too culturally charged for a foreign student to

work with. Moreover, it could be said that any authentic text which is used in the L2/FL classroom lacks functional authenticity, as all texts not written for teaching purposes intrinsically do.

A final point worth discussing concerns literary competence (point f), without which it may not be possible to enjoy literature. Though literary competence is very important as it helps the reader to interpret a text and to become a good reader, it seems to me that such competence is the ultimate result of a process that may only start with a positive encounter with the text and the story being told. What I mean to say here is that it is still possible to appreciate literature even if one lacks literary competence, by simply appreciating the content which any reader is able to access and the emotions that this elicits. This, I would say, may be a first step to approaching literature and towards the construction of a more sophisticated literary competence: even though teaching literary competence is not the focus in the L2/FL classroom, students may “begin to acquire it through their exposure to literary texts” (Lazar, 1993, p. 14). Literature is worth integrating in the L2/FL class because, as Sivasubramaniam (2006) eloquently summarises, it enriches human experience:

An engagement with literature exercises our senses more actively than we can otherwise achieve. Through literature we enjoy the beauty and splendour of nature as we travel to far-away lands. We go through experiences that will not be possible in our real lives. As we read literature filled with images of action, adventure, love, hatred, violence, triumph and defeat, we create an outlet for our emotions. As a result, our perceptions of real life experiences become sharper and deeper. (p. 265)

I argue that, in line with Wellek and Warren (1949), this is what students should be able to feel in the first place: the joy of reading literature and the emotional involvement that it brings along.

I will not proceed with a fuller analysis of these ideas at this stage, as many of them (motivation and authenticity, approaches to reading L2/FL literature etc.) will be expanded in later chapters. It suffices for the moment to draw attention to the *possibility* that many of the literary text's negative features identified on a theoretical level, may be ill-founded. I do not intend here to oversimplify an issue that has been generating such rich and valuable debate in academia. Nonetheless, I think that some false beliefs exist about the literary text and that the time has come to overcome resistance towards it.

1.3 Students' and teachers' perspectives on literature

All romantic feelings for literature tend to suffer from some kind of dramatic clash with reality. As Morgan (1993) points out "the vast majority of our undergraduate students do not love or appreciate literature as we do" (p. 491). This assumption corresponds to the L2/FL classroom reality where the use of literary texts is very limited. However, if literary texts are rarely used, despite all their asserted positive features and beneficial effects on language learning, this cannot only be a consequence of students' aversion to literature. I argue that L2/FL teachers play an important role, too.

In this section, I will review the existing research about students' and teachers' approaches to literature in order to understand the reasons for such a classroom situation. However, it is important to highlight that, although necessary, investigations of students' and teachers' opinions

on literature seem quite rare, as in many instances this question has been analysed only from scholars' and specialists' points of view.

1.3.1 What students think about literature

Some scholars have attempted to describe students' attitude to literature taking into account the decreasing number of students enrolling in literature courses at university⁸. Martin and Laurie (1993) maintain that students study a L2/FL for “pragmatic” and “practical” reasons “such as travel, employment or interpersonal communication” (p. 188) and do not find any cultural relevance or aesthetic value in studying literature. Nor do students appear to find literature particularly relevant to L2/FL improvement overall: they see literature as a way to strengthen reading and writing abilities, whereas their priorities seem to be oral and aural proficiency (Martin and Laurie, 1993; Yilmaz, 2012).

Though this may be a starting point to observe this issue, for a comprehensive view of students' attitude towards literature, indicators other than course enrolment should be analysed. As Davis *et al.* (1992) argue, direct indicators of students' opinion on literature need to be taken into account. For a start, we may ask whether students read at all. If we look at students' reading habits in general we may hypothesise that what Bretz claimed in 1990 still applies to today's reading culture, a trend that Sanchez (2009) sees as a serious problem and calls “aliteracy”: a lack of reading

⁸ As Davis *et al.* (1992) pointed out, ever decreasing numbers of students at university had been enrolling in literature courses. Moreover, the authors noted that increased enrolment in L2/FL courses was not matched by any growth in enrolment in L2/FL literature courses. This trend was confirmed by Carroli (2002) in her survey carried out in 1998 and has been interpreted as the main indicator of students' disinterest in literature in general. However, there are not many recent studies to confirm that this is the actual trend today and that this is the actual indicator of L2/FL learners' difficult relationship with literature.

habits. We may say that students are more and more accustomed to a language characterised by brevity and simplicity, such as the language of the web, chat and smartphones. According to Liu (2005) the digital environment, with its huge amount of information available, has affected young adults' reading habits: they are much more used to skimming, keyword spotting and browsing for information on the internet than to extensive reading. Macalister (2010) remarks that if L2/FL reading does not happen in the language classroom, students may not read in the TL at all. Similarly, Camiciottoli (2001) found that EFL (English as a FL) students in her study did not read much in the TL beyond the reading required for their language course. Bretz (1990, p. 335) stressed that:

The devaluation of literature in today's society is of crucial importance; however, we should keep in mind that it is not just literature but all reading that has been marginalized in today's culture. The increase in leisure-time activities of a passive nature is symptomatic of this shift. [...] [N]one of the youthful activities that are popular today require even minimal reading skills. [...] The lack of practice in reading is a reality that teachers of literature must confront.

Moreover, if we specifically talk about reading literature, we have the impression that this is very often considered a 'school activity' by many students, who stop reading as soon as they finish school. Sanchez (2009) found that students did not deem reading literature "worth the effort", considered reading literature as "a long reading comprehension exercise and usually undertook the task with some instrumental motivation in mind" (p. 2) such as, for example, passing an exam or

studying new vocabulary and grammar in the TL. However, there are always two sides to a coin. According to Martin and Laurie's (1993) investigation, some students actually enjoy reading literature but only for pleasure not for literature classes and consider literature "a private exercise" that they do not want to share in public. In fact, some students think that a big difference exists between reading literature as a compulsory activity and "reading it for enjoyment or personal development" (p. 201) and admit that this is the main reason why they do not like literature nor have an interest in it as part of their language course. The authors go on to claim that:

If students give low priority to literature, it is not necessarily because they are not readers. Not only the humanities students in our survey, but also the science, computing and economic majors valued literature as a leisure pursuit, and most were willing to make the intellectual effort to deal with what their teachers would term "good" literature. However, many seemed to be closet readers who feared to deal with literature publicly, on a formal basis. (Martin and Laurie, 1993, p. 205)

In saying this, they give a different interpretation from Bretz's, maintaining that:

Their fear of literature as a public exercise does not seem to arise from deficient basic literacy skills [...]. Inadequate reading skills may be a problem for fewer of our students than we think, if it is true that many are regular, if covert, readers of literature. [...] What our students really felt they lacked was the cultural background to enable them to relate to a

foreign literature (and, for many, any literature at all) except at a level of private and personal enjoyment. (Martin and Laurie, 1993, p. 205)

What is suggested here is that many students feel inadequate and stressed when they work with a literary text in the classroom. I argue that attention should be paid to the affective dimension of learning (Carter and Long, 1991; Lazar, 1996) which may explain students' different attitude towards private and public reading (Martin and Laurie, 1993). As reiterated by some students in my study (Chapter 5.1.1), they like literature when they feel free to *simply* enjoy a book in private; negative feelings arise when they are asked to analyse, explain, or discuss literature in public so that literature becomes difficult and background information is perceived as an essential precondition. While literary texts can indeed motivate and engage students, the classroom activities associated with them may become very demotivating. However, more recent studies have found that students appreciate the use of literature in the L2/FL classroom, as they find it "enjoyable" (Carroli, 2009) and "personally rewarding" (Yilmaz, 2012). Moreover, according to Yilmaz (2012) "literary activities designed to enhance language learning facilitate the study of literature" which students consider very difficult because of "its unusual linguistic styles and elements such as complex characterization, plot, theme and setting" (p. 91). In this regard, it is interesting to note that Hirvela and Boyle's (1988) investigation shows that "interpretation of theme" is considered much more of a problem than "language difficulties" when dealing with a literary text. This is not to minimise the role played by language knowledge in such a context. Research has found that a connection exists between students' level of language proficiency and their appreciation of literature: students who rate their L2/FL proficiency as high often develop a better attitude towards literature than students with low language proficiency (Akyel and Yalçın, 1990). However, there

are other aspects that seem to matter more than linguistic limitations to students. I argue, very much in line with Or (1995), that students' negative attitude is influenced by negative experiences in the literature classroom itself. Ineffective approaches to using literature in the classroom may, in fact, leave students "diffident" and "frustrated": as a result of "approaching literature from a 'literary' point of view, discussing it in terms of metalanguage and academic criticism, treating it as [...] something subliminal which somehow cannot be explained in ordinary terms", literature is perceived by students as "necessarily difficult, complex, unmanageable, and, above all, alien" (Or, 1995, p. 185).

Students in my study reported this sense of unease with literature (Chapter 5.1.1), that seems to originate from what Bretz (1990, p. 336) describes as a "consistent disempowering" of learners taking place in many school literature courses often, unfortunately, "teacher dominated". In school, literature tends to be taught with a teacher-centered approach where "there is only one 'right' answer and [...] only one 'right' reading of a text" (Bretz, 1990, p. 336): this way of teaching literature contributes to making students feel a lack of confidence and a sense of inadequacy when approaching a literary text. A more student-centred approach to teaching, where students are given the opportunity to respond personally to a text, may enhance students' positive attitude towards literature, as Davis *et al.* (1992) found in their study and my research also suggests (Chapter 5.2.1).

Finally, another aspect has been found to be relevant when considering students' opinion on literature, which is learners' preferences regarding literary genres and topics. As for literary genres, for instance, different surveys (e.g. Hirvela and Boyle, 1988; Yang, 2002; Ghazali *et al.*, 2009; Tseng, 2010) have indicated prose fiction, i.e. novels and short stories, is the favourite one; short stories are appreciated by students also because of their limited length, which makes the reading "not too time-consuming" (Ghazali *et al.*, 2009, p. 53). Science fiction, in particular, was

found to be highly stimulating, for it is “full of unknowns and uncertainties; and students would not be challenged as often as they might in other reading classes” (Yang, 2002, p. 57). Short stories and novels in general seem to work quite well, especially movie tie-in stories (Tseng, 2010). Yang (2002) found that students particularly appreciate it when media other than written texts, for example films, are introduced in the lesson: participants to his survey seemed to get a better understanding of the target culture and to perform better with films supporting the reading of literature. In contrast, poetry is what students dislike (Hirvela and Boyle, 1988) and, in some instances, fear most and, according to Akyel and Yalçin (1990), students do not find any particular benefit in using poetry to learn the language. Interestingly, the authors also found that students who took part in their survey tended to accept poetry and to consider it useful for language learning only when teachers show their own interest and enthusiasm during the lesson (Akyel and Yalçin, 1990). More specifically, Ghazali *et al.* (2009) found that poetry is considered more difficult to understand as, in the words of one of the students interviewed, every word is seen “to have their own underlying meaning” (p. 54) and the real message is not evident. Results from my research seem to corroborate this view: when students in the experimental phase were given the choice to read self-selected texts, poems were the least popular (Chapter 5.3.1). By contrast, fiction (i.e. novels and short stories) were the participants’ preferred reading.

The topic of a literary text is also crucial in determining students’ preference (Ghazali *et al.*, 2009); in particular, as confirmed by participants in my experiment in Chapter 5.4.4.1, students

like reading stories they can connect with and relate to⁹. However, it is difficult to generalise due to both a lack of investigations¹⁰ and the variety of learning contexts and students' interests.

I would argue that provided a literary text is *appropriate* to the learners' interests and learning needs, they *enjoy* it no matter what the genre may be. As we will see in section 1.5, the concepts of appropriateness, understood as texts' suitability to students' needs and interests, and enjoyment, understood as pleasure in reading, are very relevant when students deal with literary texts. Moreover, I agree with Carroli (2009) that not only is it relevant to analyse how students perceive literature, but also how they experience it, as this greatly influences "their approach to the study of literature and their learning outcomes" (p. 390).

1.3.2 Teachers' perspectives: the role of teachers' beliefs in teaching practice

It is important to consider the teachers' views on literature because *teacher cognition*, i.e. "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching" (Borg, 2003, p. 81) resulting from teachers' knowledge, beliefs and personal histories, is crucial in determining how they act and "what happens in the classroom" (Macalister, 2010, p. 61). Mainstream research in L2/FL has examined teacher cognition during different stages of teachers' careers, i.e. pre-service teachers, novice teachers and in-service experienced teachers. Concerning the study of pre-service teachers' cognition, many scholars (e.g. Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Johnson, 1992) agree that formal language learning experiences represent a 'model of teaching' which shapes pre-service teachers' first

⁹ In this sense, Ghazali *et al.* (2009) found that participants in their survey preferred to read "texts that address issues of youth, relationship and change in social values" (p. 52).

¹⁰ The few studies examining students' preferences result in mixed and, at times, contrasting outcomes. Research on the topic suggests that learners' preference is also variable because it is affected by factors such as the age, the culture and the society where students live (Owen, 2013).

conceptualisation of what it means to learn a L2/FL, and thus contributes to developing their cognition about L2/FL teaching. In his study on EFL student-teachers' cognition about reading instruction, El-Okda (2005) claims that teachers' behaviour is highly determined by their "theory-in-action", i.e. "tacit beliefs about what constitutes effective teaching [...] formed throughout teacher's experience as a learner" (p. 43). In particular, Holt-Reynold (1992) found that when pre-service teachers with no prior practical experience were interviewed and asked about their beliefs about teaching, they "referenced themselves as prototypes upon which to build a generalized premise" about teaching itself (p. 339). The author claims that students of teaching start their teaching education with powerful "prior knowledge" based on their "personal history" (p. 343): this emerges from the interviews where they "used their explanations of their own experiences as students in classrooms as data out of which to develop beliefs about how other students would react to particular teaching behaviors" (p. 339). These findings are consistent with those in my study (Chapter 5.1.2) and in Numrich's (1996) investigation of novice EFL teachers' beliefs and experience of teaching and learning: he found that novice teachers transfer or avoid teaching techniques and methods according to their positive or negative experience in their own L2/FL learning: i.e. teachers who enjoyed the integration of culture into the language lesson tended to integrate elements of the target culture in their classes; in contrast, those who had felt intimidated by the teacher correcting them during oral expression, consciously avoided stopping their students speaking in order to correct them.

These naturally developed beliefs are 'tacit' in the sense that they are not easily uncovered, as they are mainly unconscious and can only be inferred from teaching practice (El-Okda, 2005), or by teachers' introspection and critical reflection. Moreover, they are more powerful in teachers who start their career without any formal training (Borg, 2015). Scholars suggest that teacher

training programmes play a key role in accessing such beliefs, and in making teachers aware of them (e.g. Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Borg, 2003 and 2015). This very personal and “unique pedagogical baggage” that teachers bring to the classroom should be “unpacked”: the danger is that teachers “may unconsciously adopt practices that are not useful, and that [they] would choose to avoid if [they] had thought about them” (Edwards, 2002, p. 13). Professional education proves less effective in influencing teachers’ pre-existing beliefs when these are not made explicit and are not discussed (Borg, 2003): “dormant and unexamined” beliefs may be helpful to improve classroom practice, but they can also be “misleading and unproductive” and “highly resistant to instruction” (Holt-Reynolds, 1992) and to pedagogical theory.

Scholars in L2/FL have analysed the effect of teacher education on teachers’ beliefs, in order to understand *if* and *how* beliefs, and consequently practices, may change. In her interesting study about pre-service teacher education, Almarza (1996) found that the impact of teacher training and education programmes on teacher cognition is very subjective: it varies from one person to the other, and seems to induce a change in teachers’ behaviour (i.e. the way they give instruction and organise activities) rather than in beliefs. As Borg (2009) has highlighted, commenting on Almarza’s work, such behavioural change is not necessarily evidence of a “meaningful and lasting cognitive impact on teachers” (p. 165). Kuzborska (2011), drawing on findings from mainstream research on the topic, goes so far as to claim that teachers tend to embrace new theories and actions “only in the ways which relate to their existing beliefs and practices” (p. 103), suggesting that no change in teachers’ practice is possible without a deep change in their beliefs¹¹. Teachers’

¹¹ As suggested by Borg (2011), the ‘impact’ of teacher education on teachers’ beliefs can be interpreted as “a deep and radical reversal in beliefs” or “more broadly to encompass a range of developmental processes”, and thus measured accordingly. In her study focusing on in-service teachers’ cognition, the author found that teacher education does make

theoretical beliefs and pedagogical knowledge, which are established during professional education and derive from the methodology chosen by the teacher, are also part of teacher cognition. Examining the relationship between ESL teachers' theoretical beliefs about L2 learning and their instructional practice, Johnson (1992) found that teachers who took part in her study had very clear beliefs that “consistently reflect one particular methodological approach” (p. 93), which matches the view shared by some interviewees from my own study (Chapter 5.4.2.2). Johnson speculates that these beliefs are shaped according to the prominent methodology in use when teachers start their career, and tend to remain quite stable over time. In this sense, I believe that in-service teacher training may prove very helpful as it would provide teachers with the opportunity to reconsider their theoretical knowledge in light of current pedagogical trends, to address their preconceptions and articulate their existing beliefs. This is all the more important if we consider that the process of learning to teach evolves over time, i.e. it never gets to a ‘terminal competence’ (Graves, 2009) but rather is ongoing during teachers’ careers. Everyday classroom practice and experience shape teachers’ practice and, in turn, influence their cognition (Borg, 2003)¹².

A final point worth mentioning is the role of context in influencing the relationship between teacher cognition and practice. It is generally acknowledged that the context in which teachers work – i.e. the “social, institutional, instructional, and physical settings” (Borg, 2009) – is one of the factors affecting the extent to which they act in conformity with their beliefs. Graden (1996) examined FL teachers’ beliefs about reading and reading instruction, and the extent to which these were consistent with teachers’ practice, finding that lack of time and of suitable materials were

an impact, though variable, on their belief system. See Borg (2011, pp. 379-380) for a detailed description of results from the investigation.

¹² For a comprehensive review of studies about L2/FL teacher cognition and practice, see Borg (2003 and 2015).

factors affecting teachers' instructional decisions; moreover, teachers often reported feelings of frustration as they had to "compromise beliefs in order to respond to students' poor language proficiency and low motivation" (p. 337). This reveals that 'the reality' of the classroom has the potential to limit teachers' ability to put their beliefs into practice. Graden (1996) observed that:

Because of inadequate student preparation, the teachers had to adjust what they could do in the classroom and the amount of learning they could expect. [...] Low reading proficiency and immaturity of beginning students created a need to find materials and approaches to increase motivation. [...] [T]hey repeatedly told of altering teaching plans to accommodate noninvolvement of students. In other words, they resorted to practices they believed to be less beneficial but more expedient, practices that led them to abandon commonly held beliefs: the need for students to read often and widely, the need to minimize English during instruction, and the need to minimize oral reading. [...] In turn, the students' unwillingness to prepare affected the teachers' own motivational level. (p. 391)

Unsurprisingly, factors such as students' characteristics and levels of motivation affect teachers' implementation of their beliefs, as much as heavy workloads, difficult working conditions or curriculum and time constraints, which teachers may perceive as factors beyond their control.

We may conclude that, beyond the positive and negative features of the literary text, what determines the choice to use or not to use literature in the L2/FL classroom are also the teacher's beliefs. Beliefs are crucial to the ways in which teachers construct their opinions, and they seem to

be in turn closely linked to attitude. Opinions about and attitudes towards literary texts are analysed in the following section.

1.3.3 What teachers think about literature

“I am not a literature person”, “I don’t know anything about literature”, “I’m not into that sort of thing”: these are some of the comments reported in McRae’s book (1991, p. 9) and made by some language teachers when asked about the relationship between literature and language teaching. Though they are ‘only’ comments, they give us a first idea of how some language teachers feel when faced with literature. In fact, despite all the reasons that would justify the use of the literary text in the L2/FL classroom, many teachers still have concerns about or an ‘ambivalent attitude’ towards it (Gilroy, 1995). Unfortunately, there is very little research to date documenting this difficult relationship between L2/FL and literature teaching and findings on teachers’ views about literature are quite rare.

One of the major contributions to the topic is Gilroy’s (1995) study. She interviewed a number of EFL teachers to understand their feelings about literature and to understand what background knowledge, if any, was considered to be necessary to teach it in a FL context. Some of the interviewees stressed the teacher’s role in the FL classroom: the teacher was described as a “motivator” and a “facilitator” who helps learners to understand the literary text; the teacher is also seen as “a bridge connecting the experience of the learner with the literary work” (p. 7). When asked about what skills might be useful to a teacher in exploiting FL literary texts, the majority said that FL teaching skills are sufficient: if teachers know how to exploit a text in general, they do not need extra skills to deal with literary texts, a view shared by teachers in my study (Chapter 5.1.2). Moreover, enthusiasm and love for a text were considered important for a text to be

effectively exploited in the FL classroom. As for the objective of literature teaching in the FL class, the interviewees stated that they would use literary texts to encourage further reading, to stimulate discussion or to analyse grammar. All teachers seemed to agree on the positive impact of literature in language learning and showed positive feelings towards it but, interestingly enough (and in line with findings from my research presented in Chapter 5), they made limited use of it with their students. As Gilroy summarised, all teachers interviewed described a common practice:

[they] tended to use literary extracts as one-off, filler-type activities which, although designed to tie in with the current topic or course, seemed to be considered more of “an added extra”. [...] Most of the texts described were short – poems or extracts – often studied out of context, and none of the teachers mentioned using longer texts such as plays or novels with a class. (p. 8)

Time and syllabus restrictions seemed to be the reasons why none of them used literature more often as a teaching resource. Nonetheless, the author speculates that something is left unsaid: almost all teachers interviewed gave high importance to background knowledge such as “biographical information about a writer, general literary history and theory, literary stylistics” (p. 5) and considered it useful to the exploitation of literary texts in the FL classroom. Teachers may feel insecure when dealing with literature and call for background knowledge in order to be more confident. This view is also corroborated by several teachers interviewed in my study (Chapter 5.1.2). We may say with Gilroy that:

[t]he reasons given for the need for more background knowledge reveal some of the fears and apprehensions that teachers may have such as the ‘embarrassment felt when students think of one meaning and you haven’t’; nervousness brought on by the teacher not liking a text which, as a result, ‘won’t go well’. (p. 5)

However, teachers interviewed by Gilroy agreed that no specific training in literature was necessary to exploit literary texts in the FL classroom; this may reveal that teachers perceive their difficulty with literature more in theoretical terms (i.e. literary knowledge) than practical ones (i.e. teaching approaches). In turn, this suggests a confusion about the role of literary texts – and the role of the teacher – in a FL context. I believe that integration of literature courses in L2/FL teacher-training programmes should equip teachers not with the ‘mere’ knowledge of literature but rather with the ability to exploit literature for language learning, bearing in mind that L2/FL teachers do not teach *literature*, they teach *language* through literature.

As a matter of fact, Belcher and Hirvela (2000) are right in saying that “the vast majority of teachers trained in TESOL [Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages] programs dominated by linguists have received (and still receive) no special training in the use of literary texts and, not surprisingly, have thus not been encouraged to take advantage of them” (p. 32). This is also stressed by Bernhardt (2001), who claims that this gap exacerbates what she calls the “lang-lit split” (i.e. language-literature split): a perceived distance between language and literature, considered as two separate and different units. The absence of literature in L2/FL teacher-training programmes leaves teachers unprepared “should they decide later that they wish to work with literary texts” (Belcher and Hirvela, 2000, p. 33) and contributes to what ultimately is a vicious

circle: as noted by Marshall (2000, cited in Bernhardt, 2001), “the literature instruction teachers receive in college - the texts they are taught, the discussions that are held, the writing that is assigned - profoundly affects the instruction they provide when they begin teaching” (p. 196). This last finding - which is consistent with findings about the role of teachers’ tacit beliefs in classroom practice (section 1.3.2) - is even more relevant if we consider that teachers are much more concerned about whether or not literature should be introduced in L2/FL teaching than about how to do it, i.e. what teaching method and techniques should be used to exploit literary texts for language learning. One example of this can be found in Macalister’s (2010) survey of teachers’ attitudes towards extensive reading in EFL, a key approach to exploring literary texts for language learning (Chapter 3.7). This study found that many EFL teachers who took part in the survey, while they expressed positive beliefs about FL reading, lacked “awareness about research into the benefits of extensive reading” (p. 69), and were confused about the nature of extensive reading and its implementation.

The results of these investigations, though they cannot be generalised due to the limited number of participants, may serve at least as a starting point for further research as they have the merit of having drawn attention to some important key points:

- a) Teachers’ resistance to using literature is not equal to teachers’ resistance to literature itself, as literature seems to be appreciated among teachers but ‘something’ prevents them from using it with confidence as a L2/FL teaching resource. As was found to be the case for students, literature is mainly perceived as a private activity and presents some difficulties when it becomes public. Again, I think that the affective dimension plays an important role here: as confirmed by

several teachers in my research (Chapter 5), educators seem to feel as inadequate as their students when dealing with literature;

- b) Literature seems to have a *status* which places the literary text above all other types of text that can be exploited in the L2/FL classroom. L2/FL teachers do not seem to feel able to use literary texts as they do all other texts, and yet, as argued by Lazar (1996), “[m]any of the techniques teachers exploit every day in the classroom can be applied equally successfully to literary texts” (p. 775);
- c) L2/FL teachers might benefit from the integration in the education curriculum of specific courses on techniques to exploit literary texts as a resource for language learning.

1.4 Teaching literature in the L2/FL classroom: an overview of methodology

Teaching strategies and classroom environment are important factors in shaping students’ and teachers’ attitudes towards literature, and they influence, positively and negatively, how they feel about it. As Alam (2013) claims, all the beneficial factors of literature used as a tool to improve L2/FL learning “are contingent upon teachers’ approach to presenting literature” (p. 1). Obviously, the teacher also plays an important part in the construction of a positive classroom environment where students feel at ease: according to Hess (2006), after finishing their studies, students tend to recall teachers who have been significant for them according to “how these teachers made them feel” (p. 40). Emotion is a strong motivator not only for students but, I would say, also for teachers. If we consider, as some teachers in my study reported (Chapter 5.1.2), teachers’ anxiety towards literature as a subject of study and how little training, if any, they receive in using literature as a tool for language learning, we can only imagine the pressure they feel and how this pressure affects

their motivation to use literature in the classroom. I think that reflecting on methodology is important because it has an impact on both students' and teachers' motivation: an effective methodology for teaching a L2/FL through literature proves beneficial both to students, who can enjoy the multiple pleasures of reading literary texts, and to teachers, who may feel more competent and confident in working with literature in the classroom.

There follows a review of three main approaches to teaching literature (Carter and Long, 1991). This is relevant to my study as it relates to the role of the teacher (RQ3): I believe that instructors should be aware of the approaches for using literature and of their differences, in order to critically evaluate their impact on L2/FL students' learning and, consequently, make informed choices.

- 1) *The Cultural model*: This is a traditional approach to literature teaching which considers literature as a vehicle for presenting culture. Learners here are introduced to the context of a literary text and have to explore and to interpret it in a historical, social and political perspective. This approach helps students understand different cultures and ideologies "in relation to their own" (Savvidou, 2004, p. 2). The focus is on text as cultural artifact, much attention is therefore given to background knowledge such as author's biography, literary theory and literary genres.
- 2) *The Language-based model*: Literature is mainly seen as text used to practise language, thus this model is often used in the L2/FL classroom. Literary texts are regarded as inputs of aesthetic value and are used to learn the TL in meaningful contexts. However, I agree with the argument of some scholars (e.g. Savvidou, 2004; Sanchez, 2009; Khatib *et al.*, 2011; Alam, 2013) that using literature 'simply' for language analysis is quite reductive

and detrimental to the literary experience itself. Learners study and analyse the language of a specific text as they could do with any other non-literary text, they are not engaged in the text and, consequently, the educational value of literature, the pleasure of reading and the ‘literary goal’ of the text are disregarded.

- 3) *The Personal-growth model*: In such a model the focus is on learners’ personal encounter with the literary text, with the aim of promoting interaction between readers and text. Learners are encouraged to refer to their own experience of literature; their thoughts, opinions and feelings are given primary attention. A relevant aspect of this model is that readers are trained to construct meaning independently, referring to and making connection with their life experience. I argue that, as findings from my study reveal (Chapter 5.2), this approach allows for engagement with the text as students enjoy a real literary experience in which they play an active and central role. In the words of Bottino (n.d.), such a model “has been termed by some as an engagement with the reading of literary texts, or an engagement not for the sake of getting through exams, but as a genuine liking for literature not confined to the classroom” (p. 212). The potential power of literature to provoke emotions is used to promote classroom discussions, to make students think and to make them more involved in the learning process through memorable use of language (Carter and Long, 1991).

I think that each approach may be valued only according to the specific teaching aim and learning goal it serves. First of all teachers have to make clear what their objectives are, then they choose the appropriate approach to achieve them; depending on the approach they choose, they will use literary texts in different ways, with different methods and different class activities.

In my experiment (Chapter 4.3), the objective was not only to improve students' L2/FL skills but also to make them more engaged in a way that they feel the language as a powerful means to express themselves and not only to communicate. Therefore, I took the following considerations into account.

Both the Cultural and the Language-based model tend to create a teacher-centred classroom dynamic, where the teacher transmits knowledge and information about literature to students, who passively receive it (e.g. Savvidou, 2004; Sidhu *et al.*, 2010; Alam, 2013). Such teaching methods hardly promote students' engagement with the text and offer little opportunity for language practice; also, they do little to develop students' literary competence (Fecteau, 1999). Different surveys (e.g. Donato and Brooks, 2004; Tutaş, 2006; Sidhu *et al.*, 2010) have indicated that a teacher-centred approach to teaching literature in the L2/FL classroom inhibits discussion and language usage, while discouraging the learners' independent development of topics. Moreover, I would argue that both models rely on an instrumental use of literature, either for presenting culture or for analysing language, so that teachers may transmit to their students the idea that reading literary texts should only be accepted because it responds to some instrumental motivation. In this sense, Sanchez (2009) is right when he claims that, in doing so, teachers:

are validating current teaching practices at schools which disregard the aesthetic goals for reading literature and, instead, emphasise the achievement of more objective goals that have nothing to do with the true nature of literary reading. These teaching practices usually lead to the same unfortunate outcomes: the widespread dislike for literary reading, the

failure to associate the reading of fiction with pleasure, and the subsequent lack of literary reading habits. (p. 1)

On the contrary, a more student-centred approach to teaching literature (such as the Personal-growth model) seems to me more inclusive and potentially more efficient in terms of learning outcomes, as my research later suggests (Chapter 5.2.1). In his study Yang (2002) investigated how differences between a teacher-centred approach and a student-centred one could influence students' learning of the TL. He observed the quality and quantity of FL improvement in two classes where students worked on the same science fiction literary texts but with two different teaching approaches. Students who were exposed to a teacher-led approach, experienced literature more as an object of study: they had to read a text before class and then repeat the main ideas in front of the class so that in-class discussions were focused on "explaining the imagery and significance of passages" (p. 52). This method proved very difficult for students who had never had training in literature before, generated a drop in enrolment in the FL course itself, and led to a passive and apathetic attitude towards the literary texts used (Yang 2002). In a more student-oriented method adopted with the other group of students, in which the emphasis was not on literary elements but rather on students' comments and opinions about the text, students were engaged in group discussions with teacher mediation and "gradually became more interested in commenting" (p. 53). Learners were asked to compare the text with the world they knew and finally perceived that "literature and science fiction were not 'dead people stories' or 'futuristic make-believes'" (p. 53), but something they could talk about and relate their experience to. In the experimental phase of my study, the student-centered approach to literature I deployed yielded the same result (Chapter 5.2.1). By contrast, it was found that in the teacher-centred class, students' silence prevailed even

during discussion time. These two approaches led to two completely different attitudes and levels of student engagement and produced different outcomes in linguistic gains. In the words of the author, “[w]hen students are prepared to discuss issues they found related to them, they are more ready to participate in the activities. [...] The materials and the discussion then become the vehicles of obtaining language proficiency and a more critical mind” (Yang 2002, p. 57).

Similar results are presented in Sanchez’s (2009) investigation. In a course for EFL teacher trainees who had almost non-existent reading habits and an overall negative attitude towards literature, he found that the adoption of a student-centred approach to teaching literature improved “learners’ appreciation of the literary experience and literary reading competence” (p. 8). Though Sanchez’s study was not focused on the use of literature for FL improvement, its findings are relevant as they clarify how important the choice of teaching methodology is and how it can influence the students’ attitude towards literature. Teachers should be aware of more effective ways of using literature in order to exploit its potential for language learning to the full. They may, for instance, opt for an integrated approach where strategies used in different approaches are brought together to maximise language learning. In fact, as explained in detail in Chapters 4.3.3 and 4.3.5.3, this is what I did in the experimental phase of my study: a student-centered approach to L2/FL teaching was integrated with strategies used to teach L2/FL literature and L2/FL reading, with the ultimate aim of promoting (enjoyable) language learning.

Carroli (2008) offers an example of integrated approach that was taken into account in the design of my experiment. She stresses the importance of the link between language form (i.e. grammar) and meaning in literary texts (a connection that can be overlooked by learners), saying that:

[...] a focus on form linked to a focus on style in class can lead students' awareness of the links between language and culture in literary texts [...]. Instead of trying to memorize individual words to expand their vocabulary (the literary text as pure information), L2 learners can capture the literary dimension of words and phrases, that is, the way the author uses language to evoke feelings in the reader, or to foreshadow what lies ahead. This level of reading in L2 requires awareness of the textual interplay between form and discourse, of how, with a particular style, writers make their language 'speak' to readers in the silent interaction with the text [...]. (p. 24)

An approach that integrates language analysis with the interpretation of textual meaning and culture learning could inspire an effective literature teaching methodology in the L2/FL context. Such an approach could also reconcile the split between language and literature (section 1.3.3). However, educators should also bear in mind the distinction (in terms of learning goals) between 'literature for literature' and 'literature for language': in the L2/FL context language analysis must not be "as technical, rigorous or analytical" as it is in stylistics (Savvidou, 2004). Texts must be carefully selected in order for language, and consequently meaning, to be appropriate for all students at all levels of proficiency.

1.5 The selection of literary texts

All prospective L2/FL teachers enrolled in teaching programmes learn that, before choosing a text to be deployed in the classroom, an accurate analysis of students' learning needs and interests has to be made. Van (200) goes so far as to say that the choice of texts is very important as it "will

make the difference between passive reading and active involvement with a literary text” (pp. 8-9).

However, selecting the *right* text may prove quite challenging as many elements, related to the text itself and to the learners, must come under close scrutiny. In the process of text selection, a text’s language difficulty (vocabulary and syntax) and students’ level of language proficiency are crucial factors¹³. It may be argued that this is true for all types of text that are used for L2/FL teaching purposes; however, language difficulty is even more important in the selection of literary texts since students’ fears and anxieties are based also on a sense that literature is “somehow totally different from other forms of writing” (Hirvela and Boyle, 1988, p. 180). Controlling a text’s language difficulty also means, however, that the language must not be too *easy*, in order to challenge and motivate the learners (Lima, 2010). Teachers also need to consider students’ cultural familiarity with a text: cultural references that are unknown to students may cause comprehension problems, making “the students dependent on the teacher’s interpretation” (Van, 2009, p. 3). This is one of the reasons why, in my experiment, I opted for literary texts accessible to students on language and cultural levels.

According to the specific learning aim and the learning context, elements other than linguistic and cultural accessibility have to be considered: the quality (i.e. whether a text is of recognised value, cultural significance and is rich in content), the length, the genre and the topic of a literary text. This implies that teachers should themselves be familiar with literature: the selection

¹³ Summarising from Duff and Maley (1990), Carroli (2008) says that “whether students accept difficulties, become motivated and enjoy reading literary texts depends greatly on whether the text selected is appropriate for their language level” (p. 10).

of literary texts calls for teachers' competence, which, once again, invites us to reflect on the importance of specific training in L2/FL teacher programmes.

Text selection also entails an analysis of students' tastes and interests in order for the text to be stimulating and relevant (Tseng, 2010). However, looking at L2/FL syllabuses and textbooks, it seems that other elements may prevail when selecting literary texts: masterpieces of canonical literature, 'must-know' authors and 'must-read' books may dictate teachers' choices regardless of whether texts are appropriate and enjoyable for their students. Carroli (2008), for instance, argues that "what is commonly considered more accessible literature (e.g. detective stories, romance novels) has often been marginalised because, in traditional views, entertaining genres were not considered worthy of inclusion in the L2 syllabus" (p. 54) and teachers' choices may be greatly influenced by "cultural or canon-driven models" (p. 54). However, exposing L2/FL students to canonical literature does not seem to be so crucial. I would say that, in the context of L2/FL learning, no hierarchy should exist among literary texts as long as they prove appropriate and enjoyable. Even light reading such as comics or magazines, which may be considered to lack literary merit, have on the contrary the potential to be a "bridge" – as Krashen (2003 and 2005) calls it – towards more sophisticated reading, and to become a "springboard into the classics" (Day and Bamford 1998, p. 47). This is reflected in the choice of texts for my experiment (Chapter 4.3). I would argue that the concept of canonical literature and its 'superiority' over other literary texts risks creating in practitioners' mind the idea that only *certain* literature – and only *certain* culture – deserves to be read in the L2/FL classroom. Carroli (2002) expands this view:

[...] In the eyes of the students, the hierarchy can seem to define an insurmountable distance between them and the text, perceived to be far

above what they understand as culture. [...] Most students indicated interest in the culture or in the language as their first reason for studying Italian, while only a few placed interest in the literature first. When asked in class to clarify what ‘Italian culture’ meant in their view, most students laughed and said ‘food’, before proceeding to list cinema, sport, architecture, art and literature. [...] (p. 122)

Teachers should give space to “other perceived elements of culture” (Carroli, 2009, p. 122) when selecting literary texts and should base their choices not solely on aesthetic parameters of a text. In this sense, I, as a teacher, find Wellek’s and Warren’s (1949) reasoning about literature inspirational, in that it chimes with my original beliefs and has been confirmed by my findings: in their attempt to define it, they ask whether and which literature is “*dulce et utile*” – as defined by Horace –, i.e. *pleasant* (“not a bore”, “not a duty”) and *instructive* (“not a waste of time”, “something deserving of serious attention”) and they hypothesise that all literature “is ‘sweet’ and ‘useful’ to its appropriate users” (p. 31).

Students’ perspective, in terms of what literature they enjoy and why, were, in fact, taken into account in my own project for text selection; moreover, I found also helpful to consider Carroli’s (2008) findings on learners’ views about literature. She asked students to define their idea of “enjoyable literature” and found that *entertainment* was the most recurrent key term that they associated with it. The entertaining quality of literature was mostly explained as “the capacity to hold readers’ attention”, a sort of power which “act[s] upon the reader [...] and keep[s] him or her

glued to the text, unable to detach herself/himself from the text” (p. 38)¹⁴. Some students commented also that “enjoyable literature” is connected to “pleasure”: it is something that entertains, makes the reader feel relaxed and, as suggested by the author, is often “associated with feelings of well-being” (p. 39). Students also related the concept of enjoyable literature to that of knowledge: not only did they stress the role of literature in transmitting knowledge of culture and society, but also its pedagogical role in conveying “knowledge of the world” (p. 40). In this sense, literature is perceived as texts that teach something, educate readers and contribute to their personal growth.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that students made a distinction between L1 and L2/FL literature. Enjoyable literature in L1 is expected to be “entertaining, pedagogic in a philosophical sense and aesthetically pleasing”, whereas L2/FL literature is perceived as a source of “knowledge of the L2 culture and society” (Carroli, 2008, p. 41).

This suggests that not only should the students’ learning needs, tastes and interests be taken into account in text selection, but also their expectations in terms of what they can achieve through reading L2/FL literature. This, however, does not mean that text selection has to be driven by students’ preferences; it is instead a way of increasing the teachers’ awareness when selecting appropriate literary texts, in order to make informed choices.

In the design of the experimental phase, I selected the texts according to the factors discussed here. This is explained in detail in Chapter 4.3.2.3 and 4.3.5.2.

¹⁴ Participants in Carroli’s (2008) study, described qualities such as “not boring in the content” or “something that is interesting” to explain what captures the reader’s attention (p. 10).

1.6 Beginner-level learners and the alleged difficulties in using literary texts at this level of L2/FL proficiency

Students who participated in the experimental phase of my study were at elementary and lower intermediate levels of Italian FL (Chapter 4.3): as their teacher, this demanded of me careful selection of texts and also a reflection on how to support students reading literature. In fact, the use of literature from the earliest stages of language learning is challenging and when teachers think of it a number of difficulties immediately spring to mind.

While the valuable role of authentic texts in L2/FL learning at all levels is well established in contemporary theories (Chapter 2.7), it is not uncommon for L2/FL teachers to object, saying that literary texts do not suit their beginner-level students' language skills, and delaying the use of literature until students reach an advanced level of proficiency is often the norm. It is very common to find journalistic texts and short *realia* items (e.g. advertisements, brochures, cinema or theatre tickets, menus, etc.), as the only examples of authentic reading materials used in L2/FL textbooks for lower level learners. Shook (1996), for instance, provides an example of *how often* and *how* textbooks of Spanish FL use literature at beginners' level: he surveyed fifteen Spanish course books in print at the time, finding that only four of them included literature.

This infrequent use of literature is motivated by educators' concern that students at a lower level are "not linguistically sophisticated enough to handle literature" (Frantzen, 2001, p. 110), i.e. to understand and to interpret a literary text, and therefore they save it for students at advanced levels¹⁵. I would say that far too often literature is merely used to increase the level of difficulty of

¹⁵ At university, for instance, the separation between "language development" and "literary study" is quite common in many language departments where the L2/FL, taught in the early stages of study, is deemed the necessary prerequisite to literature, taught in more advanced stages (Shook, 1996).

L2/FL written inputs, and as a sort of ‘ultimate challenge’ for students who have already reached high levels of language proficiency. The difficulty of literary texts seems to be a common, though tacit, reason for studying it at higher levels:

[...] at a certain point learners come to the ‘end of language’, and [...] the only way to keep stretching them, and sorting out the sheep from the goats, [...], is by asking difficult questions about Shakespeare. (Parkinson and Reid-Thomas, 2000, p. 10)

One could say that literature is mainly brought into the classroom with the idea of confronting advanced students with the difficult task of understanding unusual vocabulary and grammar structures, as if linguistic knowledge were the only variable responsible for learners’ ability to read, to comprehend and ultimately to enjoy a literary text. This, I think, reinforces students’ belief that literature is something complicated requiring special and necessary abilities which beginners simply do not possess. In turn, such an approach to literature (and to reading in general) may have consequences for upper-level L2/FL students too who risk arriving at reading literary texts equipped with lexical and syntactic knowledge but lacking reading skills and strategies in the L2/FL: their expectations of, success in, and satisfaction with literature in the L2/FL classroom may be negatively affected. In fact, as noted by Fecteau (1999), “even students with apparently strong FL skills are apt to miscomprehend when reading literary texts [...]” (p. 489).

In contrast, I believe that the challenges of literature for beginner L2/FL students may be opportunities for learning. Popkin (1987), for instance, claims that, through literary reading,

learners at basic levels of language study can develop a better understanding of the foreign culture. Shook (1996) and Lazar (1994) state that beginners develop new vocabulary and are exposed to real language used in a meaningful, thus memorable, context beyond what Shanahan (1997) calls the “reductively utilitarian logic” (p. 172) of language teaching. Moreover, exposing beginners to literature helps them develop reading strategies (i.e. inferring meaning from context, guessing the meaning of unknown words, using personal background knowledge to interpret a text, etc.), and to build up reading skills (i.e. comprehending a text, understanding textual clues, etc.) in the L2/FL (Bretz and Persin, 1987). If we look at it in terms of beginner-level learners’ needs, it is useful to recall Lazar’s (1994) words about students of EFL – which apply of course to all FL. He says that:

In terms of input, they [the students] obviously need to expand their knowledge of lexis and grammar in English substantially. But even at this level they also need to move beyond an understanding of the language simply in terms of individual words or sentences. They need to start becoming aware, for example, that discourse is sequenced and organized in different ways; that words are linked with each other in relationships of synonymity and opposition; and that the meaning of a text may not be explicit, but needs to be inferred. In other words, they need to expand their overall language awareness. Finally, despite their very limited proficiency in the language, students need the challenge and stimulation of addressing themes and topics which have adult appeal, and which encourage them to draw on their personal opinions and experiences. (p. 116)

For these reasons, I opted for using literary texts with students of Italian FL at lower levels. However, being aware of the potential difficulties that students may have, I thought I should guide them through the reading experience. Therefore, I designed tasks that could support and enhance literary reading. I believe that taking into account “what students can reasonably do” (Frantzen, 2001, p. 111) when reading L2/FL literature, teachers should help students to access a text and to become better readers, providing them with beginner-level, strategy-based reading tasks. Shook (1996) claims that:

[...] what should be kept in mind regarding the difficulties of FL literature for beginning readers is that it is *what the teacher asks readers to do with the text* that will determine what difficulties, if any, the learner-reader encounters with literary texts. (p. 204)

More specifically, the potential linguistic and cultural difficulties of a literary text may be addressed by planning reading tasks at various stages of the reading process (Shook, 1996): i.e. *pre-reading tasks* (students work on activities that help them to approach a text before they start to actually read it), *reading tasks* (while students read the text, they are engaged in activities designed to make them understand the content as much as possible), and finally *post-reading tasks* (students expand knowledge and information they gained from the text, and are engaged in more language activities aimed at integrating new and background knowledge)¹⁶.

¹⁶ In my experiment, I created activities to guide the students through the various stages of the reading process. An explanation of these activities is given in Chapter 5.3.1.2.

While studies on the ways literature is presented and used in L2/FL textbooks are scarce, Shook's survey (1996) may well give us a first insight into the topic: out of the few textbooks of Spanish FL, i.e. four books out of the fifteen analysed, which introduce literature at beginners' level, he found that two used literature with a focus on linguistic knowledge (i.e. grammar and vocabulary), the other two books addressed both linguistic and cultural information; only one textbook was found to have "strategic orientation" to literary reading, i.e. to adopt the strategy-based approach to reading described above. Such an approach is, I think, extremely relevant for a successful learning experience with literature, as it does not take the difficulties of a literary text for granted but, in contrast, relates difficulty to students' abilities and skills at different levels of L2/FL proficiency. It is my opinion that, when considering whether or not to introduce literature in L2/FL courses, both textbook editors and instructors should not base their decisions merely on learners' proficiency level, but rather on *what to introduce* and on *how to do it*, i.e. on text selection, teaching approach, and reading tasks. Students at all levels may benefit from reading literary texts, and may be helped to become better readers in general.

1.7 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed how a literary text is different from other text types that may be used in the L2/FL context. The features of the literary text – when it is appropriately selected – determine its suitability in meeting a variety of teaching goals that are not solely linguistic but pertain also to students' affective dimension.

Though learners and teachers do not share scholars' enthusiasm for literature, it seems that its infrequent use in the L2/FL classroom derives from specific variables: practitioners' beliefs that

literature is a subject of study and therefore needs to be *taught* and not only *experienced*, and that it is best used to increase the level of language difficulty with advanced students.

Mindful of these features of literary texts and these perceived barriers to the use of literature in the language classroom, my study aims to show how literature can be used effectively even with students at lower levels of language proficiency.

Chapter 2

Motivation and Authenticity in the L2/FL classroom

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss two crucial concepts in the field of L2/FL: motivation and authenticity. These concepts are relevant to my study as literary texts are claimed to be one of the most motivating inputs for L2/FL learning (Chapter 0.2) and are considered to be intrinsically authentic, i.e. authentic by nature, as they are artifacts of the L2/FL society (section 2.5). Moreover, motivation and authenticity are linked to one another as authenticity is considered to be a source of motivation for L2/FL students.

In the following sections, I will analyse what is meant by motivation and by authenticity, the reasons why they are so crucial in L2/FL learning and their implications for my study. Reflecting on these aspects is important for my study as, particularly in the experimental phase, they guided my choices on how to use literature to enhance motivation and on how to give students the opportunity to enjoy an authentic reading experience.

2.1 Defining motivation

Motivation is one of the aspects of the literature reading experience that I investigate in my study (RQ1). However, to understand the alleged motivating power of reading literature in a L2/FL context we first need to understand what motivation is. Teachers and researchers often consider motivation as the most important factor in language learning because it gives students “the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2” and is also “the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process” (Dörnyei, 1998a, p. 117).

Defining motivation is no easy task, as it is “a multifaceted rather than a uniform factor” and research studies that attempt to measure it “[are] likely to represent only a segment of a more intricate psychological construct” (Dörnyei, 1998a, p. 131). However, it is widely accepted by scholars that motivation relates to three different elements, i.e. “the *choice* of a particular action, *persistence* with it, and *effort* expended on it” (Dörnyei, 2000, p. 520).

Language-learning motivation was first conceptualised by Gardner (1985), in whose view motivation includes three components, i.e. “effort, want and affect” (p. 11), it is goal-oriented, with the goal being to learn the L2/FL. In the author’s words, motivation is “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language” (p. 10). This is to say that motivation refers to the extent to which students make the effort to study a L2/FL because of their desire to learn it and “the satisfaction experienced in this activity” (p. 10). Satisfaction may be considered as directly related to what Taguchi (2006) describes as “need for achievement” (p. 561): learners need to perceive that not only is the task they perform worth the effort, but also that they are able to successfully complete the task. When L2/FL learners feel that they are not able to reach their learning goals and blame themselves for it, they experience a reduction in self-confidence that causes demotivation (Ushioda, 1998, cited in Falout and Falout, 2005). If we think of the feelings manifested by students towards literature (Chapter 1.3.1), we find a correspondence: L2/FL learners who experience reading literary texts that they do not understand (e.g. texts are linguistically or culturally too difficult for them) or that they are not capable of analysing in literary terms, often feel demotivated – as confirmed by some students in my study (Chapter 5.1.1).

In Gardner’s (1985) model, two different types of motivation are identified: *integrative* and *instrumental*. Integrative motivation is described as the desire to interact with the members of the

target-language group and, above all, to integrate with them (Gardner, 1985); this type of motivation underlies a positive learner attitude to the L2/FL group and openness to its culture and lifestyle. By contrast, when learners want to learn a language for functional reasons, e.g. finding a job or passing an exam, they are guided by instrumental motivation (Gardner, 1985); in other words, the L2/FL is studied because it is useful.

A similar view emerges from the distinction made in motivation theory between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*: intrinsic motivation refers to “behaviour performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction” (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013, p. 23), whereas extrinsic motivation leads to a specific behaviour “as a means to some separable end, such as receiving an extrinsic reward (e.g. good grades) or avoiding punishment” (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013, p. 23). However, when extrinsic goals are “fully internalized within the person’s self-concept (e.g. the personal value of being able to speak a particular language” (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013, p. 24), intrinsic and extrinsic motives can co-exist and enhance motivation overall.

Some scholars (e.g. Savignon, 1972; Hermann, 1980; Ellis, 1994) have conceptualised the idea of *resultative* motivation, according to which success in language learning breeds further success and thus renews motivation. However, this has now largely been rejected as a major factor in learning-language motivation, and motivation is described as a cause more than as an effect (Skehan, 1989).

Gardner’s concept of integrativeness to explain L2/FL motivation has fallen out of favour: instead of linking motivation to a learner’s attitude towards the target-language community – which is hard to identify, particularly in a FL setting – current theory on language-learning motivation places emphasis on the learner’s internal aspirations (Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie, 2017). More specifically, Dörnyei (2005) proposes a new approach to the understanding of motivation in his

“L2 Motivational Self System” which is based on ideas in psychology (particularly Higgins *et al.*, 1985 and Markus and Nurius, 1986) and focuses on learners’ self-perception and their vision of their possible selves – i.e. “individuals’ ideas of what they *might* become, what they *would like* to become, and what they are *afraid* of becoming in the future (Dörnyei and Chan, 2013, p. 436). On this basis he posits the main constructs involved in the motivation to learn L2/FL as: the *Ideal L2 self*, the *Ought-to L2 self*, and the *L2 learning experience*. They are described as follows:

1. *Ideal L2 self* which concerns the L2-specific facet of the learner’s ideal self. If the person the learner would like to become speaks an L2 (e.g., the person is associated with traveling or doing business internationally), the ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator for the learner to succeed in learning the L2 because he or she would like to reduce the discrepancy between the actual and ideal selves.
2. *Ought-to L2 self*, which concerns the attributes that the learner believes he or she ought to possess to avoid possible negative outcomes and that, therefore, may bear little resemblance to his or her own desires or wishes.
3. *L2 learning experience*, which concerns the learner’s situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g., the positive impact of success or the enjoyable quality of a language course).

(p. 521)

Therefore, according to this model, there are three main sources of motivation to learn a L2/FL: 1) an internal reason, i.e. the desire to effectively master the language; 2) an external reason, such as “social pressure coming from the learner’s environment” (Dörnyei and Chan, 2013) to learn the language; 3) the experience itself of studying and learning the language. L2/FL students’ vision of their desired self (especially the *Ideal L2 self*) seems to have strong motivational power, as it provides an incentive for learning efforts and achievements (Dörnyei and Chan, 2013). We may say, therefore, that the extent to which literature enhances motivation depends not only on its alleged intrinsic motivational power but, also, on students’ vision of their desired self.

Research in L2/FL motivation has also identified three different levels that are part of motivation: 1) the Language Level, 2) the Learner Level and 3) the Learning Situation Level (Dörnyei, 1994). The Language Level comprises the motives related to the L2/FL itself, such as an interest in the L2/FL culture and community, or the idea that learning the L2/FL is useful; this level explains the choice of learning one specific language. The second level, the Learner Level, implies “a complex of affects and cognitions that form fairly stable personality traits” (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 279), such as the need for achievement and self-confidence. Finally, the Learning Situation Level implies that motivation is also context-related, i.e. it is influenced by the classroom environment: the L2/FL course (i.e. the syllabus, the teaching method and approach, the learning tasks), the teacher (i.e. teaching style, feedback, relationship with the students) and the learning group (i.e. the dynamics of the group). In this sense, I believe that literature is more likely to be motivating if it is perceived as useful for learning (Language Level), if the challenges of reading a literary text in a L2/FL are faced by students with self-confidence (Learner Level) and, finally, if it is used in a way that contributes to create a positive learning environment (Learning Situation Level). Results from my study seem to support these findings (Chapter 5.2.1).

Motivation is dynamic rather than stable over time (Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2005): in fact, it seems to evolve gradually and to have different phases, such as “initial planning and goal setting”, “intention formation and task generation” and, finally, “action implementation and control” (Dörnyei, 2000, p. 524)¹⁷. Moreover, when individuals are involved in a long-term activity, such as learning a L2/FL, motivation becomes a continuous “pattern of effort and commitment” (Dörnyei, 2000, p. 524) and may suffer ups and downs within a language course or even within a single lesson. Far from being a static and constant factor of the learner’s personality, motivation is characterised by “continuous fluctuations” and tends “to go through very diverse phases” (Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2005, p. 24). As stated by Pawlak (n.d., p. 252):

[...] learners’ motives, effort and engagement are subject to constant changes in response to a whole gamut of internal and external influences, which are intricately interrelated and are themselves in a constant state of flux.

Similarly, in the words of Dörnyei (1998a, p. 118), motivation is seen as a “process”:

whereby a certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action, and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it and thereby terminate action, or until the planned outcome has been reached.

¹⁷ For more detailed information on the three phases, see Dörnyei (2000) where they are described in depth.

In the long-lasting task of learning a L2/FL, the role of motivation seems to be low in the initial phase of choosing to learn a language, becomes greater when the learner is engaged in the actual task and is crucial for the *maintenance* of “the [initial] motivational impetus for a considerable period (often several years)” (Dörnyei, 2000, p. 522). I believe that integrating literary texts in the L2/FL classroom helps sustain motivation in different ways: they may be used to enhance language learning which is the outcome students aim to reach, and to re-motivate students when they experience negative motivational flux. In my experiment, students’ motivation was sustained and, in some instances, re-activated through the introduction of literary texts in the FL course (Chapter 5.2.1).

2.2 The importance of motivation in L2/FL and why literature matters

One of the RQs (research questions) of my study concerns the impact of creative literary texts on students’ motivation. I believe that, as the majority of scholars argue, literature is motivating; however, it seems fair to ask why this alleged power of literary texts matters to the extent that it justifies their place in the L2/FL curriculum. An answer is found in the numerous studies that have analysed and explained the beneficial impact of motivation on L2/FL learning. According to Krashen’s (1981) second-language-acquisition theory, motivation is one of the affective variables that enhance learning, as it contributes to making the learner ‘open’ not only to understand the language input, but also to acquire it. He postulates the notion of the *affective filter*, and claims that affective factors such as motivation and personality traits (i.e. self-confidence, self-esteem and lack of anxiety) are predictors of L2/FL proficiency level: if the affective filter is low, learners are more receptive towards the L2/FL, and acquisition takes place; by contrast, a strong affective filter results in defensive learning and predicts lower levels of proficiency. Krashen (1981) believes that

intrinsically motivated students – i.e. integrative motivation in Gardner’s (1985) model and the Ideal L2-self in Dörnyei’s (2005) model (section 2.1) – are more likely to have a low affective filter because of their personal interest in the language, in the culture and in the community of the target language; as they are more open to use the L2/FL and to learn it “for its own sake” (p. 22), they are more likely to develop proficiency. On the other hand, instrumentally motivated learners have a strong affective filter as they are driven by utilitarian reasons to learn the L2/FL:

With instrumental motivation, language acquisition may cease as soon as enough is acquired to get the job done. Also, instrumentally motivated performers may acquire just those aspects of the target language that are necessary; at an elementary level, this may be simple routines and patterns, and at a more advanced level this predicts the non-acquisition of elements that are communicatively less important but that are socially important, such as aspects of morphology and accent. (Krashen, 1981, pp. 22-23)

Similarly, Bernard (2010) claims that students who are intrinsically motivated tend to be “more involved and persistent” and that they “participate more, and are curious about school activities” (p. 7); by contrast, students with instrumental motivation tend to be “anxious and bored at school” and are more likely “to avoid school activities” (p. 7).

It emerges that motivation plays a ‘vital’ role in L2/FL learning. As a result, I think that literature, a teaching resource that is potentially motivating because of its intrinsic qualities (Chapter 0.2), needs to be deployed by teachers at least more often. Literary texts may be one of the options that teachers have to address their concerns about how to promote and sustain students’

motivation in the L2/FL classroom. However, I do not believe that bringing literature into the classroom is sufficient in itself to enhance motivation as other factors come into play such as *how* teachers use it. In the following sections, I will present possible motivational strategies that teachers can implement when they work with literature, to promote motivation among their students, which have proved very successful in my experiment.

2.3 Motivation and the role of the teacher

My RQ3 is about the role of the teacher when literature is deployed. As discussed in section 2.2, motivation is widely accepted to be a strong indicator of L2/FL learning success; in its development, self and context are seen as constantly interacting, i.e. the self-motives that prompt students to learn the L2/FL are intertwined with the context where the L2/FL is learnt (Ushioda, 2009). Teachers are obviously a variable of the context and indeed are one of the most important ones: they make decisions on what materials to use (e.g. literary texts) and how, inevitably affecting “the motivational quality of the learning process in positive or negative ways” (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013, p. 28). The impact of teachers’ behaviour on L2/FL students’ motivation also emerges from studies on demotivation: Dörnyei (1998b, cited in Falout and Falout, 2005) found that teachers were the first cause of L2/FL students’ demotivation, followed by a sense of reduced self-confidence that students developed as a reaction to a classroom event related to something that teachers did or did not do.

However, the role of teachers in motivating students to learn is very complex, as it results from a combination of factors such as “the teacher’s personality, attitudes, enthusiasm, distance or immediacy, professional knowledge/skills, and classroom management style” (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013, p. 28). Teachers influence students’ motivation in a variety of ways, e.g. by doing

or not doing something, by adopting a specific teaching approach and materials, or else, by being motivated or demotivated themselves. Teacher's motivation is indeed an important factor as it relates deeply to students' motivation. Teachers feel motivated when they feel competent in what they do (i.e. their teaching is effective), when they are able to make autonomous decisions (e.g. adopting the teaching approach they prefer, choosing teaching materials, etc.) and consider their teaching relevant for the learning goals (Pinner, n.d.). Like learners, teachers experience fluctuations over time in the intensity of their motivation to teach (Pinner, n.d.). A study conducted by Gorham and Millette (1997) found that teachers who were less motivated perceived their students as less motivated, and vice versa; moreover, demotivated teachers were found to believe that students' demotivation was caused by factors beyond their control (e.g. a personal lack of interest, a lack of knowledge or skills, etc.) and this made the authors speculate that teachers were not aware of the effects of their behaviour on their students. This may occur when literature is brought into the L2/FL classroom: demotivated teachers may perceive that students lack motivation when working with literary texts and, without realising how crucial their role is in enhancing motivation, may attribute this to students' disinterest or dislike for literature. By enquiring about teachers' and students' perspectives on and experiences with literature, my study seeks, in fact, to understand what actually happens in the L2/FL classroom when literary texts are deployed. The way in which teachers' practice is affected by their perception of demotivation is also shown in Chapter 5.2.2.

Teachers' enthusiasm is another important factor in enhancing motivation as it communicates commitment to and excitement about the subject that is being taught and positively influences the way students respond to it (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013). Students may be inspired by teachers who show enthusiasm for the subject matter or for the teaching material and, as a result,

they may enjoy and feel more interested in the L2/FL they are learning. If positive emotions are “contagious” (Rowe, Fitness and Wood, 2015), we may assume that teachers’ positive attitude to literary texts deployed in the classroom translates into students’ positive responses to them. This highlights an important aspect of the role of teachers and seems to confirm that understanding their attitudes towards literature in the L2/FL context is relevant.

Taking all these factors into account, we should now reflect on what teachers can actually do to motivate their students. In the following section, I will present strategies that I consider suitable for a motivating use of literary texts.

2.3.1 Motivational strategies

In the language classroom motivation needs “to be actively nurtured” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 71) to encourage students to learn. A number of motivational strategies, that may be adopted by L2/FL teachers, exist; those I successfully replicated in my experiment and in its follow-up (Chapter 4.3) are presented in the following, based on Dörnyei (2001).

- 1) *Making the teaching material relevant to the students.* This was one of the most important elements I took into account when selecting the literary texts and designing the activities for the experimental phase of the study. In my teaching experience, I found that giving students something they could relate to and perceive as worth learning is crucial to their motivation. According to Dörnyei, in fact, learning something that students “cannot see the point of because it has no seeming relevance whatsoever to their lives” is a demotivating factor – “unfortunately more common than many of us would think” (p. 61).

- 2) *Making learning stimulating and enjoyable.* Learning should not be monotonous, i.e. there should be a variety of teaching materials and learning tasks. Dörnyei recommends introducing the “novelty element” (i.e. something “new or unfamiliar or totally unexpected”), the “fantasy element” (i.e. something where learners can use their creativity and imagination) and the “personal element” (i.e. something relatable to learners’ experience and life) (p. 76). In the experimental phase of my study, I used literary texts as complementary material to the coursebook, as I believe they meet these criteria when deployed in the L2/FL class¹⁸.
- 3) *Presenting the task in a motivating way.* This implies the teacher explaining the purpose and the utility of a task so that students become aware of the reasons why specific tasks are required in the L2/FL classroom and do not do things “just because the teacher says so” (p. 79). I considered this strategy crucial in the experimental phase, as I wanted the students to be aware of the specific reasons why I introduced literature in the course, i.e. language learning (vocabulary, grammar and reading skills) and enjoyment. In addition, I created activities to support reading literature, in line with the suggestion that teachers should provide appropriate strategies to do the task, i.e. guiding students to apply those strategies that might be conducive to completing the task successfully.
- 4) *Protecting the learners’ self-esteem and increasing their self-confidence.* Self-esteem and self-confidence are obviously crucial for successful learning: especially when facing a task that is perceived as difficult such as reading a literary text in a L2/FL, students need to feel

¹⁸ Furthermore, in order to make learning stimulating and enjoyable, Dörnyei (2001) suggests that the classroom’s spatial organisation (e.g. the arrangement of tables and chairs) should be changed from time to time: in the experiment and in the follow-up, the spatial organisation of the classroom was changed according to the task students had to perform, i.e. pair or group work, discussion groups, activities that involved movement, language games, etc.

that the classroom is ‘a safe place’ and the teacher is supportive. To achieve this, four strategies are suggested: providing experience of success (e.g. students start the new task with easy activities and progress slowly with more demanding ones), encouraging the students (e.g. positive feedback and incentive), reducing language anxiety (e.g. reducing the fear of making mistakes) and teaching learner strategies (e.g. L2/FL reading strategies). In the experiment and in the follow-up, I found that encouraging the students was crucial to promoting their self-confidence: expressing my belief that they had the ability to achieve the goal of reading and understanding the FL literary texts was persuasive and was taken as an incentive by participants¹⁹.

- 5) *Promoting cooperation among learners.* This strategy implies the setting up of tasks where students need to work together towards the same goal. In my experiment, students worked in small groups or as a class to make sense of the literary texts that they were reading and to carry out specific group activities. Moreover, cooperation resulted from group work where learners helped each other understand parts of the texts.
- 6) *Promoting learner autonomy.* Though there are many strategies that may be applied in order to guide students towards autonomy, I made use of one in particular, i.e. “a change in teacher’s role” (p. 106). In the experiment and in the follow-up I was a *facilitator*, i.e. “a helper and instructional designer who leads learners to discover and create their own meanings about the world” (p. 106). I found that this was crucial to help students feel comfortable with literature – a subject that is often taught in a traditional style (Chapter 0.1) –, as I wanted them to enjoy the reading experience and to give their personal interpretations

¹⁹ See quotation 157, Appendix Q, from one of the students who took part in the experimental phase of my study.

of the texts. A certain degree of learner autonomy was also achieved in the follow-up experiment, where students freely selected the FL literary texts they wanted to read.

2.4 Measuring motivation

Understanding how to measure motivation is fundamental in my investigation for two reasons: I was the researcher conducting this study and needed to know *what* to measure and *how*, and I was the teacher who carried out the experimental phase, in which one of the aims was to enhance students' motivation.

Doing research on motivation may prove challenging because motivation is multifaceted, unobservable and dynamic (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013). The multidimensional nature of motivation makes it very hard to measure, and research instruments designed to describe it may only capture a fraction of a more complex psychological construct. Motivation is also not directly observable as “it refers to mental (i.e. internal) processes and states” and needs “to be inferred from some indirect indicator, such as the *individual's self report accounts*, [or] *overt behaviours* [...]” (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013, p. 197); this makes measuring it quite subjective. Finally, being dynamic and subject to change over time, motivation is difficult to measure in a one-off study and to consider as representative of prolonged behaviour.

Nonetheless, researching motivation and arriving at meaningful results is possible when a number of methodological recommendations are taken into account. The following recommendations, found in Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013), are those that I followed in my study:

- 1) Target specific aspects of L2/FL motivation, i.e. it is necessary to define “the *behavioural domain* that one is interested in” (p. 199). For the purpose of my study, the two types of

behaviour under examination were students' active participation in the FL class and engagement in in-class and home reading assignments;

- 2) Select the dependent variables, i.e. the manifestations of motivation that are to be taken into account. Volunteering answers, course attendance, extent of task engagement and FL use during in-class reading discussions were the variables used in this study because they are concrete and quantifiable;
- 3) Decide which method to use for researching motivation, i.e. quantitative or qualitative, case study or survey study, focus on individuals or on a group of learners. As will be explained in more detail in Chapter 4, my study adopted a qualitative method, included a case study and was mainly focused on measuring individual behaviour.

Having discussed the aspects of motivation relevant for my study, I will now analyse the concept of authenticity and its role in the research I conducted.

2.5 Defining authenticity

As Gilmore (2007) has pointed out, authenticity is “a very slippery concept to identify” (p. 98) because it may refer to different things such as the text itself, the students, the context or the “purposes of the communicative act” (p. 98)²⁰. However, the debate on the topic has been dominated by the importance of exposing L2/FL learners to authentic examples of language use. Therefore, traditionally, the term authenticity has been used primarily in relation to the teaching material deployed in the L2/FL classroom to promote language acquisition and has been taken to

²⁰ Defining authenticity proves difficult to the point that there seems to be no consensus on the definition (Day and Bamford, 1998) and some of the interpretations given by scholars seem to contradict each other (Day, 2004).

be synonymous with the “[g]enuineness, realness, truthfulness, validity, reliability, undisputed credibility, and legitimacy” (Tatsuki, 2006, p. 1) of the material used to teach a L2/FL.

Authenticity is a crucial factor in my study, particularly for the design of the experimental phase. In Chapter 0.1, I argued that the various approaches applied to literature in L2/FL contexts have caused literature to lose its real nature, as a form of art capable of stimulating readers’ emotions and of giving them pleasure in reading. Based on this, I designed the experimental phase of my study so that the nature of literature and of the literary experience could be brought into the L2/FL classroom. I asked myself what readers look for when they start reading a book and what ‘actions’ they take with a book they are reading. I believe that one of the things readers naturally look for in a creative literary text is enjoyment (defined as in Carroli, 2008; Chapter 1.3), i.e. reading for pleasure, and that a very common ‘action’ readers take is to think about what they read, to talk about it with other people and, maybe, to suggest that others read the same text. This is where, I argue, the authenticity of the literary reading experience lies, which is what I achieved in the FL classroom in my experiment.

Authenticity is relevant to my study for two further reasons: 1) authentic texts, such as literary texts, have the power to stimulate students’ motivation (a crucial point I investigate in my RQ1); 2) reading authentic literature enhances L2/FL learning and, in particular, L2/FL reading skills (RQ3).

Therefore, as I explain in detail in Chapter 4, in the experimental phase of the study authentic literary texts were deployed in the Italian FL classroom with the aim of:

- integrating authentic materials in the FL course that were complementary to the textbook;

- engaging the students in the authentic task of reading FL literature for pleasure, as opposed to reading literature for study. This implies that students were encouraged to respond personally to literature using the FL to share their opinions on and interpretation of the texts;
- exposing students to extensive texts (i.e. unabridged) as an opportunity to improve reading skills in the FL – a task that is authentic for FL learners and for FL readers.

2.5.1 Text authenticity

In this section, I address what authentic materials are and what makes literary texts authentic, in order to support the view that their use in the L2/FL classroom is beneficial to learning. Authentic materials are generally described as materials “which have been produced for purposes other than to teach language” (Nunan, 1988, p. 99), i.e. “[are] produced by a speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort” (Morrow, 1977, p. 13). Beresova (2015) adds to this definition that authentic texts “are published in contexts designed specifically for native-speaker consumption, with no thought given to non-native accessibility” and, as a result, “[t]he choice of vocabulary, syntax, grammatical structures are pitched at a target audience of native speakers and offered through media intended for native speakers” (p. 196). Similarly, Lee (1995) states that an authentic written text exists “for real-life communicative purposes” as “the writer has a certain message to pass on to the reader” (p. 324). In this sense, the concept of ‘realness’ is intended to describe the communicative purpose of a text.

In other instances, the concept of ‘realness’ has also been used to describe the language itself regardless of a text’s purpose, i.e. in relation to the concept of ‘naturalness’ of language form (Rogers and Medley, 1988). Berardo (2006) distinguishes authentic from non-authentic language

by saying that the latter is “artificial and unvaried, concentrating on something that has to be taught” and that it hardly reflects “how the language is really used” (p. 61). Gilmore (2007) points out that a way to identify criteria to understand a text’s authenticity is to rely on what sounds artificial to native speakers: in fact, only native speakers are able to easily “distinguish what is natural from what is grammatically possible but non-idiomatic” (p. 100) as the language used in textbooks is often claimed to be.

All these elements are featured in literary texts: they have a real communicative purpose and are written for readers, not for L2/FL learners. In them, language is real, as opposed to the language of textbooks which is often “abnormal” and “deviant in its purity” (Sell, 2005, p. 91)²¹.

2.5.2 Task authenticity

The term authenticity should not be applied uniquely to a text but also to the way in which a text is used in the classroom and the purpose for using it – i.e. “pragmatic and pedagogic appropriateness” (Chavez, 1998, p. 282). Taking into account the authenticity of *what students do* with authentic materials is relevant because, as pointed out by Arnold (1991), “use of authentic materials does not imply that the tasks will be authentic” (p. 238).

However, we may argue that the authenticity or non-authenticity of a text is a less important factor to consider and that what really matters are learners’ interpretation of and reaction to the text. Breen (1985), for instance, considers authenticity of a text to be strictly related to the authenticity of learners’ response to it:

²¹ Sell (2005) argues that textbooks often make use of invented and “unconvincing” (p. 91) storylines with the purpose of introducing grammar points and lexis.

The learner may ‘authenticate’, or give authenticity to a text from his own state of knowledge and frame of reference. [...] we may regard texts as potential *means* for the learner towards [sic] authentic communication in the target language. (p. 64)

In this sense, a poem in a FL textbook – i.e. used for teaching purposes – is authentic in nature and, at the same time, generates an authentic response: the poet wants readers to interpret what he or she writes and this provides the basis for authentic communication (Breen, 1985). Similarly, Lee (1995) describes authenticity in terms of learners’ appropriate response to an authentic text, i.e. a response leading to authentic communication in the target language. In this sense, in order for a literary text to be learner-authentic it needs to promote learners’ interest in the TL and in the use of the language to communicate; both the text and the task need to be learner-authentic, i.e. relevant and appropriate to the learning purposes. These principles were born in mind in the selection of texts for the experimental phase of my study.

Summarising research on task authenticity, including Duke *et al.* (2006) and Blumenfeld *et al.* (1987), Parsons and Allison (2011) state that a task is authentic when it “mimic[s] the activities people complete in settings outside of school” as this helps to “contextualize students’ learning” while at the same time it “promotes motivation and strategic behavior” (p. 463). I believe that reading literary texts for pleasure – which is what naturally happens with literature outside the classroom – is one of the possible ways to achieve this in the L2/FL context.

Discussing FL reading, Berardo (2006) claims that a reading task is learner-authentic when it is designed for the student both as a reader and as a FL learner. Task authenticity, in fact, seems to be influenced by the specific context of the L2/FL classroom which is “a social environment

wherein people come to communicate for and about new knowledge” (Breen, 1985, p. 67). We may say that, in the L2/FL classroom, the task of reading literary texts is authentic when it allows students to learn the TL and to perform in it for the purposes of (authentic) communication. To this effect, the choice of my texts proved successful in meeting these aims.

2.6 Why authenticity is important in the L2/FL context and why this is relevant for literary texts

According to the communicative approach to language teaching - which is the predominant L2/FL teaching approach currently adopted by teachers and supported by scholars in SLA -, learners should be exposed to *real language* in the way it is used in *real-life* by native speakers for a *real communicative purpose*. It is argued that this would help them learn the L2/FL more easily and effectively. In the words of Guariento and Morley (2001, p. 347):

With the onset of the communicative movement a greater awareness of the need to develop students’ skills for the real world has meant that teachers endeavour to simulate this world in the classroom. One way of doing this has been to use authentic materials [...] in the expectation that exposing students to the language of the real world will help them acquire an effective receptive competence in the target language.

Being authentic materials, literary texts allow students to see “how language works in contexts” and also “how language should be used in which condition and situation” (Aghagolzadeh and Tajabadi, 2012, p. 206). This is important also to ‘prepare’ L2/FL learners for their encounter

with the real language spoken by native speakers “outside the safe [and] controlled language learning environment” of the classroom (Berardo, 2006, p. 67). Moreover, literary texts are one type of the authentic materials learners will find when they travel or study abroad and use the foreign language. Reading them offers the opportunity to practise reading ‘real-life’ texts, as opposed to reading inauthentic texts which certainly help learn language structures but “are not very good for improving reading skills (for the simple fact that they read unnaturally)” (Berardo, 2006, p. 62).

Finally, reading literature is also relevant in the L2/FL classroom because authentic materials have a positive impact on students’ *cognitive* and *affective* dimensions, as I will explain in the following sections.

2.6.1 Cognitive reasons in support of authenticity in the L2/FL classroom

In cognitive terms, authentic texts such as literary ones enhance students’ linguistic and communicative skills as they are an example of real language used in a real communicative context (Bacon and Finneman, 1990). They allow learners to react to language in the same way native speakers do in their daily life, as they enable learners to focus on content and meaning rather than on language form (Berardo, 2006). This seems true particularly for literary texts: L2/FL student readers may be guided to focus on the content, rather than primarily on the literary form and stylistics. This is what I did in the experimental phase of my study, as explained in Chapter 4.3.3.

Furthermore, authentic literary texts represent a challenge to learners as they have to cope with real language that has not been simplified for them to be more understandable, so that their comprehension strategies are enhanced. This is claimed to promote the improvement of inferencing

skills and to develop tolerance for partial comprehension (Guariento and Morley, 2001), which is an authentic way of operating with a text, as pointed out by Porter and Roberts (1981, p. 42):

Even native speakers do not impose a standard of total comprehension on themselves, and tolerate vagueness. For example, on the BBC weather forecasts for shipping, millions of listeners may hear that a wind is ‘backing south-easterly’. To a layman, ‘backing’ will mean ‘moving’ and he is quite content with that, though aware that there is probably a finer distinction contained in the term. His comprehension is partial, but sufficient for his needs, and in proportion to his knowledge.

Authentic materials have also been described as a way to “overcome the cultural barrier to language learning” (Bacon and Finneman, 1990, p. 459) or as a bridge to the target culture, as they allow students to be in direct contact with the culture without the mediation of their teacher. As findings from my research revealed (Chapter 5.2.1), and as argued by Melvine and Stout (1987), such contact with the target culture may stimulate a more authentic and meaningful use of the FL by the students.

2.6.2 Affective reasons in support of authenticity in the L2/FL classroom

As mentioned earlier, the choice of using literary texts with lower-level FL students was also (though not uniquely) made because of my belief, as a teacher, that working with supplementary authentic materials can indeed enhance learners’ motivation. However, scholars tend to have quite

different perspectives on the topic and the few investigations that have attempted to establish a link between authenticity and motivation have produced mixed results.

Bacon and Finneman (1990), studying students' affective response to authentic oral texts, found that students react negatively to such input. Similarly, no statistically significant differences between the control and the experimental group were found in an investigation of Spanish-language learners' attitude, motivation and culture/language achievement after exposure to authentic materials (Gonzalez 1990, as reported in Gilmore 2007). Peacock (1997) studied the effects of authentic materials on students' motivation in a beginner-level EFL course and found that participants were overall more motivated but considered the authentic material to be "significantly less interesting" than artificial ones (p. 151). Daskalos and Ling (2005) reported that Swedish students exposed to novels in the FL classroom showed more enthusiasm when they worked with authentic material as they felt they were learning something more than language: they were learning culture and were acquiring information from the world around them. Finally, Beresova (2015), reporting on research conducted between 2012 and 2014 using different types of authentic texts (i.e. academic texts, literary texts and newspapers) with university students of EFL in Slovakia, found that such materials had a positive impact on participants. Overall, even if some authentic texts were perceived as more difficult than simplified ones – e.g. learners "missed the explanation, clarification and systematization" (p. 198) of the simplified texts –, students became aware of how much they could learn from them and felt more interested and more motivated to learn.

These mixed results reveal that, before a strong claim that authentic materials enhance motivation in and of themselves can be made, more empirical evidence is needed.

As far as literary texts are concerned, I argue that their authenticity does indeed contribute to making the reading experience worth the effort and motivating for L2/FL learners. There are a

number of reasons to support this argument. Melvin and Stout (1987), for instance, claim that learners at all levels are motivated by the use of supplementary authentic materials because they are a break from the “usual class routine” (p. 41). Lee (1995) and Peacock (1997) state that authentic materials are intrinsically more interesting and stimulating than invented materials and thus make students more active in the learning process. L2/FL learners’ interest in authentic materials make them more willing to learn and, consequently, facilitates language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). In fact, a substantial difference exists between real and unreal materials invented by teachers or textbook writers:

The teacher’s mind, and the materials writer’s mind, is focused on “contextualizing” a particular structure, and not on communicating ideas [...]. Contextualization involves inventing a *realistic* context for the presentation of a grammatical rule or vocabulary item. The goal in the mind of the teacher is the learning or acquisition of the rule or word. What is proposed here is that the goal, in the mind of both the teacher and the student, is the idea, the message. (Krashen, 1982, p. 69)

This is to say that authentic materials, which are characterised by an authentic message, may be not only more similar to the kind of materials learners are exposed to in their own language; they are also considered more relevant and motivating. Creative literary texts are one of the best authentic written inputs available for teachers to enhance students’ engagement: the stories of literature, if appropriately selected (Chapter 1.5), may captivate students to the point that their

attention is primarily focused on the message (rather than on form) and they “even “forget” that the message is encoded in a foreign language” (Krashen, 1982, p. 66)²².

Other scholars claim that one of the most motivating aspects of coping with authentic materials is that it gives students a sense of the real language “as opposed to the classroom language” (Al Azri and Al-Rashdi, 2014, p. 249). Nuttall (1996) believes that motivation results from the recognition that the studied language “is used for real-life purposes by real people” (p. 172). This relates to another crucial aspect considered to enhance L2/FL students’ motivation: when learners realise that they can successfully cope with real-life language and they are able to extract real information from it, they perceive a sense of achievement (Guariento and Morley, 2001; Berardo, 2006). I would argue that this sense of achievement may become even stronger when L2/FL learners successfully cope with the authentic language of literary texts, a task that is often seen as challenging in students’ mind.

2.7 Simplification

Simplified literary texts represent an option for using literature in L2/FL contexts. Proponents of simplification (e.g. Shook, 1997; Day and Bamford, 1998) believe that, especially at lower levels of language proficiency, L2/FL learners may find simplified texts easier as they are “lexically, syntactically, and rhetorically less dense” (Crossley *et al.*, 2007, p. 18) than authentic ones. Many L2/FL textbooks use authentic texts that “may be subject to a certain level of adaptation” (Daskalos and Ling, 2005, p. 11), i.e. texts are lexically and syntactically modified to decrease linguistic complexity and make them easier for learners.

²² This was reported also by one of the teachers I interviewed in my study: in fact, T29 said that literature allows the students “to focus on the story” and “to forget” that the story is told in a foreign language (TI, pp. 1-2).

In the process of text selection for the experimental phase of my study, I considered the option of using simplified literature with the students, but opted for authentic literature in the end. I made this choice primarily because, in my experience as L2/FL teacher, I have found that authentic materials have the potential to enhance motivation more than inauthentic ones, as also supported by many scholars (section 2.6.2); however, I took into account other factors, too.

Firstly, I asked myself whether my belief was ‘simply’ based on what Day and Bamford (1998, p. 54) call the “cult of authenticity”, i.e. researchers’ and teachers’ idea that authentic texts are ‘superior’ to simplified ones because they are natural. In fact, one could argue that simplified texts are natural, too:

Native speakers have children’s literature and young adult literature. Because these texts aim to communicate with their particular audience, the discourse is natural. They are also, again by virtue of their aim to communicate, appropriately simple in language and concept. (Day and Bamford, 1998, p. 58)

This is a fair point. However, I thought that deploying children’s or young adult literature with university students would not be consistent with the purpose of this study. The idea of bringing an authentic literary reading experience to the FL class made authentic literature fundamental for me. Students would be given the opportunity to read a text similar to what they would read in their L1 – i.e. being at university, they would hardly read L1 children’s literature; moreover, students’ potential preconceptions about the difficulties of reading a FL literary text not specifically written for non-fluent readers would be challenged.

Another element that I considered is that when it comes to the language proficiency level of students, there is a certain disagreement on the use simplified texts in the L2/FL context. Some of the most common criticism of simplification (e.g. Mountford (1976), Meisel (1980) and Long and Ross (1993), summarised by Crossley *et al.* (2007)), refer to the fact that “the removal of complex linguistic forms in favour of more simplified and frequent forms [...] inevitably denies learners the opportunity to learn the natural forms of language” (p. 16) and may result in something more complex than the original (Leow, 1993) and, may therefore, prove counterproductive. For instance, while authentic texts are claimed to be more effective in highlighting “cause-and-effect relationships” throughout a text, simplification often implies avoiding “causal and temporal connectives and logic operators” or omitting connectives in order to shorten sentences as they are considered too difficult to understand (Crossley *et al.*, 2007, p. 17). This process of elimination may result in a loss of cohesiveness which confuses the reader, and also makes it more difficult to sufficiently develop plot lines and themes of a text (Crossley *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, Yano *et al.* (1994) believe that linguistic simplification of written text may ease comprehension for FL learners but may also “reduce their utility for language learning in other ways” (p. 189): by removing linguistic items that are unknown to students, the latter’s ability to deal with unknown words is reduced and they learn to speak “below capacity” (p. 191).

Another recurring concern relates to the effects that simplification may have not only on the linguistic aspects of a text but also on its content. Swaffar (1985) claims that simplifying texts results in an alteration of authorial aspects as texts are “culturally and linguistically sanitized” (p. 17), thus their richness is compromised. This is particularly relevant to my study: simplification has an even more drastic effect if applied to literary texts:

[...] it is precisely the literature that has been *taken out* of the simplified, or, basal reader [...] [and] a new literature has been created.

One main problem then is that of *language*. The literary language which is unique to the original is 'translated' into something else. [...] In the simplification process the writer almost deliberately loses [the] texture [of the original]. [...] The lower the level of the simplified reader (i.e. a text which has undergone more drastic simplification, for use with either more elementary learners or younger students) the more 'non-literary' the language is likely to be. (Carter and Long, 1991, p. 147)

Considering all these factors, I decided that authentic literary texts would be the best option in my study. Moreover, I thought that a way to deal with the potential difficulties of an authentic text could be to act at task-level rather than at text-level. I believe that authentic texts can be used at any level (i.e. even at lower ones) by providing very simple pedagogic tasks: as Gilmore (2007) claims, controlling the task is a way to control the difficulty of a text.

2.8 Summary

Motivation and authenticity are very complex constructs that have been the subject of rich debate in SLA.

The relevance of motivation in L2/FL teaching/learning is widely recognised. Teachers are constantly faced with the challenge of improving their students' motivation and have considerable potential to protect and sustain it during the process of learning a language. Teaching approach, materials and learning tasks have been found to affect the motivation of students in the L2/FL

context: this is why all these factors – which are intertwined and affect one another – were taken into account and carefully examined before they were adopted for the experimental phase of this study.

Authenticity is usually linked to motivation. However, its role in L2/FL learning - and in enhancing motivation - is still controversial and empirical evidence is limited. As Cook (2001) suggests, authenticity and non-authenticity, though they have become emotionally loaded terms in SLA, do not necessarily distinguish ‘good’ materials from ‘bad’ ones. Adopting a L2/FL teacher’s perspective, attention should rather be focused on learning aims and, consequently, on the appropriateness of the teaching materials selected and the tasks designed.

For the purpose of my study, I considered using literary texts - authentic by nature as they are written for reasons other than pedagogical ones - appropriate to the learning aims (Chapter 4.3.3). I used them as a break from the textbook routine and to stimulate students’ motivation and interest in the foreign language and culture, and in FL reading. I designed authentic tasks in accordance with the learning aims to guide students through the reading of such texts and to stimulate learners’ authentic response both as FL learners and as FL readers. As readers, they were supposed to read, understand and enjoy the stories told in the texts; as FL learners, they were guided through the reading with activities designed for language learning and FL reading skills development.

Chapter 3

What reading is and what it means to read in a second or foreign language

Introduction

This discussion on reading helps to address my RQ2 (research question 2) about the impact of creative literary texts (CLTs) on students' reading skills and habits in the FL. In fact, I believe that the role of literature in L2/FL contexts has often been analysed by researchers and teachers without taking into account what *reading* actually means, what the difficulties of reading an extensive L2/FL (literary) text may be and what pedagogical approaches teachers could deploy to address them. Understanding the reasons for and the ways of integrating literature in a L2/FL context implies reflection on the nature of reading, e.g. what reading means exactly, what skills are involved and what the link is between first language (L1) and L2/FL reading.

Although research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) underlines the importance of reading for improving learners' language proficiency (e.g. Knutson, 1998; Lao and Krashen, 2000; Yamashita, 2013), it seems to me that, in the classroom reality, students lack practice and confidence with reading in a L2/FL, especially with reading extensive texts. This chapter includes an analysis of Extensive Reading (ER) theory and its alleged benefits for L2/FL learning. Elements of ER that I considered relevant to my study were implemented in the experimental phase (Chapter 4.3).

3.1 What is reading?

Defining reading in general is a precondition of understanding reading literature in a foreign language, a complex process that entails the use of skills and strategies. First, reading means

decoding and processing written language that, obviously, presupposes knowledge of language (Urquhart and Weir, 1998). However, reading does not merely mean receiving information encoded with language: rather, it is a process requiring the active participation of the reader, too. Kong (2006), for instance, claims that “cognitive and psychological functions” (p. 19) work together in the reader’s mind to make sense of what is being read. An interaction between the reader and the text exists, as readers need to use their knowledge – of the language and of the topic discussed in the text – and their cognitive reading strategies, to understand the written message in front of them (Kong, 2006, p. 19). Furthermore, Wu (2016) claims that such interaction involves not only features of readers and texts but also of the task. This suggests that – as I will discuss in section 3.4 – when we read a L2/FL literary text, we do not make use solely of our knowledge of the L2/FL, as other factors come into play in order to promote understanding.

There is always a purpose to reading (Smith, 2004) and it determines how readers read: i.e. the goal readers want to achieve not only affects the way they approach a text but also their motivation and interest (Knutson, 1998, p. 49), affective factors relevant to L2/FL learning (Chapter 2), as demonstrated in the choice of reading made by the students in my study. The main distinction is between reading *for pleasure* and reading *for information*. As my experiment later suggests (Chapters 5.2.1 and 5.3.1), when learners are invited to read a L2/FL (literary) text for enjoyment, they deploy an approach oriented at general understanding and tend to be less word-bound than they would be if the purpose of reading were, for instance, translation.

Furthermore, scholars claim that reading involves the active participation of the reader through the constant elaboration of expectations of what he/she will find in the text. This is known as ‘prediction’ which, in Smith’s (2004) words, is “the core of reading” as it “brings potential meaning to texts, reducing ambiguity and eliminating in advance irrelevant alternatives” (p. 25).

Similarly, Goodman (1967) defines reading as a “psycholinguistic guessing game”, i.e. it is “an interaction between thought and language” (p. 127) that work together to select clues necessary to produce hypotheses about the text; while reading, such hypotheses about the content of a text are confirmed or modified, helping the reader to make sense of a text, i.e. to comprehend it.

Researchers (e.g. Urquhart and Weir, 1998; Alderson, 2000; Yamashita, 2002a) identify two components in reading: the process and the product. The *process* consists of the mental activities involved while reading, i.e. “cognitive and linguistic processes” (Yamashita, 2002a, p. 276) such as decoding words (Treiman, 2001), predicting and inferring meanings (Yamashita 2002a), thinking about the text (Feng, 2010a); the process is “silent, internal and private” (Alderson, 2000, p. 4). On the other hand, the result of this process is called the *product* of reading, i.e. comprehension (Yamashita, 2002a). Therefore, applying this to literature, I argue that the way a L2/FL student reader understands a text is not only the result of the process of reading but is also a product of the reader’s experience and background.

Research on reading has focused on the approach that readers adopt to read a text, identifying two different reading models, i.e. ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’. In the bottom-up model emphasis is given to the text as readers recognise letters and sounds first, then understand words and finally decode meanings (Carrell, 1993). In this sense, reading is a decoding process that “proceeds from part to whole” (Feng, 2010b, p. 154). By contrast, the top-down model emphasises what is brought into the text by the reader who “determines how a text will be approached and interpreted” (Smith, 2004, p. 234). This is to say that the text is not the only source of information for readers, who primarily rely on their own knowledge (of the language and of the topic) “so that the process of word identification is dependent upon meaning first” (Feng, 2010b, p. 155). According to this model, the process of reading implies readers’ activation of cognitive structures

called ‘schemata’, which Alderson (2000) defines as “networks of information stored in the brain which act as filters for incoming information” (p. 17). Schemata are a great resource when literature is used in the L2/FL classroom: teachers should elicit students’ schemata that may help them understand and make sense of a literary text “in the light of what [they] know” (Klapper, 2002, p. 7).

However, scholars agree that these two models are not accurate in describing the process of reading, which seems to be characterised by an interactive model, i.e. all components in the reading process interact with each other simultaneously (Alderson, 2000). More precisely, the interaction is considered compensatory, as it occurs when there is a deficit in one individual component (Smith, 2004). In fact, as Fecteau (1999) summarises:

[...] readers may compensate for insufficient knowledge in a particular area, such as word recognition or syntactic knowledge (bottom-up skills), by relying heavily on other knowledge sources, such as topic recognition or use of genre or content schemata (top-down skills) in order to comprehend texts. (p. 476).

Proponents of the interactive model believe that effective readers tend to use both models to ensure the accurate and rapid processing of information and that they process sentences rather than words (Klapper, 2002); by contrast, less proficient readers have less automaticity in decoding, as they prove slow and less accurate and tend to be more “word-bound” (Alderson, 2000, p. 19). Obviously, this has consequences for the product of reading: comprehension does not merely consist of understanding one word (or sentence) after the other, as individual words and sentences

may be understood without understanding the text itself. In fact, “the unit of meaning” in reading comprehension “is not the sentence or the paragraph, but the whole text” (Klapper, 2002, p. 27).

While readers are reading and understanding a printed text, there may be different types of comprehension: literal (information directly stated in the text), inferential (they analyse the text and interpret it, looking for implied meanings), and critical (they evaluate information and interpretation they gain from the text) (Alderson, 2000). According to Alderson (2000), these different “levels of understanding” a text are conventionally ordered in a hierarchy, as it is taken for granted that understanding a text critically is not only more valued but also more difficult than understanding it literally. Through this study I propose that reading literature requires another type of comprehension that may be found in what Feng (2010a) describes as “appreciative”, i.e. “reading in order to gain an emotional or other kind of valued response” (p. 153) from a text. The emotional response of the students involved in this study suggests that appreciative comprehension is relevant to promote effective – and enjoyable – reading (Chapter 5.2.1).

The process and the product of reading are influenced by the interaction of variables that are specific to the reader and to the text. Reviewing the research in the field, Alderson (2000) provides a list of variables that come into play²³:

Personal variables:

- The reader’s background knowledge (e.g. knowledge of language, of text type, of topic, cultural knowledge, knowledge of the world);
- The reader’s motivation to read (section 3.2);

²³ For a comprehensive analysis of variables influencing reading, see Alderson (2000, pp. 32-84).

- The reader's purpose for reading (see above);
- The reader's reading skills and strategies (see below);
- Stable and physical characteristics of the reader (e.g. age, personality, eye movement, speed and automaticity of processing).

Variables of the text:

- Text topic and content (e.g. an unfamiliar vs. a familiar topic, the quantity of information in a text);
- Text type and genre (e.g. expository/narrative, literary/non-literary);
- Text organisation and language (e.g. text coherence and cohesion, syntax, lexis);
- Text readability (e.g. syntactic complexity, lexical density);
- Typographical features of the text (e.g. layout, font, illustrations).

Among the personal variables affecting reading, reading skills and strategies deserve attention as they relate to one specific aspect investigated in my study (RQ2). Urquhart and Weir (1998) describe some differences between reading skills (reader-oriented) and strategies (text-oriented): a reading skill is “a cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with written texts” (p. 88); a reading strategy is a procedure carried out in order to solve a problem in understanding the meaning of a text. Reading skills are “automatic actions” and occur subconsciously (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008, p. 368); reading strategies, by contrast, are “deliberate, goal-directed” (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008, p. 368) actions and are consciously used by a reader. More specifically:

Being strategic allows the reader to examine the strategy, to monitor its effectiveness, and to revise goals or means if necessary. Indeed, a hallmark of strategic readers is the flexibility and adaptability of their actions as they read. In contrast, reading skills operate without the reader's deliberate control or conscious awareness. They are used out of habit and automatically so they are usually faster than strategies because the reader's conscious decision making is not required. (p. 368)

This seems to be the most important differences between reading skills and strategies, i.e. the level of automaticity and the effort deployed to use them. To be more precise, these authors explain that when a reader adopts a strategy for the first time and it helps to solve the problem encountered while reading, he or she will use the same strategy again and throughout his or her future reading. Consequently, when the same strategy has been deployed many times, that strategy “requires less deliberate attention, and the student uses it more quickly and more efficiently. When it becomes effortless and automatic [...] the reading strategy has become a reading skill” (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008, p. 368).

A reflection on reading skills and strategies is important, and is relevant to reading L2/FL literary texts, because the ability to read is very often taken for granted, especially, I would say, in a L2/FL context. Berardo (2006) argues that reading is “an integral part of our daily lives, [...] and generally assumed to be something that everyone can do” (p. 60). However, the assumption that everyone can read does not necessarily imply that everyone can read effectively or is a fluent, skilled reader: fluent reading may appear “effortless” but is indeed extremely complex (Woore,

2013, p. 82). Reading skills and strategies can be taught and trained: explicit teaching of the nature and the use of reading strategies, e.g. explaining to students “how, when, and why specific strategies are effective” (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008, p. 369) proves very helpful for improving students’ reading proficiency (i.e. “the relative difficulty or ease that an individual reader experiences in reading a particular written text”, Knutson, 1998, p. 50). As my study suggests (Chapter 5.3.1.2), the difficulties experienced by less-skilled readers may not be due to a lack of reading strategies, but rather to a lack of ability to select “the appropriate strategy for the problem at hand” Walter (n.d.).

3.2 Reading attitude and motivation to read

Reading has an emotional component that has an impact on the reader’s experience and reading habits – aspects I explore in my RQ2 –, and is crucial in that it determines the decision to read or to avoid reading. Smith (2004) affirms that:

[o]n the positive side, reading can provide interest and excitement, stimulate and alleviate curiosity, console, encourage, rouse passions, relieve loneliness, assuage tedium or anxiety, palliate sadness, and on occasion induce sleep. On the negative side, reading can bore, confuse, and generate resentment. The emotional response to reading is treated insufficiently in most books about literacy [...] although it is the primary reason most readers read, and probably the primary reason most non-readers don’t read. (pp. 190-191)

These emotions are known as ‘reading attitude’²⁴. Readers acquire their attitude according to their personal reading experience (Yamashita, 2013) and, in this sense, instructional practices in school and the importance accorded to reading in the L1 culture contribute too (Day and Bamford, 1998). Reading attitude is generally developed early in the life of a person, but it may change over time for the feelings towards reading “are not permanent, whether they are essentially positive or negative” (Lukhele, 2013). If reading attitude is non-permanent, it means that it may change: teachers who are willing to try and change students’ negative attitudes to reading literature (Chapter 1.3), for instance, may use those approaches to L2/FL reading that have been found to have a positive impact on learners (a description of these approaches is given in sections 3.6.3, 3.7 and Chapter 4.3).

Reading attitude is considered to be multi-dimensional. Reviewing the literature on reading attitude, Yamashita (2013) describes three components: affect (i.e. feelings), cognition (i.e. thoughts and beliefs), and conation (i.e. the intention to perform actions that promote or hinder reading like, for instance, “going to the library frequently”, Yamashita, 2004). Intention is an important variable, because, as noted by Lukhele (2013), “one’s attitude may be positive but one may lack the intention to read, resulting in non-reading behaviour being exhibited”. However, out of all components, affect seems to be the crucial one. It is deeply connected to motivation to read, which is generally divided into two different types: Alderson (2000) describes ‘intrinsic reading motivation’ as one that “is generated internally by the individual” (p. 53) and is aimed at one’s own pleasure or satisfaction, such as reading for pleasure; ‘extrinsic reading motivation’, by contrast, is generated by factors external to the reader, such as passing an exam (section 2.1). In particular,

²⁴ Smith (1990) provides a definition, according to which reading attitude is “a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that makes reading more or less probable” (p. 215).

intrinsic motivation has been found to correlate more than extrinsic motivation with: 1) the amount of reading for enjoyment (Mori, 2015), and 2) the “quality of the outcome of reading” (Alderson, 2000, p. 53). There is, in fact, a substantial difference in the way intrinsically and extrinsically motivated students read: the former reach “higher level of understanding” (Alderson, 2000, p. 53) as they read globally, looking for general meanings and ideas; the latter are more bound to details, seem to be less able to relate what they read to their knowledge and tend to look for surface meanings (Alderson, 2000). Considering the role of motivation to read, I believe that, if teachers wish to have students who read effectively in the L2/FL, they should work more on the affective component of reading. Giving learners the opportunity to have an enjoyable experience such as reading CLTs may be one of the possible ways to enhance intrinsic motivation to read and, in turn, reading ability²⁵.

The reading attitude developed in one’s own native language is one of the sources of L2/FL reading attitude. Day and Bamford (1998) claim that learners who have positive feelings about reading in their language are more likely to have positive attitudes to L2 reading. However, this is not the only factor influencing students’ attitude to L2 reading: past experience with reading in other foreign languages counts, too, as do learners’ attitude to and interest in the TL and culture (Day and Bamford, 1998). Moreover, L2 learners’ attitude is influenced by the classroom environment, i.e. “the experience with the teacher, classmates, materials, activities, tasks, procedures” (p. 25). This, in turn, negatively affects the motivation to read in a L2/FL and seems to activate a vicious circle: lack of motivation is connected to poor reading because “poor readers do not have the motivation to read or to dedicate their time to become better readers” (Alderson,

²⁵ Giving the students the chance to choose their own readings in the follow-up phase of my experiment was also prompted by the desire to increase their motivation.

2000, p. 54). By contrast, as my findings also prove (Chapter 5.3.1.1), good readers feel motivated to read further, as they feel confident that “they can monitor and improve their own reading” and, also, because “they have both knowledge and motivation to succeed” (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008, p. 367). According to Ellis (1994), “successful reading and the attendant sense of achievement is a form of ‘resultative motivation’ in that it is likely to encourage further reading activity” (p. 75). This was also found in my study (Chapter 5.3.1.1) as, after a positive reading experience with FL literature, students felt more confident about and motivated to FL reading.

If reading skills are crucial to the process and the product of reading (section 3.1), attitude and motivation seem to be essential variables too, influencing not only the decision to read but also the way students read. Teachers are generally aware of that and of the importance to foster students’ positive feelings towards reading. However, Heathington and Alexander (1984, pp. 486-487) found that teachers spend most of the teaching time focused on developing learners’ reading skills (e.g. comprehension) and little time developing their positive attitudes. Activities that have been found to change students’ attitude to reading, such as free reading or reading for pleasure, are not common in the classroom; by contrast, activities that promote reading comprehension, linguistic knowledge or other skills relevant to reading are widely deployed. In their attempt to explain why this happens, Heathington and Alexander (1984) speculate that it could be due to teachers’ belief that positive attitudes develop from strong skills, or to teachers’ perceived pressure to comply with course requirements. I argue that both skills and attitude deserve attention: in sections 3.6 and 3.7 I will discuss different ways of reading that may be encouraged in the L2/FL classroom to positively influence students’ attitude and skills.

3.3 Reading habits

The reason why I decided to investigate the potential impact of CLTs on students' reading habits (RQ2) comes from the recognition that a common concern about reading is shared by teachers: students do not have the habit of reading. Ögeyik and Akyay (2009) claim that reading "is a long-term habit" (p. 72) starting in childhood and that reading habits are essential for individuals' educational growth. Important as they seem to be, rarely have the reading habits of students at college and university level been investigated and the studies conducted so far are very much context-bound, so that generalising their findings is quite difficult. However, there are some interesting studies that say something about students' reading habits in terms of the purposes for reading, the materials and the time they dedicate to reading.

For instance, inquiring about the reading habits of Malaysian university students, Karim and Hasan (2007) highlight that findings from previous studies in Malaysian universities have provided evidence suggesting that a low percentage of students (20%) read regularly and the majority of them are "reluctant readers", i.e. they only read to pass exams and are "reluctant to read for information or pleasure" (p. 286)²⁶. One may speculate that the reading habits of students may be influenced by the compulsory nature of the reading experience in the education system that requires them to read specific materials for specific course requirements. In their investigation of the reading habits of students attending teacher training departments in Turkey, Ögeyik and Akyay (2009) found that students had a positive attitude to reading but could not dedicate much time to reading for pleasure because of their heavy workload; therefore, the students would read for academic reasons (i.e. studying) and the material would be mainly books and articles related to

²⁶ The study that is cited by the author is Pandian (2000).

their field of study. Sheorey and Mokhtari (1994) also conclude that college students involved in their research would mainly read for “utilitarian reasons” (p. 164) and did not spend much time on free, i.e. self-selected, voluntary reading.

Conversely, another study conducted in an American university (Blackwood *et al.*, 1991) found that students were reading primarily for pleasure, that they preferred reading newspapers and that they would read more during holidays than in class-sessions. Such findings are in line with those in Karim and Hasan (2007), who found that student readers spent a “significant amount of time” (p. 296) - especially during their leisure time - reading academic books and newspapers online.

As for reading habits in FL, Ögeyik and Akyay (2009) affirm that FL reading does not occur for pleasure when students feel they lack fluency and vocabulary, and perceive dictionary work as time-consuming. Students in Camiciottoli’s (2001) study did not develop the habit of reading for pleasure in the FL, though their attitude to reading was overall positive; she found that this apparent discrepancy was due to 1) students’ lack of time for FL reading – which, the researcher of this study says, is “a question of low priority among these students who are apparently unable or unwilling to find sufficient time for it” (p. 147) –, and 2) lack of access to books in FL (i.e. lack of material and lack of knowledge of what may be interesting to read in the FL). Finally, students’ low reading frequency in FL corresponded to a low reading frequency in the L1, suggesting that reading frequency transfers from the L1 to the FL (Camiciottoli, 2001).

From the studies presented above, we can say that the purpose of reading affects the choice of both *when* and *what* to read: i.e. reading for studying implies reading academic books and articles, supposedly during students’ study-time; by contrast, reading for pleasure implies free selection of materials (e.g. newspapers) and tends to occur during students’ free time.

I would say that teachers' concern about poor or absent reading habits among their L2/FL students should be followed by a reflection on what they can actually do to improve them. The materials I selected (i.e. CLTs) and the approach to reading I used in the experimental phase of my study (Chapter 4.3), are my attempt as a teacher-as-researcher to address this issue.

3.4 The relationship between L1 and L2/FL reading

Research on the relation between L1 and L2/FL²⁷ reading has identified two components of L2/FL reading ability: L1 reading ability and L2/FL proficiency. In particular, Yamashita (2002a) states that the types of linguistic knowledge which are more closely related to reading proficiency are knowledge of vocabulary or grammar structure, with a "heavier weight of vocabulary" (Yamashita, 2001).

Research seems to conclude that the impact of L2/FL proficiency on L2/FL reading ability is stronger than the impact of L1 reading ability, especially at lower levels of language proficiency. Alderson (2000) explains that the difficulties in L2 reading derive both from a language problem (i.e. weakness in L2 proficiency) and from a reading problem (i.e. weakness in reading skills and strategies). He specifies that at lower levels of language proficiency, reading in L2 is more a language problem than at higher levels, where difficulties are more likely to be caused by a reading problem.

²⁷ In this section, the wording L2 is sometimes used instead of L2/FL where reference is mainly to a second language context (e.g. Singhal, 1998; Fecteau, 1999; Alderson, 2000). However, what is said about L2 reading is considered to apply to FL reading too.

The relationship between L1 and L2/FL reading will be discussed in detail in the following sections, but first it is important to review the similarities and the differences. L1 and L2 reading are similar because (Singhal, 1998):

- They imply an interaction between the reader and the text;
- They are based on content, formal and linguistic knowledge;
- They require readers' mental activities (skills and strategies) to understand a text;
- During reading, both top-down and bottom-up models are deployed by effective readers.

However, L1 and L2/FL reading are also very different. Compared to L1 readers who start to read with a strong vocabulary and grammatical knowledge of their own language, L2 readers are less equipped with such linguistic knowledge when they approach a L2 text. They, in fact, begin to read in the L2 "at the very outset of learning the language itself" (Woore, 2013, p. 84) and some processing difficulties may undermine their comprehension. As learners need to focus on content and language at the same time (Klapper, 2002), reading in a L2/FL proves more challenging because they may also be unfamiliar with the topic of the text and lack relevant cultural knowledge to decode cultural meanings encoded with the language (Horiba and Fukaya, 2015). These are some of the difficulties learners may experience when reading L2/FL literature, too. I was mindful of this when I selected the texts and created the activities for my experiment (Chapter 4.3.2 and 4.3.3).

I think that awareness of similarities, differences and interactions between L1 and L2/FL reading should support teachers' reading instruction in the L2/FL class. This seems even more important if we assume that, while reading in one language, readers make use of the "other

languages existing in their mind” (Talebi, 2013), meaning that what they learn about reading (literature) in one language is potentially transferable to the others.

3.4.1 The cognitive domain

Understanding the relationship between L1 and L2/FL reading implies the definition of the concept of ‘transfer’. According to Karim (2010), transfer consists in the use of knowledge and skills a person possesses in one language to support understanding and production in another; in fact, transfer is deployed by L2/FL learners who use L1 knowledge and skills to help their learning of the L2/FL. It can be positive (i.e. it supports learning) or negative (i.e. it detracts from learning) and it takes place “consciously as a deliberate communication strategy, where there is a gap in the learners’ knowledge” or “unconsciously either because the correct form is not known or because, although it has been learned, it has not been completely automatized” (Karim, 2010, p. 49).

Scholars (e.g. Alderson, 2000; Yamashita, 2002a; Karim, 2010) agree that transfer occurs in reading too, as L2/FL readers transfer their L1 reading ability to the TL. After all, it is unlikely that learners “would suspend their L1 reading knowledge when encountering L2 reading tasks” (Bernhardt and Kamil, 1995). However, if it is known that reading skills are transferable from one language to the other, when transfer actually occurs is not so clear. In an attempt to understand this, two hypotheses on the relationship between L1 and L2/FL reading abilities have been formulated:

- *The linguistic interdependence hypothesis.* Yamashita (2001) states that, according to this hypothesis, L1 reading ability transfers automatically to L2 as “there is a common underlying cognitive ability between L1 and L2” (p. 189). This implies that having high-level L1 reading ability allows for L2 reading even if the level of L2 language proficiency

is very low. In other words, as Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) put it, “second language skills are only superficially distinct” (p. 17) from L1 language skills, so that when “language operations” such as reading and writing have already been acquired, they are “simply available upon need” (p. 17) within second language contexts. In this sense, L1 literacy is the foundation of L2 reading: Jiang (2011) cites Grabe (2009) claiming that learners with low L2 proficiency are able to “use all of their L1 academic reading skills to carry out L2 academic reading tasks successfully” (p. 141).

- *The linguistic threshold hypothesis*. The main assumption of this hypothesis is that a certain level of L2 language ability is necessary before L1 reading ability can transfer to L2 reading (Alderson, 2000). The role of L2 linguistic knowledge is emphasised as it is considered to be a stronger predictor of L2 reading than L1 reading ability: in fact, before the threshold proficiency level is reached, the level of L1 reading ability does not make any difference in L2 reading (Bernhardt and Kamil, 1995).

The majority of research studies have provided support for the linguistic threshold hypothesis; however, it seems that a difference exists in the way L1 reading ability and L2 proficiency interact based on the level of the L2:

[...] second-language knowledge is more important than first-language reading abilities, and [...] a linguistic threshold exists which must be crossed before first-language reading ability can transfer to the second-language reading context. However, it is clear that this linguistic threshold

is not absolute but must vary by task: the more demanding the task, the higher the linguistic threshold. What makes a task demanding will relate to issues like the topic, text language, background knowledge and task type. (Alderson, 2000, p. 39)

This is to say that the threshold level is very difficult to identify: it may change depending on the reading task or context; defining it is also difficult because it is influenced by the “dynamic, interactive interrelationships” (Jiang, 2011, p. 181) between L1 reading, L2 reading and L2 proficiency.

In an attempt to elaborate the concept of linguistic threshold, Yamashita (2001) proposes a model based on results from three different studies, i.e. Brisbois (1995), Taillefer (1996) and Yamashita (1999). The author’s tentative hypothesis identifies three levels of the linguistic threshold:

1) the “fundamental level”, where L2 proficiency “starts to make a contribution to L2 reading, but L1 reading ability cannot be transferred yet” (p. 196);

2) the “minimum level”, where transfer of L1 reading ability begins and increases as L2 language ability develops; however, as L2 proficiency develops towards the next level its role in explaining variation of L2 reading decreases gradually;

3) the “maximum level” where “the L2 language ability has developed so fully that it does not cause problems for L2 reading” and readers are able to read in L2 as well as in L1 (p. 197). In other words, when the maximum level is reached, readers are able to read in L2 as native speakers. This is a very high level and quite difficult to achieve for L2 readers: Yamashita speculates that

this might explain the fact that no study so far has found a group of readers whose L2 reading ability was explained uniquely by L1 reading ability.

Moreover, in another study about the relative contribution of L1 reading ability to L2 reading comprehension, Yamashita (2002b) investigates the possibility that reading ability and L2 (here meaning second or foreign language) proficiency compensate each other. Results from his investigation showed that a mechanism of “mutual compensation” occurs in L2 reading. Even if L1 reading ability has less impact than L2 proficiency on L2 reading, the compensatory mechanism explains that L1 reading ability is indeed a variable of the threshold level as, for instance, “readers with higher reading ability are likely to need lower L2 language proficiency than readers with lower L1 reading ability in order to achieve the same level of L2 reading comprehension” (p. 91).

These hypothesis on the relationship between L1 and L2 reading were relevant to my study: I decided to integrate CLTs only after the students had reached the ‘minimum FL proficiency level’ that would allow them to read and understand the texts; also, students’ proficiency level was taken into account also when I designed the reading tasks²⁸. As students in my experiment were at low levels of FL proficiency, I also found helpful to elicit students’ L1 reading ability and encourage them to use it. In fact, especially in the case of skilled readers, L1 reading ability has “facilitative effects” on L2/FL reading (Yamashita, 2002b, p. 92).

Students at L2/FL lower levels may approach a literary texts better equipped than teachers think: if they are good readers and their mind is not blank about the task, i.e. they already possess strong and strategic reading skills, students may be “capable of reading far beyond the level at

²⁸ This is further explained in Chapter 4.3.3 and 4.3.5.3.

which they speak” (Knutson, 1998, p. 50), as was the case for some students involved in my experiment (Chapter 5.3.1.2).

3.4.2 The affective domain

L1 reading attitude seems to be one of the factors that influences the attitude towards L2 reading (section 3.4.1). However, whether transfer occurs in the affective domain from the L1 to the L2/FL is a question that the theory has not addressed in detail yet. Yamashita (2004), studying the relationship between L1 and L2/FL reading attitudes and the influence of such attitudes on the performance in L2/FL extensive reading, found some interesting evidence. He defines the study’s findings as “suggestive” rather than “definitive” because of the limitations (e.g. the small-group scale) and calls for more evidence; however, the results expand the scope of the investigation of the relationship between L1 and L2/FL reading attitudes.

Yamashita’s study supports evidence for two main aspects: 1) transfer from L1 to L2 happens not only in the cognitive domain, but also in the affective domain; and 2) L2 proficiency, contrary to findings from studies examined earlier (section 3.4.1), is not a crucial factor in the transfer of reading attitudes. In Yamashita’s (2004) words:

[...] if students have a positive attitude towards L1 reading, they are more or less likely to keep it in L2 even if they are, at a certain point of their development, not very successful learners. Such students have the potential to improve in L2 in the future, because their positive reading attitude is likely to encourage them to obtain input from reading. On the other hand, if students have a negative attitude in L1 reading, they may not continue to

read in L2 once requirements such as class assignments or exams are over. Such learners may not develop their potential to the fullest, even if they are successful learners at a certain point of their development, because they are not willing to get further input.

Reading attitude emerges as an important variable: I think that teachers should attempt to understand students' affective response not only in L2/FL but also in L1 and try to enhance positive feelings towards reading as much as possible. In my study, I enquired about students' attitudes to literature before and after the experimental phase because I wanted to understand what I could do as a teacher to sustain and/or to promote positive feelings. This, in turn, guided also my choices about the teaching approach and the CLTs (Chapter 4.3).

3.5 Literary versus non-literary texts in L2/FL

As discussed in section 3.1, the process and the product of reading are influenced by many factors and one of them is the type of text to be read. In particular, a distinction is often made between literary and non-literary texts, as literary texts are considered more difficult to process because of the language used and the multiple meanings they contain. Brumfit (1981), for instance, underlines the connection between literary competence and the ability to “properly” read a text. He suggests that ordinary reading skills and language proficiency are not enough to understand a literary text, as what is needed is literary competence: a good reader recognises literary conventions and “interprets them in relation to the world of other experience which literature must in some sense imitate or comment on” (p. 244). According to him “[t]he fundamental ability of a good reader of literature is the ability to generalise from the given text to either other aspects of the literary

tradition or personal or social significances outside literature” (p. 246). This led Brumfit to conclude that reading literature in the L2/FL context implies the teaching of literature with the same approach taken in L1 context, i.e. teaching students the codes and the properties of literature itself. Similarly, Davis (1992) argues that what proves particularly difficult for FL student readers of literature is “satisfying the preconditions for experiencing the aesthetic effect of a text” (p. 362) and claims that the understanding and the aesthetic appreciation of a literary text in a FL context implies four sequential steps. First, FL readers decode the literal meaning of the text (i.e. word and sentence meaning); secondly, they activate historical-cultural background knowledge of the piece of literature to understand the context of the text; then, they make use of the literary competence to enhance comprehension; and, finally, FL readers give their personal response to the text by re-creating and re-constructing it.

The way some literary texts are processed by readers is different from non-literary texts and, as discussed in Chapter 1.2, literary competence is helpful for understanding a text; however, there does not seem to be any evidence that specific reading skills are involved in the process. The difference between a literary and a non-literary text is not absolute as it is extremely difficult to group all literary texts in one category – i.e. literary texts have distinct features and may be at a different level of complexity (Alderson, 2000). Moreover, students may possess a literary competence far more developed than teachers assume, because the conventions traditionally ascribed to literature are also used outside literature (Carter and Long, 1991).

Another point worth discussing is the language of literature, which is often considered an issue because of its alleged difficulty. The unusual and creative styles of literature may, in fact, be challenging for L2/FL students, especially at elementary levels; however, another aspect - much less frequently mentioned - is that language may be difficult because students do not have the

technical vocabulary and the critical concepts to describe their reading experience in the L2/FL (Weist, 2004). This may be the case when L2/FL teachers expect their students to analyse texts deploying highly critical skills that they may not possess. My entire approach in this study is based on using literature as a vehicle for L2/FL learning, not as literary criticism.

To conclude, we may say that reading L2/FL literary texts is different from reading non-literary texts and that this is because different types of text have different features. Furthermore, we may say that literary competence and a good L2/FL proficiency level are certainly helpful in understanding the meaning of a literary text. However, generalising about literary texts is not possible and, apart from the assumption that literature is more difficult than other text types, fundamental differences in the reading process of L2/FL literary texts do not seem to exist.

3.6 L2/FL reading and learning: classroom teaching practice

The complex nature of L2/FL reading deserves attention in the classroom as it has significant pedagogical implications. Reading in L2/FL, far from being something that students learn naturally, can prove quite a difficult task and would benefit from explicit teaching - as is the case with L1 reading (section 3.1). The fact that L2/FL reading ability is primarily dependent on L2/FL language proficiency does not mean that “a learner will automatically and consistently be able to transfer this linguistic ability to reading any unfamiliar text” (Klapper, 2002, p. 3). Activities that support and facilitate reading comprehension (i.e. glossing, formal and contextual guessing, etc.) should be designed and used by L2/FL teachers. Teachers, for instance, should provide students with the necessary background knowledge they need to preview the content of a text and to construct text meaning; introductory activities to convey the semantic content of a text are helpful too because they also allow L2/FL learners to focus on the language that conveys it; moreover,

teachers should give focused vocabulary instruction, i.e. encourage students to develop strategies for vocabulary learning so that they can apply them when reading texts (Klapper, 2002). In my experiment, for instance, I explicitly taught the students what Nuttall (1996) defines “word attack skills”, i.e. understanding how words are related to one another, how to identify words that can be ignored, how to efficiently use the dictionary²⁹.

In light of theories on the nature of L2/FL reading discussed in the previous sections, I will now address these pedagogical implications in more detail, i.e. what specifically L2/FL teachers need to teach in order to develop general reading ability/skill. In particular, I will focus on teaching practice and techniques to enhance:

- L2/FL proficiency;
- Reading ability;
- Reading attitude.

In the experiment and in its follow-up phase, I deployed these pedagogical approaches and techniques, applying them to literature (this is further explained in Chapter 4.3).

3.6.1 Enhancing L2/FL proficiency

Linguistic knowledge has been proved to have a facilitative effect on reading. Specifically, knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is considered the kind of knowledge that is more helpful in comprehending L2/FL texts.

²⁹ This is further explained in Chapters 4.3.3 and 5.3.1.2.

3.6.1.1 Vocabulary

Reading proficiency is enhanced by vocabulary knowledge and automatic word recognition (Woore, 2013) which is, indeed, “the single best predictor of text comprehension” (Alderson, 2000, p. 35). In fact, a large vocabulary is essential not only because it obviously facilitates the decoding process proper; according to the threshold hypothesis, it is fundamental also for the activation of all the other reading skills and strategies. However, L2/FL teachers seem to accord vocabulary much greater importance: they often see it as “a very high priority” (Kuzborska, 2011, p. 117) and believe that learning to read implies learning vocabulary more than learning strategies to process it. Obviously, struggling with unknown words negatively affects understanding of a written text and risks taking the pleasure out of reading. Nonetheless, when reading a L2/FL text unknown words are almost inevitable and total comprehension is not always achievable, so strategies other than stopping reading to look up every word need to be deployed.

Klapper (2002), on which the following approach is based, describes some activities that can help students develop those strategies either to ‘ignore’ unknown words that are not necessary for general comprehension, or to ‘guess’ their meaning. Teachers need to make language students aware that they are able to understand texts with many unknown words. To teach students how to ignore unfamiliar vocabulary, the following activities may be deployed:

- restrict the use of a dictionary to a limited number of words that are essential to answer questions on the text;
- students read an easy passage of a text where some words that are not fundamental have been deleted: this makes them realise that not all words are necessary to understand a text;

- students read a complete text with difficult words that they do not understand and are asked only to get the general sense.

In turn, L2/FL teachers need to teach how to guess the meaning of unknown words; the following ideas were implemented in the experimental phase of this study:

- Formal guessing. This implies L2/FL learners work on word roots, on word formation, on the role of affixes or on recognition of morphological clues. Students learn how to “recognize those parts of the word they do know to help them make a guess at the overall meaning” (Klapper, 2002, p. 21);
- Contextual guessing. Students work on context to arrive at the word meaning. For instance, they can be given a list of sentences where the unknown word is used and need to gather information on that word; an alternative is to give learners a text with unknown words that they have to match with possible definitions, excluding those that have no evidence in the text;
- Glossing. This implies supplying definitions, synonyms, equivalent L1 words or images on the side of a text and is more suitable for lower and intermediate level of L2/FL proficiency.

3.6.1.2 Syntax

Nuttall (1996) states that:

[...] understanding texts is closely associated with understanding syntax.

[...] reading does require grammatical skills. When faced with a text whose

meaning they cannot untangle, students must be able to identify the constituents of its sentences – the subject, verb and so on – and to analyse these if they are complex. (p. 78)

In fact, a text that is written with a familiar vocabulary can still prove difficult to understand if the syntax is complex; in order to help students cope with “heavy texts” (p. 78), Nuttall suggests a number of strategies to develop what she defines “text attack skills”:

- Understanding syntax. She describes an approach to complex syntax that implies a simplification of sentences: e.g. students may be asked to rewrite sentences by removing co-ordinating conjunctions (e.g. ‘and’, ‘but’); finding nouns and removing items following them which are part of the same noun group but are inessential for general comprehension; locating verbs and finding the subject and object;
- Recognising and interpreting cohesive devices. Misunderstanding elements of cohesion, i.e. “that part of grammar that reflects the coherence of the writer’s thought and helps the reader make the right connections between ideas” (p. 86), may impair comprehension of a text. It is therefore important to make students practise identifying and interpreting cohesive devices (e.g. ‘it’, ‘this’, ‘that’, ‘such’, ‘the latter’) so that they are able to understand what they refer to in a text;
- Interpreting discourse markers. Markers are important to understand as they show the relationship between different parts of a text and the writer’s intentions. Students can familiarise themselves with markers through in-class activities: e.g. working with a text where markers are omitted and need to be allocated; completing a sentence where

a discourse marker is given by choosing between two alternative sentence completions (see exercise 2A, Appendix D, in my experiment).

3.6.2 *Reading ability*

Reading is not merely a decoding process, i.e. a process where readers need to decode words and sentences; it is mainly a process of comprehension and meaning-making (section 3.1). L2/FL teachers, therefore, should teach learners those strategies that will help them to enhance their reading ability such as the ability “to establish the purpose of reading, to monitor comprehension, to use reading strategies, to make inference of many types, to draw on background knowledge [...], to critically evaluate the information being read” (Kuzborska, 2011, p. 104).

Exposing students to different types of reading, for instance, can be useful in equipping learners with reading strategies appropriate for different types of text and reading purposes. In the L2/FL classroom learners could practise different ways of reading. Klapper (2002) identifies four of them, each one implying different abilities according to the reading purposes:

- Skimming. It is “quick reading to get the drift of a passage” that proves helpful “for training the reader to be less dependent on word-by-word processing, to reduce eye movements and take in large chunks of text at a time” (p. 13);
- Scanning. Readers are encouraged to rapidly process a text for the purpose of finding specific information;
- Intensive reading. This involves “careful, literal processing of a text” (p. 14). Readers need to read in detail and generally have specific tasks, e.g. answering detailed comprehension questions or translating short passages of a text to check comprehension. Such practice is

commonly used by L2/FL teachers and it proves beneficial for enhancing reading skills such as inferencing meaning from context. However, as Klapper (2002) suggests, it should be used carefully, with the teacher explaining the purpose of this way of reading to students, as asking students to pay attention to the details of a text may encourage not only slow reading but also the idea that reading is a mere decoding process (Kuzborska, 2011);

- Extensive reading. This implies reading long texts for pleasure. As opposed to intensive reading, fast reading to get the general meaning of a text is encouraged here. As extensive reading is beneficial not only for the development of reading ability but also of reading attitude, I will address it more fully in a separate section (section 3.7).

3.6.3 Reading attitude

One way to enhance reading attitude in the L2/FL classroom is to promote free voluntary reading: Krashen (2003) claims that it is “extremely enjoyable” and creates “a low-anxiety [learning] situation” (p. 15). In fact, free voluntary reading is a student-centred approach to reading that can be implemented in different ways – e.g. sustained silent reading, extensive reading programmes, self-selected reading programmes – and is based on a simple concept: enhancing students’ reading attitude does not simply mean recommending books; it means giving students the opportunity to read, i.e. providing them with accessible texts and with time to read them. Time seems to be very relevant as “[s]imply providing time to read results in reading” (Krashen, 2003, p. 26). The recreational aspect of free voluntary reading is crucial: as I discussed in section 3.1, the purpose of reading deeply influences the reading experience; therefore, if students read for pleasure, i.e. they are free to read texts that they like, they are intrinsically motivated and their reading performance

is enhanced. Also, as Yamashita (2013) found in his study, enjoyment of reading positively influences FL learning.

Another way to have a positive impact on students' reading attitude is to allow them a satisfying reading experience. For instance, when L2/FL students read something that they like and gain information and knowledge from a text that they are interested in, their self-perception as readers increases. Self-perceptions of reading ability are closely related to intrinsic reading motivation; thus, Mori (2015) stresses that high self-perception of reading ability potentially helps “to reduce the psychological and cognitive barriers to reading in a foreign language” (p. 132).

In designing my experimental phase, I took into account all these aspects. I selected CLTs that could meet students' interests and taste to enhance enjoyment; the CLTs were also selected according to students' proficiency level and FL learning needs, to give them the opportunity to have a satisfying reading experience. Finally, I adopted a student-centred approach to reading that combined learning and enjoyment. All these aspects combined contributed to promoting positive feelings towards reading in the TL and, potentially, to increase learners' amount of reading.

3.7 Extensive Reading: what it is and how to integrate it into a L2/FL curriculum

Extensive Reading (ER) is discussed here because I used some of the principles of this reading pedagogy in my experimental phase. ER has been found to be beneficial for L2/FL reading as it enhances L2/FL proficiency, reading ability and reading attitude (e.g. Yu, 1993; Day and Bamford, 1998; Renandya, 2007; Yamashita, 2013 and 2004).

ER is often defined in opposition to intensive reading (section 3.6.2). However, these two different approaches to teaching reading seem to be complementary: intensive reading teaches students how to obtain information from a text while enhancing L2/FL proficiency through

vocabulary and grammar work; extensive reading teaches students reading fluency, in an environment that encourages the development of positive attitudes and lifelong reading habits (Renandya, 2007). A comprehensive definition of ER is provided by Davis (1995, p. 329):

An extensive reading programme is a supplementary class library scheme, attached to an English course, in which pupils are given the time, encouragement, and materials to read pleurably, at their own level, as many books as they can, without the pressures of testing or marks. Thus, pupils are competing only against themselves, and it is up to the teacher to provide the motivation and monitoring to ensure that the maximum number of books is being read in the time available. The watchwords are quantity and variety, rather than quality, so that books are selected for their attractiveness and relevance to the pupils' lives, rather than for literary merit.

Day and Bamford (2002) provide a list of ten principles which should guide an effective ER approach to teaching reading in the L2 classroom – and which can be applied to a FL context too. The list includes indications on reading material, on the role of L2 learners, on the purposes and the way of reading, and on the role of the L2 teacher:

- 1) The reading material is easy, i.e. it is appropriate to learners' L2 reading competence.

- 2) There is a variety of texts on a variety of topics to encourage learners to read “for different reasons (e.g. entertainment; information; passing the time), consequently, in different ways (e.g. skimming; scanning; more careful reading)” (p. 2).
- 3) Students choose the texts they want to read, i.e. “they can choose texts they expect to understand, to enjoy or to learn from” (p. 2).
- 4) Students read as much as possible.
- 5) Reading for pleasure and general understanding is the purpose of reading.
- 6) Reading is not followed by comprehension questions as the experience of reading a text is what matters “just as it is in reading everyday life” (p. 3).
- 7) Students read fast to develop reading fluency, e.g. the use of dictionaries is discouraged.
- 8) Reading is individual and silent to allow a personal interaction with the text.
- 9) Teachers have to support and guide the reading experience, e.g. they pay attention to students’ personal reading experience, provide orientation to read and keep track of students’ progress.
- 10) Teachers read with their students to offer a model (e.g. they can read silently when students do it, or read aloud parts of a text they like in order to show that they value such an activity).

One of the obvious benefits of ER is that it helps students to become better readers. As I argued in section 3.6, in fact, the ability to read is not naturally developed, but rather needs to be taught and trained. If it is important to teach students reading strategies and to help them develop reading skills, I believe that encouraging students to read extensively is important, too. According

to Smith (2004), “[t]he more we read, the more we are able to read” (p. 188) and one of the best consequences of reading is experience:

Experience in reading leads to more knowledge about reading itself. [...] [Students] don’t need to read better in order to read a lot, but the more they read, the more they learn about reading” (p. 190).

In this sense, ER provides students with the opportunity to be extensively exposed to reading material and, consequently, to practise reading. Other scholars support this. Lukhele (2013) says that “[a]n increase in reading seems to improve not only a reader’s reading ability but also a reader’s attitude to reading”. Klapper (2002) points out that there are many benefits in reading, such as:

[...] significant gains in affect, general language proficiency, vocabulary and writing. The findings relating to affect are especially important as they show the strong motivational benefits of extensive L2 reading programmes, with successful and enjoyable experiences motivating learners to read still further and more extensively. (p. 38)

Similarly, Yamashita’s (2013) investigation with a group of Japanese students studying English as a foreign language (EFL), resulted in an important finding as he says that “ER increased students’ feelings of comfort and reduced anxiety towards EFL reading, and also had a positive effect on the intellectual value that the students attached to reading” (p. 256).

However, in his study on teachers' cognition and the teaching of reading in a FL, Macalister (2010) points out that teachers consider ER important for language development, but they almost never incorporate it in the FL programme: most of the time, reading is "the exception rather than the rule, particularly in higher education contexts", and it is presented mainly as a "recommended, extra-curricular activity" (p. 60). One may ask why the use of ER is so limited in the L2/FL context despite the fact that research evidence is so clear in supporting its benefits. A number of issues seem to exist: Day and Bamford (1998) believe that this is because many language teachers think that intensive reading is enough to teach students how to read fluently; Yu (1993) claims that the "examination oriented education system" does not allow for reading for pleasure as it is not considered real "work" (p. 4) and silent reading is not taken as a serious activity; Mori (2015) affirms that language teachers experience "a paradoxical situation in which pleasure reading is implemented as a course requirement" (p. 129) and this frustrates the 'voluntary' aspect of ER. Moreover, according to Renandya (2007), teachers do not feel comfortable with ER because it requires a change in their role (i.e. it is "less central" as students are more independent in their reading) and because ER "is not directly assessed" (p. 147) and they prefer to spend time on activities where students can be tested.

From a teacher perspective, I believe that incorporating ER in the L2/FL curriculum can be difficult and some adjustment may be necessary. One crucial step would be acting on teachers' beliefs about the beneficial effects of ER on language proficiency and motivation; in fact, pedagogical innovations will not succeed if teachers who carry them out are not convinced of their value. Another step could be that of adopting a flexible approach to ER, e.g. the principles proposed by Day and Bamford (2002) are not seen "as a checklist for effective ER" (Mori, 2015, p. 133) but rather as a theoretical framework that can be adapted to the teaching context, the students and the

course taught. In this sense, teachers have a crucial role in deciding whether and how to integrate some reading in their L2/FL courses. As confirmed by Day's (2003) words in reference to ER in a course of EFL, the benefits would be many:

Extensive reading complements a curriculum because, while helping the program achieve its objectives of teaching students to read and pass examinations, it broadens those objectives and improves students' attitude toward achieving them. Most EFL teachers must, first and foremost, make sure that their students do well in their courses and pass the required examinations. But a teacher can, at the same time, achieve the broader goal of helping students become English readers by making sure that they have access to easy, interesting reading materials. This is the beginning of reaching beginning readers because it allows students to discover that they can actually read English and enjoy it. The more students read and the more they enjoy it, the more likely it is that they will become students who both can and do read in English. (p. 2)

Even if integrating ER in a L2/FL context may be difficult for the practical problems highlighted above, I believe that it is worth trying for even one positive experience with reading has the potential to positively influence students.

3.8 Summary

Understanding the act of reading is essential when literary texts are brought into the L2/FL classroom: teachers need to be aware of what reading means and what reading in a L2/FL entails, so as to be able to guide their students and help them become more effective and fluent readers. Moreover, assuming that enjoyment and pleasure are the most powerful factors to motivate learners to read, L2/FL teachers should pay more attention to the affective component of reading. In this sense, I believe that a comprehensive knowledge of the approaches that can be used to incorporate reading in the L2/FL classroom and of their effects on learners, is helpful in guiding their choices and decisions.

Having covered the main theoretical topics that relate to my study (i.e. the role of literature in L2/FL context, in Chapter 1; motivation and text authenticity, in Chapter 2; L1 and L2/FL reading, in this chapter) I will proceed, in the following chapter, to address the research context and the methodology I employed.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is about the research design of the study, and it provides an in-depth explanation of the methodology adopted, which encompasses a triangulation of research measures. Subsequently, qualitative and quantitative measures such as survey questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and teaching materials are discussed. The integrity of the study, the selection of research participants, and the methodology adopted for data collection and analysis are also addressed.

4.1 Research Questions

The concept of literature is very broad, and defining it is not easy (Chapter 1.1). Not only is the word *literature* difficult to define, it is also very evocative: looking at students' and teachers' feelings and attitudes towards it, one is left with the impression that the word *literature* is often associated with canonical literature, and it is referred to as a subject of study (Chapter 1.3).

For these reasons, instead of using the word literature, I opted for the use of a different term: in my research questions (RQs) and in the research measures, I refer to 'Creative Literary Texts' (hereafter CLTs). CLTs denote novels, short stories, plays and poems, which are fictional and use the language creatively to convey their message.

The research questions (RQs) that this study aims to investigate are the following:

- RQ1: Does the use of CLTs influence university students' motivation in the FL classroom?

- RQ2: Does the incorporation of CLTs in the FL classroom have an impact on university students' reading habits and skills in the foreign language?
- RQ3: What role do teachers play in the use of CLTs in the FL classroom?

Whereas RQ3 was never reformulated during the study, I found that some adjustments were needed in RQ1 and RQ2. At the beginning of my study, I intended to focus on the impact of CLTs specifically on 'students at beginners' level' (this was the wording of RQ1 at the earliest stage of my research). However, as I progressed into my investigation – e.g. analysing participants' answers to the questionnaires, using CLTs with beginner students of Italian in my experiment – I realised that what I was finding could actually apply to all levels of language proficiency. I decided, therefore, to broaden the extent of my RQ1 leaving out the specific reference to students at beginners' level.

As for RQ2, the focus in the early stages of my research was the role of CLTs in the development of students' reading habits, and indeed items in students' and teachers' questionnaires and interviews tend to focus primarily on reading habits in the FL. However, in an attempt to reply to these items, some teachers focused their attention on students' reading *skills* in the FL more than on their reading habits. At the same time, students' answers frequently referred to FL reading skills, too. I considered teachers' and students' comments on FL reading skills relevant for a better understanding of their views about and experiences with reading FL CLTs; I, therefore, included them in the analysis. As a result of participants' comments, I decided to broaden my RQ2 to include a focus on students' reading skills in the FL, too.

4.2 Research methodology

A qualitative approach to research was adopted in this study, although some of the data derived from the questionnaires were analysed quantitatively, on a statistical basis. Considering the limited number of participants in this study, however, the quantitative analysis is not to be generalised, rather it proves useful to interpret the data collected in the sample. In particular, quantitative data was complementary to the qualitative one, and was used to expand and clarify the qualitative data³⁰. The quantitative data collected was of two kinds: nominal data, resulting “from counting things and placing them into category”, and ordinal data, resulting from “counts of things assigned to specific categories” which “stand in some clear, ordered, ranked relationship” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 255). Ordinal data results from answers to questionnaire items in which respondents are asked to respond on a five-point scale (Likert scale): the researcher can only infer rank order, whereas the “cause of the order” and “by how much they differ” is not known (Denscombe, 2007, p. 255).

To help reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation of data, and to increase confidence in the process of drawing conclusions, I used triangulation, i.e. “two or more methods of data collection” (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 195). This entailed deploying multiple research tools such as questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations and teaching materials. Moreover, I chose what Denscombe (2007) calls ‘informant triangulation’ which consists in comparing data from different informants: as shown in table 1 (Appendix P), informants in my study were teachers, students and myself, the teacher-as-researcher (section 4.2.1.1). Using more than one method for collecting the data has two main advantages: it allows for more accuracy of the findings, and it also provides a more complete picture of the studied phenomenon (Denscombe, 2007).

³⁰ I used quantitative data, for instance, to support terms such as *some, most, usually* in the description and interpretation of qualitative data.

The primary source of data of my study were teachers' and students' questionnaires and interviews; I used data derived from classroom observation to supplement the primary data.

4.2.1 Case study

The nature of this study is *exploratory*, i.e. it addresses research questions with the aim to “develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry” (Yin, 2009, p. 9). As suggested by Yin (2009) there are many research methods that can be applied to an exploratory study and *case study* is one of them. For the purpose of this research, I decided to use case study as one of my research methods because I wanted to get an insight into a specific instance - students' responses to the use of CLTs in terms of motivation and FL reading habits and skills - in a “natural setting” (Denscombe, 2007), a beginners' course of Italian as a FL. In fact, in a case study the *case* that the researcher wants to investigate already exists, i.e. it is not created specifically for the study to be conducted (Denscombe, 2007).

In my study, the case (section 4.3) consisted of two groups of undergraduate students of Italian and one teacher-as-researcher (myself); the issue was to gain an understanding of students' attitudes towards CLTs, as well as their responses in terms of motivation and FL reading habits and skills, and to report on teachers' experience when deploying CLTs in the FL classroom. I selected the case as it represents a “typical instance”, i.e. “[it] is similar in crucial respects with [sic] the others that might have been chosen” and because of this the findings are “likely to apply elsewhere” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 40). One practical reason also determined my choice: the institution where I conducted my research offered a range of courses in Italian as a FL.

From a methodological point of view, I opted for a case study as a research method because of its “unique strength” (Yin, 2009, p. 18): it draws on different sources of evidence, i.e. documents

(e.g. teaching materials and activities), questionnaires, direct observation of the events studied, and also interviews of participants in the events. Moreover, unlike a mass study, a case study allows exploration of a single case (or multiple cases) in detail and in its particularity, in order to understand events happening in a specific situation; attention is given to ‘processes’ that lead to certain outcomes and results: this way, a case study proves very effective in explaining why specific results happen (Denscombe, 2007).

However, this peculiarity of case study raises one of the most common concerns about its validity as a research method. According to Yin (2009) some scholars claim that case studies provide little basis for generalisation, because they only focus on one single case (or a few cases). Some believe that case studies lack rigour in the sense that it seems easy for the investigator to allow “equivocal evidence” or personal bias “to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions” (Yin, 2009, p. 14).

Aware of the concerns about case study, I decided to use it because I believe that investigating one particular case helps understand the general. In fact, one counter argument to the criticism can be found in Denscombe (2007), as he claims that:

[...] there may be insights to be gained from looking at the individual case that can have wider implications and, importantly, that would not have come to light through the use of a research strategy that tried to cover a large number of instances – a survey approach. (p. 36)

On the other hand, to ensure a rigorous and careful use of the approach, I deployed multiple sources of data and triangulation to analyse it.

A further qualification comes from Yin (2009) and Denscombe (2014) who suggest that investigating a single case (or a few cases) allows for the elaboration of concepts, suggestions or hypotheses to explain what is happening and why in a specific real-life situation; findings from a case study, however, are not “final or absolute” but rather “provisional” and their validity needs to be corroborated through further research (Denscombe, 2014, p. 61). In this sense, my case study is intended as a potential starting point that can serve “as a descriptive or exploratory foundation” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 61) to help expand the theory on the role of literature for L2/FL learning. Consequently, my findings should not be used for statistical generalisation, rather to broaden or develop theories.

4.2.1.1 Participant-Observation

One of the research methods and sources of evidence adopted within this case study is classroom observation. In particular, as my role in this case study was that of a FL teacher and, at the same time, that of a researcher investigating her own students (i.e. teacher-as-researcher), I opted for a specific kind of observation: participant-observation. Yin (2009) defines it as “a special mode of observation” (p. 111) where the observer may take part in the events studied instead of observing them passively. In fact, I adopted participant-observation because it gives the researcher the opportunity to learn about the activities of the people under study “in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities” (Kawulich, 2005).

Guest *et al.* (2013) emphasise the suitability of participant-observation for exploratory researches – like this study –, explaining that through observing natural behaviours in context it is

possible to uncover the reasons, i.e. “cognitive elements, rules, and norms” (p. 79), behind them. I believe this is relevant to my study, as I wanted to uncover the reasons to explain the difficult relationship between students/teachers and literary texts in the L2/FL classroom. Observing students work with CLTs and analysing my response as a teacher to their behaviour complemented my data and informed my study overall.

Using a case study required me to understand the limitations of this research method. One of the most common criticisms of participant-observation relates to its potential bias. Guest *et al.* (2013) argue that the strength of this method may be, at the same time, its weak point: data derived from participant-observation “are often free flowing” and the analysis “more interpretive than in direct observation” (p. 79). Participant-observation is “an inherently subjective exercise” (Mack *et al.*, 2005, p. 15) as the event is observed by an individual whose ideas and experiences influence the way he/she sees and understands events. As a consequence, using such a method requires the researcher to truly understand the difference between description and interpretation of an event, in an effort to “[filter] out personal biases” (p. 15). In order to address this, I employed Zacharias’s (2012) recommendation to distinguish between things that can be observed, and “impressions and feelings of what happens” (p. 137) (see the difference between ‘field notes’ and ‘extra notes’ given in section 4.3.6). On the other hand, the participant role and the observer role obviously overlap, and the attention required for participating in the event may undermine the ability to observe properly (Yin, 2009) and consequently to document the data.

For all these reasons, and to make the best use of the advantages of participant-observation, I believe it is important to use it along with other data collection methods (e.g. interviews and questionnaires), in order to 1) develop what Yin (2009) calls “*converging lines of inquiry*” (p. 115), and 2) ensure validity.

During participant-observations, data is collected primarily through field notes (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002): in order to have “a rich and complete description of what happens in the classroom” (Zacharias, 2012, p. 134), such notes, typically textual, should include “records of what is observed” (Kawulich, 2005), “an account of events, how people behaved and reacted, what was said in conversation, [...] your subjective responses to what you observed, and all other details and observations necessary to make the story of the participant observation experience complete” (Mack *et al.*, 2005, p. 21).

In this study, one focus of my observations was students’ responses to the use of CLTs in class, in terms of motivation and reading habits and skills in the FL. Attention was also paid to my attitudes, feelings and experiences preparing and teaching each class-session. The procedures for writing classroom observations’ records are fully described in section 4.3.6.

4.3 The experiment

The experiment consisted of a series of lessons where two Italian literary texts were deployed, i.e. the students read them and did activities (in class and at home) designed to guide the reading process. In my role of teacher-as-researcher, I selected the texts, designed the activities and taught the classes.

The following provides a detailed description of participants in the experiment, of the CLTs and of the teaching approach and methodology.

4.3.1 Subjects: the experimental group

The subjects of the experiment were sixteen first-year university students of Italian FL enrolled in a beginners’ course in the institution where this study took place. Participants were selected on a

voluntary basis, using what McKay (2006) calls a “sample of convenience”, describing it as participants the researchers “are able to get access to” (p. 37). In fact, participants were students enrolled in a course that I was teaching. The choice also depended on the following factors:

- The students were all at beginners’ level: I was interested in using literature with beginners because, as emerged from my research measures (i.e. teacher questionnaire and interview), this is the level at which literature is less frequently used by FL teachers³¹;
- The size of the group was relatively small and seemed appropriate for my experiment: in fact, I thought that working with a small group would allow me to carry out the activities designed (e.g. role-plays, work group, etc.) effectively and also to monitor students’ behaviour, difficulties and progress (e.g. through classroom observations or in one-to-one conversations);
- Before I started the experiment, I had taught Italian to these students for three months. That allowed me to get to know them and to understand what they might be interested in reading before selecting the CLTs and the activities;
- They were all students of modern languages with previous experience of working on FL literature: that was an important factor in understanding their views about literature before and after the experiment³².

³¹ This was just my starting point however: my study was not focused specifically on the students’ language proficiency level in the FL.

³² Their views were gathered through the student questionnaires (section 4.4.1).

Participants in the experiment had attended fifty hours of Italian in the first term, twenty of which were on a course that I taught; when they started the experiment in the second term, they had already reached the CEFR level A1³³.

The experiment lasted three months (January-March 2016) and comprised one hour per week working exclusively with the CLTs selected (i.e. the experimental class). Along with the weekly experimental class, participants also had one hour per week of Italian taught by me (i.e. the normal class), plus three more contact hours taught by two other teachers. Apart from the experimental class, for which I designed a specific programme and teaching materials (sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.2.1), in all the other hours of Italian, participants were taught according to the current syllabus and using the textbook.

Before they took part in the experiment, the framework and the aim of the study were explained to the students to enable them to give informed consent concerning participation and use of data³⁴. Students were also told that the experiment would not be part of their exam and would not affect their final mark: I thought that ‘reassuring’ the students on this would help them relate to the texts in a relaxed and authentic way.

³³ For a detailed description of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) levels, see <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/the-cefr-descriptors>.

³⁴ More specifically, students were given an information form with a detailed description of the study and of the experiment; they were informed that classroom observations would take place, and that anonymity and confidentiality would be guaranteed according to the policy of the institution where the study took place. After agreeing to take part in the experiment, participants completed student questionnaire 1 (Appendix G), student questionnaire 2 (Appendix H) and, at the end of the follow-up phase, student questionnaire 3 (Appendices I and J). A full description of the student questionnaires, the pilot study and the procedures to administer them is given in section 4.4.1.

4.3.2 Teaching materials

Two Italian CLTs were deployed in the experiment and activities to support reading were designed. The first decision concerned the kind of literature I wanted to use: based on my beliefs, on my experience and on anecdotal evidence about students' response to literature, I wanted to avoid canonical texts and opted for contemporary literature. I was aware that canonical literary texts may be perceived as scary by the students who are used to studying them at school, and they may be seen as distant from their everyday life experience. This decision also took into account the idea that 'lighter' and 'easier-to-read' texts prove beneficial to students' motivation and enjoyment (Chapter 1.5). Finally, I opted for contemporary literature because the language and the topic of a recent text are more likely to be accessible to a FL student, especially at beginners' level.

In particular, I selected two short stories: *Curry di pollo* (text one) and *A Milano non c'è il mare* (text two) that will be fully analysed in the next sections. The decision to use short stories rather than other literary genres was guided by the following reasons:

- the few studies conducted on FL learners' preferences in literary genres suggest that prose fiction, i.e. novels and short stories, is the most appreciated (Chapter 1.3.1);
- the length of the course and the relatively limited time available to work on the texts would have made it difficult to work with longer texts (i.e. a novel). Moreover, according to Gazali *et al.* (2009), the length of a text also seems to be crucial to learners who prefer to read something that is not "time-consuming" (Chapter 1.3.1);
- I thought that a short story would be easier than a novel for beginner learners to read, in terms of the amount of language they would have to process;

- short stories are shorter than a novel but they have the same narrative elements (i.e. characters, plot, theme) and narrative structure (beginning, middle and end phases) that may appeal to a reader. Moreover, short stories represent an entire text³⁵, so students would not be faced with elements in an excerpt that are explained in another part of the novel or that require knowledge of other elements to be understood. These elements were relevant to the kind of work I intended to do in the experiment as they would allow students to get to know the characters slowly, to imagine how the plot might develop, and to immerse themselves in the story;
- a short story may be read many times in the classroom or at home, giving students opportunities to practise language and to strengthen reading skills.

Once I decided to use short stories, I had to select the ‘right’ ones for the experiment. The text-selection process was guided by some key questions, such as:

- For what *purposes* do I want to use short stories in the classroom, i.e. what do I want students to achieve and why?
- What should be the *topic* of the short stories in order to be interesting and appropriate to the students?
- Is the *language* (i.e. vocabulary and grammar) appropriate to the students’ proficiency level?
- Are the main *cultural references* in the texts accessible to students?

³⁵ That aspect was crucial to me: I wanted to expose the students to a full text as opposed to literary extracts, for the reasons suggested by proponents of Extensive Reading (Chapter 3.7).

Answering these questions helped me define the concept of the ‘right’ text for my specific teaching context; consequently, I was able to start selecting possible texts to arrive at the final ones. My pedagogical beliefs about how and for what purposes literature should be deployed in the FL classroom, my previous experiences with literature as a FL teacher and as a student, and my personal taste also influenced my decisions on text selection.

A full description of the short stories deployed and of the approach and methodology used will follow in the next sections.

4.3.2.1 Text One: Curry di Pollo

Curry di pollo (Chicken curry) is an Italian short story written by Laila Wadia and published in the anthology *Pecore Nere* (Black sheep, Laterza 2005)³⁶. It tells the story of Anandita, the Indian-Italian protagonist, who lives with her family in Milan. She is a teenager “completely aligned with the taste and trends of her peers” (Angelini, 2013, p. 255): she goes to an Italian school, has Italian friends and a secret Italian boyfriend. By contrast, her parents show nostalgia for their Indian roots and are attached to Indian traditions, food and language. While Anandita has never been to India and would like to integrate completely in Italian life, her parents barely speak Italian (her mother cannot pronounce Anandita’s secret boyfriend’s name “Marco” and calls him “Makko”), have a strong passion for Indian food and tea, and want her to wear traditional Indian clothes. In fact, as noted by Curti (2011), Anandita’s parents represent “the obstacle to the entrance of the heroine in Italian society” as they “behave, in her [Anandita’s] dismayed words, as if they lived in a hut in

³⁶ The book is a collection of eight stories written by four women writers who were born or raised in Italy and represent the first generation of daughters of immigrants from countries as diverse as Somalia, India and Egypt.

the village of Mirapur in central India” (p. 55). She would like her parents to be different, to be “normal” like all the other children’s parents in her school. She is concerned with the fact that they have lived in Italy for twenty years, but her father still “*ragiona come un contadino indiano*”³⁷ and her mother “*si veste sempre all’indiana [...] si pettina sempre all’indiana, cucina sempre all’indiana, parla sempre indiano*”³⁸ (Wadia, 2009, p. 40). The story revolves around a forthcoming dinner at her house, to which Anandita has invited her boyfriend and another female friend. The protagonist is very nervous because she does not want her parents to know about her secret boyfriend and, more importantly, because she fears that her parents would act “too Indian” in front of him. This is why she begs her mother to speak a comprehensible Italian with her friends, to avoid cooking Indian-style chicken curry and to prepare a simple, traditional Italian pasta dish instead. However, during the meal, while they are all eating *penne al pomodoro*, the father begins to praise the excellent chicken curry that his wife prepares following the recipe of Anandita’s grandmother, and it turns out that the two Italian teenagers would have preferred to eat this dish instead of pasta.

The text touches with irony on a relevant theme in contemporary Italian society, i.e. multiculturalism, which contributed to the selection of the text.

³⁷ “Thinks like an Indian peasant” (*my translation from Italian*).

³⁸ “Always dresses Indian-style [...] she always does her hair in the Indian way, she always cooks Indian food, she always speaks Indian” (*my translation from Italian*).

4.3.2.2 Text Two: *A Milano non c'è il mare*

A Milano non c'è il mare (There is no sea in Milan) is a short story written by the Indian-Italian writer Gabriella Kuruvilla and published online on the blog *La città nuova*³⁹.

A Milano non c'è il mare tells the story of Ravi, a teenager born in India who has always lived in Italy and does not remember anything about his country of origin. Ravi lives in a basement apartment in the suburbs of Milan, which are mainly inhabited by immigrants like him and his family. He has two strong passions: he likes the sea and wishes to live in a city close to it (in Milan, as he says, there is no sea unfortunately), and he loves rap music. His favourite singer is Amir, a famous Italian-Egyptian rapper whom Ravi feels close to as he speaks about integration problems similar to the ones encountered by the protagonist. In fact, in his song *Non sono un immigrato* (I am not an immigrant), that is quoted many times in the short story, Amir says “*mangio pasta e pizza, io sono un italiano, mi chiamo Amir come te ti chiami Mario*”⁴⁰.

With the simple language typical of a young boy of his age, Ravi tells the readers that he has to move to Marseilles where his father has recently found a new job. He is upset and scared because he does not want to leave his friends, his school and his city; he does not want to live in a place where people do not speak his language, as happens to him when he goes to visit his family in India.

In the end, Ravi's two passions (i.e. sea and rap music) will make him happy to move to Marseilles: while searching for information about the city on the Internet, Ravi finds out that not only is there the sea in Marseilles but also that a famous Algerian-French rapper lives there.

³⁹ The blog (<http://lacittanuova.milano.corriere.it/>) publishes articles, interviews, poems and short stories (written by various authors) that deal with multiculturalism in contemporary Italy: in particular, the blog intends to give a voice to people of foreign origin living in Milan.

⁴⁰ “I eat pasta and pizza, I am Italian, my name is Amir like your name is Mario” (*my translation from Italian*).

Moreover, the suburbs where he is going to live with his family are located on a small hill by the city which, in Ravi's words, might be seen a sort of "*ascesa sociale*" (upward mobility) for someone like him who is used to living in a basement apartment.

This text, too, was considered relevant for the students to learn something more about multicultural Italy.

4.3.2.3 Criteria used in selecting the two short stories

Integrating literature in the Italian course that I was teaching served primarily three purposes: 1) to allow beginner learners to have an enjoyable reading experience with an authentic piece of literature in order to enhance their motivation to learn Italian; 2) to give students the opportunity to improve their language skills (i.e. vocabulary, grammar, reading skills, etc.); 3) to expand students' knowledge of Italian culture (section 4.3.3). The two short stories selected fulfilled these purposes in the following ways:

- I considered the *stories* being told in the texts meaningful and relevant for the students: they touch on themes (i.e. human relationships, feelings, conflict between parents and children, music and changes in life) that are common among young adults and, therefore, easy to relate to. As I found in my teaching experience, it is important to make students read something that they do not perceive to be distant and uninteresting in order for them to enjoy it. Moreover, the characters' stories and emotions are central in both texts and readers have the opportunity to get to know them slowly by reading their words and understanding their perspective: I considered this aspect motivating, as it helps readers to immerse themselves in the story;

- The *language* used in the texts is accessible to beginner students while still being challenging. More precisely, the language was relevant to what the students were required to learn in the course: the texts included many dialogues, descriptions of people and places and dealt with semantic domains specific to the learners' proficiency level (e.g. family, places in the city, home, school, etc.). Another important element is that the texts do not make use of dialect, nor of the type of poetic lexis and unusual language structures that characterise some literature. I also considered specific grammar patterns, especially verb tenses: I thought that it would motivate the students to find in the texts the grammar structures we were analysing during our normal classes (e.g. the use of *imperfetto* for descriptions in the past, the use of *futuro* to speak about plans and the future). In fact, exposing students to literature allows them to find authentic examples of language use, enhancing their language awareness (Chapter 1.2). For all these reasons, I deemed the texts to fit well in the syllabus in terms of vocabulary, grammar and learning goals;
- The *cultural* references in the stories. Teaching culture is considered part of language study (Chapter 0.2). However, before literary texts are brought into the classroom, it is crucial to assess whether the texts are too culturally charged and whether the FL cultural elements in the texts may be familiar to the students (Chapter 1.5). The main cultural points of the texts I selected were multiculturalism in contemporary Italy and the cultural/affective relevance of food for immigrants, concepts that are easily understood by learners living in a multicultural society such as England, and finally the role of the family in Italy. Moreover, comments and observations about contemporary Italy emerged frequently in the texts, giving readers insights into the target culture, i.e. both the Italian way of life and its cultural artefacts. In this sense, not only are the two short stories selected literary artefacts of Italian

society, but they are also a representation of contemporary Italy that, according to Torresan (2012), FL students (studying Italian abroad) do not know very well but are very interested in⁴¹. Therefore, I thought that the reading experience would help students engage with the target culture;

- *Personal taste* of the teacher. In the selection process I took into account also my response to the texts as a reader because working with texts I enjoyed reading would help me address them in a motivating way for the students (Chapter 1,3,1). I knew that I would need to be a ‘motivator’ for them, encouraging and guiding them through the challenge of reading authentic literature in Italian for the first time. Therefore, I thought that my personal enjoyment and enthusiasm for the texts would help me to better fulfil my role as a teacher. In order to support my choices of texts with my students, I found it useful to ask myself *why* I liked the texts, and I identified three main reasons: 1) the story and the characters captivated me and made me want to read to the end; 2) the use of simple and direct language combined with irony and metaphor, made the reading light-hearted and fun; 3) the cultural references in the texts made me reflect on contemporary Italy. These factors helped me assess whether the texts were worth using with my students;
- Texts’ *literary value*. Though this was not a primary element guiding my choice of texts, the fact that both texts were recognised for their literary value in Italian society, made me even more determined to use them. Gabriella Kuruvilla, the author of *A Milano non c’è il*

⁴¹ This aspect was particularly important for participants in the study: learners have few opportunities to experience the target language directly and may have very limited, if any, opportunities to access the target culture. Out of the sixteen students who took part in the experiment, only one of them had travelled to Italy before enrolling on the course, while all the others had had no direct contact with the country nor with Italian people, apart from their language tutors at university.

mare (text two), is a well-known writer who has published many books that have been positively reviewed by literary critics; Laila Waida, author of *Curry di pollo* (text one), is not as famous, but her short story was awarded the 2004 “Eks and Tra” literary prize, awarded to migrant writers and their descendants (<http://www.eksetra.net/concorso-eksetra/edizione-2004/vincitori-2004/>);

- *Literariness* of texts. When the experiment started I did not know the level of participants’ literary competence; I only knew from student questionnaire 1 (Appendix G) that all of them had studied literature in secondary school for one to six years. Considering further that the main focus of the course was language learning, I opted for texts that did not have deep or complex literary meanings or complex literary language. As I will explain later in this chapter, my aim was not teaching students literature or literary analysis; in Lazar’s (1994) words, my intent was to challenge them with “themes and topics which have adult appeal, and which encourage them to draw on their personal opinions and experiences” (p. 116), while actively using Italian.

4.3.3 Approach and methodology

Since my intention was to use literature to encourage students to read, to become more actively involved (“both intellectually and emotionally”, Lazar, 1993 p. 24) in learning Italian and to enhance language and cultural knowledge, I opted for the “personal-growth model” (Chapter 1.4). I used this approach because it is student-centered: it focuses on readers’ personal encounter with the literary text and uses literature’s emotional power to stimulate them to share opinions and experiences, while using the FL. My decision was based also on the fact that I did not want to introduce literature in the classroom merely for language work (i.e. analysing grammar structures,

learning new vocabulary), thereby conveying to students the idea that reading literature merely serves the function of acquiring language. By contrast, I wanted to give them the opportunity to experience reading for pleasure and learning as a consequence (Chapter 1.4). However, since I also intended to promote active language learning, I designed some activities that may be considered part of the “language-based model” (Chapter 1.4): in fact, for these activities the text (or parts of it) is used as an input to teach the target language (TL) (e.g. vocabulary) or to develop reading skills (e.g. comprehension questions). Finally, as I intended to work on students’ reading skills and to promote reading habits in the FL, some principles of Extensive Reading (Chapter 3.7) were integrated into my approach and activities were designed accordingly. The reading and the language activities were carried out in the framework of a combination of two student-centered approaches to L2/FL teaching: the Communicative Approach⁴² and the Humanistic-Affective Approach⁴³. Both approaches promote active learning, are based on the idea that teaching needs to be oriented towards students’ needs and, more importantly, pay great attention to the affective dimension of learning (i.e. they aim at enhancing students’ positive feelings and motivation to learn).

In the experiment, I used literature as complementary teaching material, i.e. it was not the primary and sole source of language learning but rather was used to complement the textbook and to provide extra language practice for students. I introduced it to the classroom as an “invitation to read” (Di Benedetto, 2012, p. 8; *my translation from Italian*), as a stimulus to interact with the text and to share the personal reading experience in the classroom. Furthermore, I felt it was important to make students aware of *what* we would do with literature and *why*; this, in my opinion, would

⁴² For a detailed description of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, see Brumfit and Johnson (1979).

⁴³ For a detailed description of the Humanistic-Affective Approach, see Rahman (2008).

help learners to participate in the reading experience more actively. Therefore, the goals and the procedures of the experiment were explained to the students and a presentation (based on Welch, 1997) was designed as follows:

- *Class goal*: fluent reading. In order to enhance reading fluency, the students were encouraged to practise reading without using the dictionary too much; however, I glossed the CLTs (Appendix A and C) either in Italian, when it was possible to find an equivalent word or expression known by the students, or, when this was not possible, in English. Images were also used to gloss unknown words. This methodological choice was made to avoid glossing in English as much as possible;
- *Reading purpose*: the students were told that the main purpose was to enjoy the story (i.e. reading for pleasure), to understand it and to share opinions about it;
- *Focus*: the students were explained that they should look for general meanings, as opposed to detailed and accurate understanding of every single word and sentence. In fact, this was encouraged by comprehension activities designed to guide them through the reading and to focus their attention on general ideas and concepts emerging from the story;
- *Speed*: I opted for fast reading, as opposed to slow and close reading, to encourage fluency. Students had to find their own pace and read at their own speed. I believed that this was important to give FL learners the opportunity to practise reading longer texts and to let them find their own strategies to become better readers;
- *Method*: in-class and home reading were combined. In-class reading was considered fundamental as it provided practice with silent and independent reading; furthermore,

devoting some time (e.g. 15-20 minutes) to individual in-class reading is a way to show learners that reading matters, that it is a relevant activity in the FL classroom.

Finally, a crucial point for me was deciding whether or not to design activities to support reading. On the one hand, I wanted students to read the CLTs authentically and without feeling the ‘pressure’ of having to do language exercises at the same time. This is recognised as an inauthentic reading task in ER, as scholars claim that it threatens the pleasure of the reading experience itself (Chapter 3.7). However, considering that the students were beginners in Italian, I thought that they would benefit from some support. I designed various tasks at different stages of reading (i.e. pre-reading tasks, reading tasks and post-reading tasks) to guide and help them through potential textual linguistic and cultural difficulties (Appendices D and F). A combination of new and usual techniques was adopted: I thought that students may feel at ease working with new material (i.e. literature) using familiar tasks (i.e. in my case, multiple choice and true/false questions for reading comprehension).

As for the methodology, while text one was read during the course of Italian FL, text two was read during the summer term outside of formal tuition time. I provided online reading activities and monitored students’ work on them.

4.3.4 Pilot (the CLTs and the activities)

I piloted the CLTs between January and February 2016. *Curry di pollo* was pilot-tested in January: three students agreed to read it and to give their feedback afterwards. I selected the students instead of asking them to volunteer for the pilot for two reasons: 1) I needed students with specific characteristics (explained below), and 2) knowing that reading a CLT would be additional work

for students, I thought that requesting their participation personally would be more persuasive and would allow me to avoid the risk of having no student or a very limited number of them (e.g. only one) volunteering. Having explained to the students that my purpose in asking them to read the texts was simply to receive their feedback, I felt that selecting them would not compromise the legitimacy of their comments. The students' characteristics I considered relevant to the pilot study were as follows:

- They were in the same age group as the students involved in the experiment;
- Their level of Italian was only slightly higher than that of the students in the experiment;
- They were enrolled on the same university course as the experimental group;
- They were attending one of the classes I was teaching, which made it easy for me to reach them.

Since I knew the students, I opted to approach them personally: at the end of one class I explained the framework of my research to them and asked them if they wanted to read a literary text and tell me what they thought about it. Students were asked to email me as soon as they had finished reading the text to give their comments about it. I explained that I was particularly interested in understanding things such as: 1) their feelings and opinions about the story and the plot; 2) the level of language difficulty, any problems they might have had while reading the text and how they dealt with them; 3) their understanding of the cultural references in the text.

Having these students read *Curry di pollo* was very useful: on the one hand, it made me more aware of students' views on the text itself and of their understanding of the story; on the other, the students' positive comments (e.g. quot. 1 and 2, Appendix Q) made me feel more

confident and enthusiastic about my choice. All the students involved in the pilot liked the short story as they found it “comical” (student pilot 1, SP1), “very entertaining” (SP2) and enjoyable (SP3).

Other useful comments were specifically about the language and about the way students approached difficulties. Students could read the text easily even if it was “a bit complicated” (SP3) in some parts. The glossary was deemed helpful as it supported the students through the reading without using the dictionary too often, as I had recommended. Moreover, students tried to rely on their previous knowledge and on the context to understand unfamiliar or unknown words (quot. 3 and 4, Appendix Q).

That was encouraging for me: promoting fluent reading and enhancing students’ ability to infer meanings were among the objectives I hoped to achieve in the experiment (section 4.3.3).

Another student was involved in the pilot study. However, since she was my student and was studying Italian privately online, I carried out the pilot study informally: i.e. I used both CLTs (text one and text two) in our classes, asked her to do the activities and to give me oral feedback on her understanding of the stories and on any difficulties. While using these teaching materials with her, I observed and monitored her response to the texts and her motivation. Doing the activities with this student also helped me improve them: after our classes, I was able to identify potential mistakes that I had not seen while editing the first draft of the activities or rephrase some sentences in them that were difficult to understand. Overall, using the teaching material with this student made me more confident about using it with the students in the actual study.

4.3.5 Follow-on experiment

The follow-on experiment consisted of a series of lessons where I used CLTs in the Italian FL classroom. The students were free to decide which texts they wanted to read and read them, in class and at home, at their own pace. I selected the CLTs, designed the activities to share the reading experience in the classroom with peers and taught the course. As I will explain in the next sections, the follow-on experiment differed from the experiment (described above) in terms of the group of students (i.e. it was slightly larger), the approach and the methodology. Variations were made in order to expose the students to two different ways of integrating literature in the FL classroom.

4.3.5.1 Subjects: the follow-up group

The follow-up group comprised students who took part in the follow-on experiment. They were twenty-eight university students in their second year, studying Italian at intermediate level. The group included fifteen students from the experimental group who had worked on two CLTs in their first-year course of Italian for beginners, and thirteen students who had attended the same beginners' level course but without working on literature, i.e. they were learning Italian only from the textbook. The choice of carrying out the follow-on experiment with a group of students that was different from the experimental group, i.e. including students from the experimental group but also 'new' students, was dictated by the way Italian language courses are organised at the institution where I conducted the study. Beginner students of Italian in their first year are usually divided into two parallel groups, which come together in one bigger group (Italian intermediate) in second year. This explains why the follow-up group differed from the experimental one.

I selected these participants because: 1) I wanted to gather follow-on students' views about the integration of literature in a FL context after some time had passed since the experiment was

completed; 2) they were enrolled in a course I was teaching and, therefore, I had ready access to them (in accordance with McKay's (2006) "sample of convenience").

The follow-on experiment lasted for three months, in the first term (October-December 2016). Participants would attend three hours of Italian per week taught by me, plus one hour with another teacher. Follow-on experimental classes were held every week or every two weeks, for a total of eight sessions. At the end of the follow-on experiment, I gave participants student questionnaire 3 (Appendices I and J)⁴⁴ in order to gather their feedback and their views for further analysis.

Prior to the start of the follow-on experiment, students gave their informed consent to participate in the study and to the use of data. Anonymity and confidentiality were respected according to the rules of the institution where the study was conducted.

4.3.5.2 Teaching materials

For the follow-on experiment, I intended to bring into the FL classroom a variety of literary texts and genres. As I did not know some of the students in the follow-up group (as above) it was more difficult to select the CLTs. I hypothesised that their interests would be similar to those of the students in the experimental group as they were in the same age group, had the same level of language proficiency and were enrolled in the same university course.

However, in order to improve the chances of satisfying students' literary taste and interests, I opted for a wider range of texts: i.e. short stories, poems, fairy tales and short graphic novels

⁴⁴ As will be explained later (section 4.4.1.7), there were two copies of student questionnaire 3: they were the same apart from the last item which differed for students in the experimental group (section 4.3.1) and those in the follow-on group (section 4.3.5.2).

(Appendix E). The CLTs I selected were modern and contemporary pieces of literature; the criteria for selection were the same that I had followed in preparation of the experiment (section 4.3.2.3). The purposes for integrating literature in the Italian course I was teaching were the same as those explained above regarding the experiment: giving students the opportunity to have an enjoyable reading experience while learning Italian language and culture.

However, in the follow-up phase I intended also to encourage students to develop autonomy in selecting CLTs that they might like. In fact, as I will explain in the following section, I thought that giving them the opportunity to pick up a text and to decide whether to keep on reading it or not according to their interests and taste would be beneficial to their motivation to read⁴⁵.

4.3.5.3 Approach and methodology

For the follow-on experiment, a different approach and methodology were adopted. Various copies of each CLT were provided to the students at the beginning of each session with an indication of reading difficulty (i.e. ‘easy’, ‘intermediate’, ‘difficult’) so that they could select the level they preferred. To encourage fluent reading I glossed the texts; I created text covers with relevant and captivating images to make the texts more appealing. Students could choose one text, stop reading it and select another one if they did not find it interesting. In fact, I explained that the aim was reading for pleasure so they should not be forced to read something that they did not like. Even if

⁴⁵ The literary texts deployed in the follow-on experiment were not pilot-tested for three reasons: 1) many texts had been selected but it was difficult to find students available to read all of them, especially because the selection was carried out during the summer, when students were on vacation; 2) some of the texts selected, or extracts from them, had been already used successfully in an Italian FL context by other researchers (e.g. *Il piccione comunale*, used in Carroli’s investigation, 2008), by colleagues of the researcher (e.g. *L’H in fuga*, *La passeggiata di un distratto*) or in Italian FL textbooks (e.g. *L’avventura di due sposi*); 3) since students were free to choose which texts they wanted to read, and since many texts were available, I thought that it would be neither practicable nor crucial to pilot them.

the texts selected had been numerous and different literary genres had been offered, I think that students would have felt freer if a larger number of texts had been given to them. However, as I will discuss in Chapter 5, time constraints and limited access to CLTs made it quite hard to bring more texts into the classroom.

Students would read in class for 15-20 minutes each session (section 4.3.5.2), or at home. As had been the case in the experiment, the reading always happened individually and silently. No comprehension activities were designed to guide the students through the reading, as I intended to give them more autonomy and to encourage them to read more naturally. The only activities that I designed required discussion of the text selected, in pairs or in small groups, or sharing the personal experience of reading it (quoting one's favourite passage, describing the main characters, reading a meaningful sentence aloud)⁴⁶. Moreover, students were asked to discuss their opinions on selected texts and to give advice to their peers. This helped them feel that they were reading literature as a class, even if they were reading different texts at different paces. Occasionally, I would talk to them individually to enquire about the texts they were reading and whether they liked them. Finally, I designed written tasks⁴⁷ to encourage them to actively reflect on specific aspects of the texts while practising writing in Italian. Written tasks were also useful to me: reading the students' reflections allowed me, in my role as teacher-as-researcher, to appreciate their understanding and enjoyment of the texts.

⁴⁶ E.g. exercises 2b and 3, Activity sheet – follow-on experiment, Appendix F.

⁴⁷ E.g. exercise 5, Activity sheet – follow-on experiment (Appendix F).

4.3.6 Classroom Observations

During the experiment and the follow-on experiment, I carried out classroom observations (CO) and wrote field notes (FN) and extra notes (EN) (section 4.2.1.1)⁴⁸. The reason why I decided to differentiate FN and EN is that they have a different content. I would write FN during or after each class-session in order to describe events, students' behaviour and, occasionally, my feelings as a teacher about them. By contrast, EN resulted from my personal reflections about the experiment and the follow-on experiment (e.g. my feelings, my doubts, procedures for selecting the literary texts); they did not refer to any lesson specifically but rather were unsystematic, as I would write them every time I felt the need to record my thoughts. I used the EN to add data resulting from my self-observation and self-evaluation, in order to better understand my behaviour and my responses as a teacher. Quotation 5 and 6 (Appendix Q) illustrate the difference between FN and EN.

First, I started to write my FN using a structured form (Appendix O) adapted from Peacock (1997). This form, which I used for the first four sessions, helped me at the beginning to familiarise myself with CO: it allowed me to understand *what* I should look for and *where* I should direct my attention. In fact, as Guest *et al.* (2013) claim, “having some structure can greatly facilitate data collection and analysis” (p. 92). However, once the experiment had started and I was more aware of what to observe and how, I realised that the form was not appropriate anymore as it was too structured. Consequently, from the fifth session I opted for free FN where I would describe and comment on what would happen in the classroom more spontaneously. The EN were unstructured

⁴⁸ More specifically, classroom observations records produced during the experiment resulted in nine field notes (FN) plus three extra notes (EN1, EN2 and EN3); for the follow-on experiment, two EN were written (EN4 and EN5) before the start and eight FN were written during it.

too, as they were written naturally and were not focused on any specific topic, rather they were an attempt to record relevant impressions and thoughts that I, in my role as teacher, might have.

Since the teaching approach and methodology were different in the experiment and in the follow-on experiment, CO were different, too. In fact, as I described in sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.5, there was more in-class work to observe in the experiment than in the follow-on phase. Experimental sessions were longer (1 hour) and more regular (every week); by contrast, the duration and frequency of each follow-up session varied. This, along with the fact that students were reading different CLTs and fewer activities were designed for in-class work, made it more difficult to observe students' response. This is why FN written during the experiment are much richer and more detailed than those resulting from the follow-up, which on some occasions were simply a record of what was done during the lesson, as in the extract reported in quotation 7 (Appendix Q).

4.4 Research measures for Data Collection

The methods utilised in the study were:

- *Questionnaires: i.e. Student Questionnaires 1, 2 and 3 (SQ1, SQ2 and SQ3; Appendices G, H, I and J); Teacher Questionnaire (TQ, Appendix L).*

Questionnaires were used to collect data on students' and teachers' feelings for, attitudes towards and experiences with CLTs: I chose this research instrument because it would allow me, in my role as researcher, to gather information relevant to my study by "asking people directly" (Denscombe, 2014, p. 166). For ethical reasons, my questionnaires began with a brief statement describing the purpose of the study and, specifically, the aim of the questionnaire itself. In the statement, I explained that there are no right or wrong answers

and I provided each section with instructions on how to answer the questions. For the construction of the questionnaires, I started “by generating a theoretically driven list of the main areas to be covered” (Dörnyei and Taguchi, 2009, p. 127); then, I decided to divide the questionnaires into sections to give them a clear and logical structure. I also followed instructions in Zacharias (2012), such as avoiding leading items which may encourage participants to respond in a certain way, and asking relevant questions directly related to my research, which the respondents will be able and willing to answer. Following Dörnyei (2003), who suggests researchers should draw on other researchers’ questionnaires, I took and adapted some items asked in Gilroy’s questionnaire (1995) and in Camiciottoli’s (2001), in as far as they were relevant to the objectives and content of my study. The questions were placed in a strategic order (Denscombe, 2007) to encourage respondents to persevere: straightforward, closed questions were at the beginning, whereas more complex, open ones were at a later stage.

The questionnaires were pilot-tested with a group of respondents who were similar to the group that would be surveyed (sections 4.4.1.8 and 4.4.3.3). In fact, piloting a research instrument is essential as it makes a study more reliable (McKay, 2006). The pilot work was guided by the following aims:

- To identify possible problems in the interpretation and in the understanding of terminology used in the items;
- In the case of the TQ, I wanted to have feedback from professionals in the field of L2/FL teaching about possible strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire itself;
- To understand whether the questions were effective in eliciting the sort of information that I was interested in and whether they were relevant to my research;

- Finally, I also wanted to know how long it took participants to complete the questionnaire, in order to avoid too long/too time-consuming a document that might discourage them from responding.
- *Interviews: i.e. Student Interview (SI, Appendix K); Teacher Interview (TI, Appendix M).*

Interviews are “a method of data collection that uses people’s answers to researchers’ questions as their source of data” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 201) and I chose them because I believe that they are useful to get a deeper understanding of respondents’ perspectives. They contrast with “observational methods (which look at what people *do*)” and “focus on *self-reports* – what people say they do, what they say they believe, what opinions they say they have” (p. 201). Interviews I used in my study were semi-structured. I decided to use a semi-structured interview because, even if it is similar to a structured interview, I believe it is more flexible and “provides richer data” (Zacharias, 2012, p. 99): the interviewer can decide the order of the questions and has the flexibility to let the interviewee elaborate on points of interest and topics. The interviews followed up on the questionnaire results in order to obtain further information about participants’ views on literature in the FL classroom. In fact, the SI and the TI were structured according to themes and concepts that emerged from both SQs and TQs, and from data gathered in the experiment⁴⁹. I, in my role as researcher, conducted one-to-one interviews in English and in Italian, in the institution where my study took place and in Italy⁵⁰. Particularly in the case of the SI, I could have asked another person

⁴⁹ The TI was designed and conducted after the SI and also included themes and concepts emerged in the SI.

⁵⁰ They were in English for the students. As for teachers, they were in English for those interviewed at the institution where I conducted the study, whereas an Italian translation (Appendix N) was used to interview Italian teachers in Italy, Spain and USA in an effort to avoid possible failure to fully understand the questions.

to conduct the interviews to prevent students from feeling (potentially) uneasy as I had been their teacher. However, I opted to undertake the interviews myself because they took place after the end of their Italian course and examinations when I interviewed the students: as I was no longer their teacher, I thought they would feel free to express their opinions with no fear of repercussions. I also thought that being the interviewer would be helpful, as I knew the context of my study and the RQs, I designed and carried out the experimental phase and I participated, in my role as teacher, in the events under investigation. This allowed me to focus the interviews on those aspects that were relevant to the purposes of my study and, also, for instance, to elaborate on events that I had experienced as a teacher and students had experienced from their perspective. This aspect is particularly important for my study, as it enquires about teachers' and students' views on literature. Moreover, I conducted the study by myself (i.e. no other researcher collaborated in it), I had reviewed and analysed theories and studies on the role of literature in a L2/FL context before undertaking the interviews and, finally, I could add my experience as L2/FL teacher to this theoretical knowledge. I thought that all these factors would help me make sense of and critically reflect on interview data, and they convinced me that I was a suitable interviewer for my study. Such an approach could have caused students to feel pressurised to 'say the right thing' and some of their answers may have been biased. However, precautions to avoid potential biases were taken, as I will explain in section 4.4.2.1.

Each interview lasted between thirty and forty minutes, was audio-recorded and fully transcribed between one and two weeks after it was recorded. The SI and the TI (sections 4.4.2.3 and 4.4.4.3) were pilot-tested with the aims of:

- Identifying possible problems with the design of the questions, i.e. making sure that participants understand what was being asked;
 - Understanding the kinds of data that could emerge from participants' responses and ascertaining that the items were effective in eliciting relevant information for my research;
 - Practising my interviewing skills: e.g. being attentive, tolerating silence, adopting "a non-judgemental stance", being adept at using "prompts", "probes" and "checks" (Denscombe, 2014, p. 192).
- *Classroom Observations (CO) and Teaching materials (TM)* (description and pilot as in sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.6).

The CO reported during the experimental phases (i.e. experiment and follow-on) and the TM deployed were considered relevant, though not primary, sources of data: they were analysed and used to complement data from the other research measures of my study.

All data gathered through the research measures will be fully described, discussed and compared to each other in Chapter 5.

4.4.1 Student questionnaires 1, 2 and 3

For the purpose of this study, I designed three different student questionnaires (SQs) and administered them to students at three different points between December 2015 and February 2017, as follows:

- SQ1: designed and administered before the experiment, between December 2015 and January 2016;
- SQ2: designed and administered at the end of the experiment, between March and April 2016;
- SQ3: designed and administered at the end of the follow-on experiment, between January and February 2017.

4.4.1.1 Subjects

The SQs were administered to three different groups of students, as follows:

- Experimental group (section 4.3.1): students who participated in the experiment and completed questionnaires 1, 2 and 3;
- Non-experimental group: students who did not participate in the experiment but completed questionnaire 1;
- Follow-up group (section 4.3.5.1): this comprised both the experimental group (as above) and a group of students who participated only in the follow-up phase; both groups completed questionnaire 3⁵¹.

Table 2 (Appendix P) illustrates the groups of students who completed each questionnaire and students' response rate in each group.

⁵¹ In the research instruments, students who took part both in the experiment and in the follow-up are referred to as SE (student in the experimental group); students who only took part in the follow-up are referred to as SF (student in the follow-up group).

4.4.1.2 Experimental group

Respondents in the experimental group⁵² completed questionnaires 1, 2 and 3. SQ1 was administered to them before the start of the experiment because I wanted to gather students' views before exposing them to CLTs. Their views were used not only as data for my study but also to improve the design of the experiment.

At the end of the experiment, students were given SQ2: the aim was to gather their views on literature after they had worked with CLTs in the classroom and to compare their feelings, attitudes and opinions before and after the experiment.

Finally, the same students completed SQ3, which was administered at the end of the follow-up phase for two reasons:

- To gather participants' views once again after some time had passed from the experiment and to see whether their attitudes and opinions had changed;
- To enquire about students' feelings for, attitudes to and opinions on the teaching methods used in the experiment and in the follow-up.

All students in the group (n=16/16) completed and returned SQ1 and SQ2; SQ3 was completed and returned by fourteen students out of fifteen⁵³. Participants' answers in SQ1, SQ2 and SQ3 were analysed and compared.

4.4.1.3 Non-experimental group

This group of respondents comprised students of Italian in the institution where my study took place, selected on a voluntary basis. They were students in the second and fourth years at

⁵² A description of the experimental group and criteria of selection are provided in section 4.3.1 above.

⁵³ The number of students decreased from sixteen to fifteen after one learner left the Italian course.

intermediate and advanced levels of Italian, enrolled in courses that I was teaching or that were taught by colleagues. Participants were asked to take complete SQ1 because they possessed characteristics that were relevant for the purpose of my study: i.e. they were all university students with experience of studying at least one FL at different levels of proficiency.

Out of twenty-four questionnaires submitted to the sample of students, eighteen were completed and returned.

4.4.1.4 Follow-up group

Students in this group⁵⁴ were already aware of the purpose of the study as they had given their informed consent to participate in the follow-on experiment. Consequently, at the end of the follow-up phase, I simply informed the students that SQ3 would be emailed to them to gather their views on the CLTs that they had read during the course and on the classroom activities. Nineteen students out of twenty-eight returned the completed questionnaire.

4.4.1.5 Student Questionnaire 1

I designed a 17-item questionnaire, divided in two sections, specifically for this study (Appendix G). The first section (items 1-6) combined closed and open-ended questions eliciting background information. Section two used a five-point Likert scale to gauge beliefs about and attitudes to the use of CLTs ending with a general open question.

Section one started with a general question about students' reasons for studying Italian (item 1): in particular, respondents were required to rank the given reasons in order of priority. This

⁵⁴ A description of the group is provided in section 4.3.5.1 above.

item, adapted from Carroli (2002), was useful to have an initial idea on students' interest about Italian and on their general motivation to study it. In item 2 respondents were asked to explain what literature is in their opinion: I designed the item as an open-ended question to encourage the students to write freely about whatever idea or concept the word *literature* evoked in them. Moreover, I considered that having a first general idea on students' understanding of literature would be useful in interpreting and analysing the other answers throughout the questionnaire. The next two items asked about respondents' reading habits in their mother tongue (item 3) and in a FL (item 4), requiring participants to specify in each case what literary genres they read (items 3.1 and 4.1) and whether they read for study, for pleasure or both (items 3.2 and 4.2). Some scholars claim that students' reading habits are poor as they do not accord literature any relevance in their life, and consequently do not read much in L1 and FL (Chapter 1.3.1). Moreover, anecdotal evidence reveals that students' unfamiliarity with reading literary texts is one of the reasons cited by FL teachers to explain why they do not use literature in their classes. For all these reasons, I felt that it was important to understand if and for which purposes students in the sample read literature. However, with hindsight, I should also have asked them to specify the amount of time they spent reading or the average number of books they read in a year. In fact, even if these items were useful in understanding whether participants read or not, they did not say anything about how much they read, making it impossible to describe respondents' reading habits in terms of quantity.

In item 5, respondents had to specify for how many years they studied literature in secondary school, on a scale from zero to six. As some teachers think that students lack experience with literature, the aim of this question was to gather information on students' experience with and previous exposure to literary texts. Finally, the first section of the questionnaire ends with an open question (item 6) asking students why they do or do not like literature. I wanted this question to be

open and general because I thought that this would allow participants to express freely whatever they considered relevant. Considering the limited number of studies on students' attitudes towards literature, I felt it was very important to ask respondents directly in order to understand their points of view. This last item serves, as it were, as an introduction to section two, where I used a five-point Likert scale where participants were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding the use of CLTs in the FL classroom specifically.

Items 7 and 8 enquired about students' opinions on the role of literature in improving their FL skills (item 7) and in enhancing their appreciation and understanding of the target culture (item 8). Although literature is generally considered beneficial to FL learning, some of its features make it potentially detrimental to the learning process itself (Chapter 1.2)⁵⁵. I therefore considered it extremely important to record students' opinions on these issues.

Item 9 required respondents to express their agreement or disagreement with the idea that literature is motivating. Again, I wanted to gather students' opinions on this issue for two reasons: 1) anecdotal evidence reveals that literature's motivating power, supported by the majority of scholars (Chapter 0.2), is often denied by FL teachers who find their students do not enjoy literary texts very much; 2) the way literature is used in the FL classroom could, at times, be demotivating (Chapter 1.3.1). Item 10 followed the same line of inquiry, asking students' opinion on whether FL learners should be exposed to literary texts.

⁵⁵ If one considers, for instance, the role of literature in improving FL skills, supporters of the integration of CLTs in the FL classroom claim that literature is an authentic example of language and an excellent model of language use (e.g. Koutsompou, 2015). However, as Parkinson and Reid-Thomas (2000) summarise, critics claim that the language of literature is too 'deviant' and difficult for foreign learners (Chapter 1.2). Similarly, literature's role in enhancing foreign cultural knowledge is contrasted with the inherent cultural difficulty and students' lack of familiarity with cultural references in a text (Kramersch, 1996). Overall, some of the alleged positive and negative features of literary texts are in turn used to support or resist its integration in a FL context.

Items 11, 12 and 13 focused on students' self-perception when they deal with literature and, in particular, on factors they consider relevant in order to appreciate a literary text: i.e. a student's literary background knowledge (item 11), interest in the story being told in a text (item 12), and the level of a text's linguistic difficulty (item 13). Moreover, as teaching approach influences learners' appreciation of literature (Chapter 1.3.1), I decided to ask respondents' opinion on the role of the teacher when deploying CLTs in the FL classroom. I asked students to say whether they expect the teacher to: 1) explain the text using literary background knowledge (item 14); 2) allow them to express their opinions on the text (item 15); 3) support them with activities that encourage language development (item 16).

The questionnaire ends with an open-ended question (item 17) where students are free to add any further comments on the possible roles of literature in FL learning, on problems they experience when reading foreign literature and on how they deal with them⁵⁶.

To simplify the task of filling in the questionnaire, I highlighted key words in bold (section two of the SQ) to help respondents focus on the questions' specific topic.

4.4.1.6 Student Questionnaire 2

I designed SQ2 (Appendix H) with the aim of gathering students' views after they had taken part in the experiment and to see whether there were any changes in their opinions, feelings and attitudes. In order to be able to compare students' views expressed in SQ1 and SQ2, some items of the first questionnaire were repeated in the second one. For instance, in section one of SQ2,

⁵⁶ The word "problems" in item 17 was used because I wanted to understand which factors, if any, students perceived as challenging or difficult. However, with hindsight, I might have replaced this word with a more neutral one (i.e. challenges) in order not to give any negative or positive connotation to the question itself.

respondents were required to answer two general questions they had already answered in SQ1 (i.e. items 1 and 2). In section two (items 3 to 12), respondents had to answer the same set of closed questions that had already been asked in the previous questionnaire (SQ1, section 4.4.1.3). Section two continued with two new items, i.e. 13 and 14. Item 13 asked students to say how motivating it was for them to read *Curry di pollo*, the Italian text read during the experiment⁵⁷; subsequently, they were asked to explain their answers making reference to such things as topic, genre, language and activities engaged in. I designed this item to address my RQ1 (section 4.1) about the impact of CLTs on FL students' motivation. Item 14, specifically designed to inform my RQ2 (section 4.1) on the impact of CLTs on FL students' reading habits and skills, asked participants to say whether they intended to read further in Italian or in a FL after the experiment⁵⁸ and to explain their answers.

SQ2 ends with item 15 that was repeated from SQ1 (item 17; section 4.4.1.3). I replicated this question here with the aim of gathering new potential ideas after students had been exposed to a CLT with the specific teaching approach. I thought that participants' answers, and potential variations in their views on the role of literature in the FL context, could inform my RQ2 about the effects of CLTs on students' reading skills and also my RQ3 (section 4.1) about the role of the teacher in students' appreciation of CLTs.

4.4.1.7 Student Questionnaire 3

The purpose of SQ3 was to obtain students' holistic feedback on the experience of reading CLTs during the follow-up. The questionnaire, divided into two sections, had a similar structure to SQ1

⁵⁷ In particular, they had to select one option from the following: "not at all motivating", "slightly motivating", "moderately motivating", "very motivating" and "extremely motivating".

⁵⁸ More specifically, respondents had to select one option from the following: "definitely not", "unlikely", "not sure", "probably" and "definitely yes".

and SQ2. Section one asked about students' attitudes towards literature in a FL and comprised some selected items from SQ1. These closed questions (items 1 to 5) were statements with which students were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". I selected from the SQ1 only those items I considered relevant, in an attempt to create a questionnaire that students could complete relatively quickly: in fact, this was the third questionnaire I was submitting to students in the experimental group and I did not want them to find it boring or too time-consuming.

Section two focused on participants' experience of and opinions about the CLTs they read during the follow-up. In item 6, I wrote the list of the CLTs I had provided for the students and they had to indicate those that they had read. This item was included because it would give me an idea about students' preferences regarding literary *genres* and about the number of texts that they freely decided to read. Item 7 referred to the CLTs that students had read: respondents were asked to indicate how motivating it was for them to read those texts⁵⁹ and, then, to explain their answers. Item 8 - identical to item 14 in SQ2 - enquired about the impact of the reading experience in the follow-up on students' desire to read further in Italian or in a FL. As I have already explained in the section above in reference to items 13 and 14 in SQ2, items 7 and 8 in SQ3 were aimed at addressing my RQ1 and RQ2 specifically.

The questionnaire ends with item 9, which was designed in two different versions: i.e. item 9 in SQ3 given to students who took part only in the follow-up (Appendix J), and item 9 in SQ3 given to students in the experimental group (Appendix I). Students who took part only in the follow-up had to answer item 9, providing any further comment they wished to add on the possible

⁵⁹ I.e. "not at all motivating", "slightly motivating", "moderately motivating", "very motivating and "extremely motivating".

role of literature in FL learning, on possible problems they experience when reading literature in a FL and on how they deal with them. This item had already appeared in the two previous questionnaires. By contrast, students in the experimental group (who had already commented on this topic in the two previous questionnaires) were required to answer a different open-ended question: for them, item 9 enquired about students' preference concerning the teaching method used in the experiment and the one used in the follow-up. Students were asked to say which of the two ways of integrating literature in their Italian language course they liked more. I designed this item to provide further data to answer my RQ1 on students' motivation, and my RQ3 on the role of the teacher (section 4.1).

4.4.1.8 Pilot

The pilot student questionnaire 1 (PSQ1) was submitted and returned in January 2016, by hand and by email; subsequently, I analysed participants' responses in order to assess the questionnaire's effectiveness according to the aims described in section 4.4.

Three participants in the pilot study were selected from students in the Italian department of the institution where my research was conducted; one participant was a student enrolled in an Italian university. They were all students of Modern Languages and were asked to take part in the pilot because of their similarity with participants in the actual study, i.e. they studied two or three FLs (i.e. French, Spanish, Italian, English, German, etc.), they were used to using CLTs in their language studies and, finally, they were in the same age group as the students in the study.

The pilot study revealed some relevant findings. First, participants showed a generally positive attitude towards CLTs: all of them were readers of literature for study and for pleasure, and made interesting comments about the reasons why they like literature, i.e. because of its

imaginative and educational power (quot. 8, 9, 10 and 11; Appendix Q). Although these are the opinions of a small group of students and are not to be generalised, I considered these preliminary findings interesting because they seemed to indicate that, as I hypothesised in Chapter 1.3.1, students are not necessarily ‘against’ literature and may be more receptive to literature than their teachers suppose. One participant, for instance, highlights the relevance of literature for language learning in terms of grammar structure and vocabulary (quot. 12, Appendix Q). However, respondents’ comments on the use of literature in a FL context highlighted also difficulties experienced while dealing with literary texts, i.e. problems with vocabulary and the need for “time-consuming” translation (SP4, PSQ1) to understand a literary text. Participants’ opinions touched upon what I hypothesised in Chapter 1.3.1: students’ sense of unease with literature may not be related to literature itself but could be connected to difficulties that they experience while using literature in the classroom.

Overall, the pilot study revealed that the students understood the questionnaire items, and that SQ1 was well structured and effective, i.e. it gave me a wide range of data on my RQs. Therefore, no changes were made to the actual questionnaire.

Only SQ1 was pilot-tested. SQs 2 and 3 were almost identical, in structure and in content, to SQ1, with small variations only; in SQs 2 and 3, I added items that specifically referred to the activities and to the reading materials used in the experiment and in the follow-up. I did not consider such variations from SQ1 to require a further pilot test. I also did not pilot-test SQ2 and SQ3 because they referred specifically to the reading materials used in the experiment (SQ2) and in the follow-up (SQ3) and, consequently, the new items added could not be pilot-tested with students other than those taking part in the experiment and in the follow –up.

4.4.2 Student Interview

4.4.2.1 Subjects

For the SI (carried out in May 2016⁶⁰), six students were selected from the sixteen students in the experimental group according to: 1) their beliefs, attitudes and experiences as expressed in the questionnaires, and 2) their observed behaviour during the experiment. I opted for *selecting* students instead of *asking them to volunteer* for three reasons: 1) having identified in my COs students who manifested/did not manifest the specific types of behaviour under investigation (e.g. active participation during the classes, engagement in reading), I needed the same students to answer the interview questions in order to triangulate data; 2) I wanted to understand opinions expressed in the SQs and I needed to ask the students who expressed them for explanations; 3) I avoided the risk of having no student or a very limited number of them (e.g. only one) volunteering. The students selected may have felt slightly under pressure to answer questions asked by their teacher and some of their answers may have been biased; to limit this risk, I interviewed them after the exams, I explained that the aim of the interview was to gather their opinions (i.e. there was no right/wrong answer) and to compare them with what I had noted in my COs to inform my research data.

I considered the following factors in order to obtain a group of students with a variety of experiences and opinions:

- The student's attitude towards CLTs in general and in the FL classroom;
- The student's experiences with the use of CLTs in general and in the FL classroom;

⁶⁰ The interviews were done in May 2016, after the students had passed their exams, so that they would feel less constrained in expressing their opinions truthfully.

- The student's personal response to the use of CLTs in the FL classroom during the experiment.

Table 3 (Appendix P) summarises the characteristics of these students. I selected SE7 because of her ambivalent attitude towards CLTs: even though the student had a strong passion for literature and she was one of the best students in the group in terms of language proficiency level, she described the text as 'moderately motivating' and claimed that reading it was a very difficult task for her. Feelings for and experiences with CLTs described by SE7 in the questionnaires highlighted her ambivalent attitude to literature, which seemed to vary depending on what she was asked to do with it in the classroom. This aspect was particularly relevant for my RQ1 (about students' motivation) and RQ3 (about the role of the teacher). The other five students selected for the interview had a generally positive attitude to literature: however, their opinions on literature and their experiences with CLTs in the FL classroom differed slightly from each other and I wanted to understand them in greater depth. Students with a negative attitude were not interviewed: there was only one student in the sample who said she did not like literature but I decided not to interview her for two reasons: 1) she changed her mind slightly after the experiment, and 2) she did not show much interest during the experiment and this discouraged me from asking for her cooperation. However, on reflection, it might have been a good idea to interview her to understand the reason for her (perceived) disinterest and to have the perspective of a student who seemed not to find literature particularly engaging.

For the selection, I also paid attention to students' observed behaviour: during CO some students caught my attention more because of the way their behaviour differed in the normal class from the experimental one. Therefore, in the interview I wanted to compare my own impressions

with their direct opinions about the reading experience. I decided to interview SE13 because she was the student whose attitude changed most from the normal class, where she often looked bored, to the experimental class, where, by contrast, she was very active. SE9 was interviewed because of her active participation in the activities and her enthusiasm for the CLTs used; also, the student seemed to have a comprehensive understanding of the texts, in terms of plot, characters and inferential meanings. SE4 and SE5 were selected mainly because of their positive responses to the reading experience, even though their behaviour in the normal and in the experimental class did not differ as they were always engaged and motivated. However, SE4 was also selected because the experience of reading a text in Italian seemed to have had an impact on her: she found the CLT (i.e. text one) ‘extremely motivating’ and said that she would ‘definitely’ read further in Italian. I considered this relevant data for my RQ2 (about reading skills and habits), as she did not used to read in any FL before the experiment. On the one hand, this could confirm Macalister’s (2010) and Camiciottoli’s (2001) remarks that, for some students, FL reading may happen *only* in the FL classroom. On the other, SE4 behaviour made me want to understand why she would not read FL literature before and, more importantly, what made her change her mind.

Another aspect that I took into account when selecting the interviewees were students’ answers to items enquiring about motivation and about reading habits and skills in SQ2⁶¹. Looking specifically at such items was relevant in addressing my RQs 1 and 2. SE5, SE9 and SE13, for instance, were selected because they found the CLT (i.e. text one) ‘very motivating’. SE13 was an interesting case as she changed her mind consistently in many of the closed questions included in SQ1 (before the experiment) and SQ2 (after the experiment), especially those questions related to

⁶¹ For a comprehensive description of these items in SQ2, see section 4.4.1.6.

motivation: in SQ1 she was ‘unsure’ whether CLTs in the FL classroom are motivating, but she shifted to ‘strongly agree’ in SQ2. By contrast, SE6 was selected because of her unexpected answer about motivation: in my CO records she was described as engaged and involved, whereas in SQ2 she described reading the CLT (i.e. text one) as ‘slightly motivating’.

Though it would have been interesting to discuss further with students who did not find the experiment motivating, none of the students in the experimental group described their experience in negative terms.

4.4.2.2 Research Instrument

The SI was used as a method of data collection in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of students’ perspectives: i.e. what they thought about the use of CLTs in the FL classroom, the experiment and their feelings during it. Moreover, I wanted to understand their views on the role of the teacher and, based on their experiences, on the way teachers use literature in the classroom.

The SI comprised seventeen items common to all six students in the sample and nine extra items that I designed for specific students only⁶² (Appendix K). It was structured in three sections, each section comprising a set of items addressing one of the RQs. I designed the first part (items a to g) specifically to address my RQ1 about the impact of literature on students’ motivation (section 4.1). Accordingly, the interview started with a question related to the experiment: item a asked participants to describe what they first thought when I, in my role of teacher in the experiment, told them that they would read a literary text in Italian during the course. I included this item in an

⁶² Such extra items referred to what participants had previously said in SQs 1 and 2 or to what I had noted in my CO records. This is why the extra items were asked of only some students in the sample.

attempt to seek information on students' general feelings about literature, as I thought that through this question students' concepts of and potential preconceptions about literature might emerge⁶³.

Item b proceeded along the same line of enquiry as it asked whether respondents were expecting anything in particular. The way some students described their experiences with literature in SQ1 (e.g. difficult texts to read, literary analysis, etc.) was what prompted me to include this item: I thought it would help me to better understand respondents' view on the topic and, also, their motivation before starting to read a piece of literature in a FL. Items c to g were more specific as they enquired about students' feelings for and opinions on the reading experience I conducted during the experiment. Item c asked directly about how reading an Italian CLT made respondents feel about their language learning; item d focused on respondents' self-perceived level of motivation at the end of the experiment. In the following items, I asked participants to describe: 1) any possible impact of the text on their feelings about Italian (item e), 2) their favourite aspect of working with the text (item f) and 3) any possible difference in the way respondents felt during experimental classes and during normal classes.

Items h to k were designed to address RQ2, which investigates literature's potential impact on students' reading habits and skills in a FL (section 4.1). I started by asking respondents in what ways they thought reading a CLT in Italian had or would have an impact on their reading habits in a FL (item h). Subsequently, respondents were asked to say whether reading the text during the experiment changed the way they read (item i) and the way they approach language difficulties, i.e. grammar and vocabulary (item j). I considered it important to ask the students directly about

⁶³ As some teachers who answered the TQ thought, the word 'literature' itself may evoke students' negative feelings and such feelings may negatively affect their approach to and motivation regarding any literary text used in the classroom. For these reasons, I included item a in the interview and used it to open the interview.

what they thought they had learnt because the (beneficial) role of literature in terms of language learning is controversial, especially when it comes to beginner-level students (Chapter 1.6) as the participants in my experiment were. The final question in this section explored students' feelings about working with another CLT in future FL courses (item k).

The third and final section of the interview focused on the topic of the teacher's role, addressing my RQ3 (section 4.1). Items l to o⁶⁴ sought respectively: respondents' opinions on how teachers' method affects their appreciation of a CLT (item l); their feelings about the fact that some FL teachers are afraid to deploy CLTs as they think students do not like literature (item m) and, more specifically, that teachers do not often use literature at beginners' level because they considered it too difficult (item n). It was particularly important for me to ask these students this question, as they were reading the text when their Italian was still at beginners' level, and I thought that this could be a great opportunity to understand students' actual opinions on such a debated issue (Chapter 1.6). Item o asked students what they would recommend to a teacher who is going to use literature in his or her FL course: I thought that asking this question would indirectly give me more insights into students' feelings for and experiences with literature, highlighting what they enjoy and what they do not. Item p focused on my work as a teacher: I asked students to say in what way my approach differed in the normal and experimental classes. The purpose of this question was to ascertain whether my self-perceptions about the way I was teaching – which I noted down in my CO records – were perceived by the students as well. In addition, I thought that students' opinions on this subject would enable me to discover relevant aspects of my behaviour while teaching and would help me understand better their responses to it.

⁶⁴ These items were included in the teacher interview as well in order to gather practitioners' views on the same topics.

The interview ended with a question on students' self-perception about the use of Italian, since I noticed that during the experiment students were using more Italian than in the normal class, and I wanted to compare my findings with their personal perspective.

4.4.2.3 Pilot

The SI was pilot-tested at the beginning of May 2016. The pilot student interview (PSI) involved three students selected from the experimental group. As many of the items referred to the experiment, I felt it necessary to pilot the interview with students who took part in it. The reasons why I opted for selecting the students instead of asking them to volunteer were the same as described for the actual interview; so were the criteria I used to select participants (section 4.4.2.1). In particular, I chose one student who appeared to be very engaged in the experiment and who described reading the CLT (i.e. text one) as 'extremely motivating'; I selected another student at the other end of the spectrum who found the CLT 'moderately motivating' and did not show as much involvement as the previous one; no student described the experiment as 'not at all' motivating: this is why I did not include negative experiences in the PSI nor in the actual interview. Finally, I also chose a student in between, who described her experience in reading the CLT as 'very motivating' and who was active and responsive during the experiment. I deemed the set of responses to the PSI obtained from this last student important for my research, because the student's responses in the interview provided precious information as she had a lot to say about her experience with literature in the FL classroom and fully engaged with the questions, giving detailed and relevant answers. Therefore, I decided to use them in the actual study.

Overall the pilot study was useful because, after the questionnaires, I had a deeper insight into respondents' views. By listening to students' opinions, I had a clearer idea of what kinds of answers I might expect in the interview.

In addition, I used one student's answer to a question in the PSI (quot. 13, Appendix Q) to design an item for the TI (item q, Appendix M). The student's answer was so simple and straightforward, and as a FL teacher I found it quite striking. Therefore, I thought that it could be useful to see how other FL teachers would react to it and, more importantly, what feelings and opinions such an answer would elicit from their perspective.

The pilot study confirmed that the SI was well designed for the purposes of my RQs and that participants understood what was being asked. Therefore, I made no changes to the actual SI.

4.4.3 Teacher Questionnaire

4.4.3.1 Subjects

The initial survey of teachers' beliefs about, attitudes to and experiences of literature in the context of FL teaching/learning was conducted by means of a questionnaire and involved thirty-three participants. All participants were selected on a voluntary basis, taking into account factors such as "geographical proximity" and "easy accessibility" as recommended by Dörnyei (2003, p. 72) and by McKay (2006). Accordingly, I selected the FL teachers in the Modern Languages Department of the institution where I conducted my research and where I had ready access to teachers. Moreover, in order to include as wide a range of teachers as possible, I also selected them in three different teaching contexts (i.e. schools and universities in Italy, Spain, and the USA) and from colleagues and ex-colleagues. More specifically, the sample included eighteen permanent or temporary staff members in the Department of Modern Languages at the institution where my

research took place, twelve L2 and/or FL teachers working in a public school or university in Italy, two teachers working in a private school in Spain, and one teacher working in an American university⁶⁵.

Table 4 (Appendix P) summarises the characteristics of the sample. Overall, the teachers selected had a variety of academic backgrounds (e.g. Modern Languages and Literature; L1 Literature and Language; etc.), and the majority of them (n=24/33) held a qualification specific to L2/FL teaching (e.g. PGCE, CTEFL/CELTA, etc.). Teachers in the sample were teaching on average one L2/FL, with the exception of a few Italian teachers who taught two or three languages. Their teaching experience ranged from two to forty years.

Out of forty questionnaires sent out to L2/FL instructors, thirty-three were completed and used to collect data for my study.

4.4.3.2 Research Instrument

I designed a 23-item questionnaire – divided in four sections – specifically for this study (Appendix L). The first section focused on respondents’ academic/literary backgrounds and personal reading habits, and included questions (items 1-6) about teachers’ qualifications, years of experience in teaching, and reading habits. Section two used a five-point Likert scale to gauge teachers’ beliefs about and attitudes to the use of CLTs in FL teaching and learning (items 7-13) taking into account students’ learning and teachers’ self-perceptions when using literature; section two also enquired about the role of the teacher when deploying literature in the classroom (items 14-17). Section three

⁶⁵ As shown in table 4 (Appendix P) the majority of teachers in the study were FL teachers. Some of them were L2 and FL teachers and only five worked in a L2 context exclusively. Therefore, considering that the vast majority of teachers work in a FL context and that all students involved in the study are FL learners, I use the wording FL in the discussion of research instruments (in this chapter) and in data analysis (Chapter 5).

used open-ended questions (items 18-22) aimed at gathering in-depth information concerning teachers' attitudes towards literature as a resource in the FL classroom, the method and the techniques adopted when using literature, and its impact on students' motivation and reading habits and skills in the TL. Finally, section four only had one item (23), which I included simply to ask teachers whether they wanted to be contacted for an interview at a later stage of the research to discuss the issue further.

The questionnaire was aimed at gathering data about teachers' views on some key issues that I selected from mainstream research on the topic, as they were considered relevant to my RQs. In this sense, the perception emerging from both theory and practice that literary texts are different from other types of text (Chapter 1.2) led me to design items 7 to 13. In item 7, teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the idea that CLTs can be used at all levels of language proficiency; item 8 enquired about teachers' agreement/disagreement that CLTs are linguistically and culturally more difficult than other types of text for FL learners. These items enquired about two aspects that are often mentioned as negative features of literary texts: the unsuitability of literature for all proficiency levels in the FL, especially for beginner-level students (Chapter 1.6), and literary texts' intrinsic difficulty (Chapter 1.2). In item 9, I thought it was worth asking teachers whether they agreed with the majority of scholars on the beneficial effects of reading literary texts in the FL classroom, and compare their answers with what they said in open questions about their opinions of and experiences with literature. In fact, there can be a surprising difference between what teachers *know*, what they actually *believe*, and how they *behave* in the classroom (Chapter 1.3.2).

Items 10 to 13 enquired about teachers' self-perceptions when they use literature (items 10 and 11), and also about their opinions on what knowledge (item 12) and skills (item 13) a teacher

should have in order to use CLTs effectively in the FL classroom. The closed questions' section ends with items 14 to 17, enquiring about respondents' opinions on their role as teachers when they use literature in a FL context. Indirectly, these items were aimed also at eliciting information about teachers' current beliefs with regard to the purposes of literature in the FL.

Being aware of the limitations of closed items, e.g. they do not give any insight into the reasons for participants' responses (Dörnyei, 2003), I designed section three of the questionnaire where respondents were asked open-ended questions and could provide details, explaining their opinions further⁶⁶. Item 18, the first question of section three, asked teachers to describe their feelings about using CLTs in their FL courses. I intentionally designed this item as a general and broad one, to allow teachers to write whatever they felt was relevant and useful. In Chapter 1.3.3 I hypothesise that teachers' affective dimension plays an important role in determining their use of literature with FL learners. Accordingly, I used the word 'feelings' in item 18 as I wanted teachers' affective dimension to emerge from their answers; potentially, this would have helped to understand better the connection, if any, between this and teachers' practices with CLTs.

Item 19 simply asked whether participants use or have used CLTs as resources in FL teaching. This was a kind of precondition for continuing the questionnaire, as responding 'no' to item 19 brought the teacher to the end of the questionnaire. At this stage in the questionnaire, respondents who did not use CLTs were not asked to explain their reasons for not using them; with

⁶⁶ Dörnyei (2003) suggests open questions have some important merits in this sense as they allow us "to identify issues not previously anticipated" and, also, they prove very useful when "we do not know the range of possible answers and therefore cannot provide pre-prepared response categories" (p. 47). I thought that I could use teachers' answers to this section to understand better their answers to the previous one. Also, I thought that comparing respondents' answers to the statements in section two with their open responses in section three, could reveal potential contradictions and/or relevant additional explanations of their beliefs and practices.

hindsight, it might have been more useful to ask them to do so: this would have informed my study with the perspective of L2/FL teachers who decide not to integrate literature in their courses.

Items 20, 21 and 22 refer to specific topics related to the use of CLTs in the FL that I considered relevant for my RQs. Answering them required teachers not only to rely on their opinions and beliefs, but also to make explicit reference to their experiences in the FL classroom. Respondents' teaching experiences were crucial to address item 20, where I asked them to describe how they use or have used CLTs. Teachers were asked to include students' language proficiency level, the type of text and the activities that were carried out. This question was important for two main reasons: 1) it encouraged teachers to describe their practice and, indirectly, give information about their approach and methodology when using CLTs; 2) as they described their practice, I was able to gather information on what they actually *do* with literary texts, and compare this with their opinions and beliefs emerging from other items in the questionnaire⁶⁷.

In item 21, respondents had to say, according to their experience, whether or not using CLTs in the FL had any impact on learners' motivation⁶⁸. Finally, item 22 enquired about teachers' experience concerning the potential impact of literature on students' reading habits in the FL. Considering that there is not much research to date documenting students' reading habits, asking teachers about their experiences in the FL class seemed to me a good way to proceed in order to gain a first insight into an unexplored, though relevant, topic.

⁶⁷ This is even more important if we consider that teachers are not always aware of their beliefs, as some of them may be 'tacit', though El-Okda (2005) suggests that these beliefs can potentially be inferred from teaching practice.

⁶⁸ In fact, as mentioned earlier, literature's motivational power is claimed to be the predominant argument for including literary texts in FL teaching. However, the extent to which FL learners feel motivated when dealing with literature still seems to be a controversial issue (Chapter 0.3).

Overall, teachers' answers to open-ended questions in this section, had the potential to reveal teachers' awareness of current SLA theories/research about methodology and their approach to using literature and promoting reading in the FL classroom.

4.4.3.3 Pilot

The TQ was pilot-tested between December 2015 and January 2016. The pilot work entailed sending the questionnaire to four L2/FL teachers in Italy, my colleagues and ex-colleagues. This choice was made because I wanted to administer the pilot questionnaire to people whom I knew I could rely on and who would spend time discussing it with me and giving me feedback to improve it.

The pilot study revealed that the teachers easily understood the items and that overall the TQ was well structured and effective. Therefore, no changes were made for the actual questionnaire. However, two Italian teachers out of four in the pilot study commented that they were unsure about item 3 in section one, which sought information on qualifications specific to L2/FL teaching. First, I was asked to clarify the meaning of PGCE, and more specifically, whether this qualification granting the eligibility to teach in England could be considered equivalent to the Italian *abilitazione*. Then, I also had to clarify the difference between the qualification of *Master's* in the Anglo-Saxon system – which corresponds to the Italian *laurea specialistica* – and that of *Master* in the Italian one – which is a professional degree obtained after a BA (*Master di 1° livello*) or an MA (*Master di 2° livello*)⁶⁹.

⁶⁹ Many of the teachers I submitted the TQ to had attended a university-level Masters in teaching Italian as a L2/FL language in Italy. Such degree was obtained after the completion of an MA.

Taking into account Italian teachers' doubts that had emerged in the pilot study, I decided to specify what was meant by PGCE and Master's in section one of the TQ, and what could be the equivalent in the Italian system. This clarification was added in the email I sent to Italian teachers in Italy, Spain and America with the questionnaire attached.

Pilot-testing the TQ also made me aware of the fact that teachers had potentially a lot to say about the topic, that they felt it to be an unusual but relevant issue, and that they were interested in discussing their views about it. In particular, two teachers in the pilot study thanked me for asking them questions about their teaching practice with CLTs. They reported that some of the questions made them think about their teaching and about the reasons why they do not use CLTs very much in their FL classes. Surprisingly, they said that they had never thought about it before. Moreover, two teachers commented on item 14 in section two, both stating that they had struggled with the concept of "correctly interpreting" a literary text. One of them found herself wondering whether this might be considered an objective term when it is applied to the interpretation of art. The other told me that item 14 has always been an issue for her both as a student and as a teacher, so that she has always found it difficult to answer. Indeed, explaining what it means to interpret a literary text "correctly" is seen as a contentious issue in literary studies, though, for some, it means to understand the author's 'message', which may be either explicit or implicit. However, I believe that one of the main reasons for using literature in the FL classroom is that it allows for learners' different and personal interpretations, based on their personal responses to the text. When I decided to include item 14 in the TQ, my assumption was that some FL teachers might feel excessively responsible for learners' 'correct' interpretation of a literary text, at the expense of students' personal interpretation, which allows for oral language practice. FL learners often fear interpretation of themes more than language difficulty, might feel excessively dependent on the

teacher's interpretation, or on the interpretation given by a course book (Chapter 1.3.1). Overall, I thought that asking teachers about this specific topic was justified.

The pilot study also revealed another interesting finding: three teachers out of four showed a generally positive attitude towards CLTs, while one teacher was quite neutral to this. All of them declared that they do not use literature very often. I considered this preliminary finding interesting because it revealed what Gilroy (1995) defined as an “ambivalent attitude” towards literature in the FL classroom, an attitude which, I believe, needs to be investigated in more depth. Indeed, teachers' responses to the pilot study gave me further motivation for my study itself: though the restricted number of participants in the pilot study made it impossible to generalise the emerging themes and data, the way teachers engaged with the topic and questioned their teaching practice made me feel that the use of literature as a resource might be perceived as a relevant issue by FL instructors.

The pilot showed that the TQ was well structured and effective; therefore, I did not make any changes to the actual questionnaire. Moreover, I decided to include one set of responses to the pilot TQ as data for the actual study. In fact, the responses in the questionnaire turned out to provide precious information, as the teacher fully engaged with the questions, giving detailed and relevant answers that I deemed useful for my study.

4.4.4 Teacher Interview

4.4.4.1 Subjects

Six teachers were interviewed. I selected participants from the thirty-three respondents to my earlier TQ on the basis of their beliefs, attitudes and experiences. I did not use volunteers to avoid

the danger of poor or uneven response; I considered the following factors in order to obtain a group of teachers with a variety of experiences and opinions:

- The teacher's attitude towards CLTs in the FL classroom;
- The teacher's experience with the use of CLTs in the FL classroom;
- The teacher's way of and/or reasons for using CLTs in the FL classroom.

Table 5 (Appendix P) summarises the characteristics of these teachers. T11 and T29, for instance, were selected because of their ambivalent attitudes towards CLTs: these teachers had positive feelings to literature but feared using it with their students. I selected T12 and T17 mainly because of their experience: both of them had positive feelings towards literature and felt confident enough to deploy it with their FL students. I selected T15 for her long experience but also for her negative attitude to the use of CLTs in the FL classroom, that seemed to be ascribed to students' disinterest and demotivation. Finally, T32 was selected because of his approach and methodology. All the teachers interviewed use, or have used, CLTs in their classes, though with differences in frequency and methods. T11 and T29 said they use CLTs very rarely and, when they do, they use it like any other source of written input; T12, T15 and T17 use CLTs regularly, mainly for translation exercises; finally, T32 said he uses CLT quite often as he enjoys allowing the students to live the experience of reading artistic texts. Though it would have been interesting to discuss further with teachers who do not use CLTs, none of those who completed the TQ was available for the interview.

4.4.4.2 Research Instrument

The TI (carried out between May and September 2016⁷⁰) included eighteen items common to all the interviewees and three extra items that were addressed only to specific participants (Appendix M), as they referred to what teachers had previously said in the questionnaire.

I divided the interview into four sections: the first section (item a to d) represents the opening phase, where I asked general questions on how often the participants use CLTs (item a), how they select them (item b) and with what purpose (item c); item d asked about possible differences between the use of CLTs in the FL classroom and in the translation classroom⁷¹.

The second section of the interview included items that address my RQ1 (section 4.1). Item e takes into account that all teachers interviewed agreed (or strongly agreed) in the TQ that, when they deploy CLTs, their role is to motivate students to use the TL more. Accordingly, item e asks interviewees' opinions on how literature motivates students to use the TL more. Item f also referred to the issue of students' motivation. In particular, I reported on some beginner students' opinion that using CLTs is more motivating than using the textbook. As this is what some students said in the SQ2 – completed at the end of the experiment –, I wanted to ask the teachers to comment on it. Finally, item g referred to the concept of 'authenticity', since authenticity is one of the most relevant reasons why literature is supposed to motivate FL learners (Chapter 2.6.2). However, as authentic texts are also claimed to be too difficult for FL students, especially at lower levels (Chapter 2.6 and 2.7), I thought it was worth asking participants' opinion on this topic.

⁷⁰ The interviews, carried out at the institution where I did the study, took place in May 2016; the ones in Italy were delayed until August and September 2016, to respond to researchers' and participants' availability.

⁷¹ This item was included because it emerged from the teacher questionnaire that many FL teachers, particularly those working in the UK, use literature uniquely for translation exercises. Therefore, through item d, I intended to elicit teachers' beliefs about which techniques can be used to work with a literary text in the classroom and why.

The TI continued with a section addressing my RQ2 (section 4.1). Participants agreed in the TQ that when they use CLTs in the classroom they want to improve students' reading habits: therefore, the teachers were asked to explain in what ways literature contributes to the improvement of students' reading habits (item h) and to say whether they believe that literary texts are more effective than other texts in developing reading habits and skills (item j). Item i reflected an apparent 'conflict' between teachers' and students' experience with CLTs: while many teachers in the TQ were sceptical about literature's impact on students' reading habits in the FL, many students in the experimental group said that, at the end of the experiment, they would like to read further in the FL. Item i asked teachers to say how they felt about this.

Items k to n focused on the role of teachers when CLTs are deployed in the class and I designed them to address my RQ3 (section 4.1). The importance of the teacher's role was a recurrent theme in TQs, i.e. participants referred to the importance of text selection, the way a teacher uses literature with students and to the teacher's competence with literature. In the interview, I asked teachers to explain what they think is their role when they use literature (item k), how they think what a teacher does affects learners' appreciation of literature (item l), what they would recommend to a teacher who wants to use CLTs in the classroom (item m), and finally whether they think that special training on how to use literature for FL learning is required (item n). The interview finished with questions that do not address any of my RQs specifically (item o to r) but are designed to explore further teachers' views on the topic. I asked participants' opinion on the linguistic and cultural difficulty of CLTs (item o) and on the use of CLTs with beginners (item p). Finally, the last two questions compare students' and teachers' perspectives on the difficulty of CLTs (item q) and on students' appreciation of literature (item r). Here I highlighted

some differences emerging from SQ and TQ and asked interviewees to say what they think about them.

4.4.4.3 Pilot

The interview was pilot-tested in May 2016 with two of my colleagues who work as teachers of Italian FL, in university-level courses, at the institution where my research took place. Participants had completed the TQ during the first phase of data collection, therefore they were able to answer the questions that referred to the questionnaire itself and they were aware of the context of my study.

The pilot teacher interview (PTI) revealed that the questions were appropriate for the purpose of the interview as they allowed me to explore in greater depth the opinions and the beliefs that teachers had already expressed in the questionnaire. Since the interview seemed well structured and effective, I did not make any changes for the actual TI. However, the pilot made me aware that I should be more careful in contextualising some of the items. In particular, I realised that the interviewees needed a brief explanation of what the experiment involved in order to understand some of my questions and to be able to comment on them. Moreover, I understood from the pilot that I should specify the difference between the students who took part in the experiment and those who only completed the SQ1 (section 4.4.1.3). In fact, the wording of some of the items in the TI⁷² could otherwise remain unclear for the interviewees.

Another aspect that emerged from the pilot is that both teachers interviewed misunderstood item h: whilst the item enquired about students' 'reading habits', they answered the question by

⁷² E.g. "some beginner students I interviewed" (item f), or "many students who took part in my experiment" (item i), and "many students who answered my research questionnaire" (item q).

referring to students' 'reading skills'. As discussed in Chapter 3.1 and 3.3, reading habits and reading skills are different concepts. Since such confusion between the two concepts had already occurred in the TQ, I decided that I would not make any changes to item h and that I would listen to teachers' responses first to see whether they were familiar with the concept of 'reading habits' and, if not, I would explain specifically what was meant in item h.

The PTI also helped me to improve the interview as I understood which items might need further clarification. In particular, in one pilot interview the teacher said something interesting about item r and I used his idea to encourage teachers in the actual interview when they did not seem to have much to say about the item. In an attempt to explain why students' and teachers' ideas on literature seemed to be so different according to my research questionnaires, one teacher in the PTI said that this is due to a "generation gap" (quot. 14, Appendix Q). However personal such an opinion might be, I thought that it could be used to prompt teachers in the actual interview to comment further on learners' and teachers' apparent difference of perspectives on literature.

4.4.5 Administration procedure: questionnaires and interviews

For questionnaire administration, I mainly followed Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) and Zacharias (2012). Once I had identified the sample, I administered the questionnaires by mail and by hand. I delivered the questionnaire by hand only to colleagues and teachers I knew personally and to students in my courses: this was more personal and direct than contacting them by mail, and I believe increased the chances the questionnaire would be filled-in⁷³. By contrast, sending the

⁷³ I contacted the students who took part in the experimental phase (i.e. the experiment and the follow-on experiment), as I was also their teacher. SQ1 and SQ2 were given out by hand and were returned to me after completion. Students in the non-experimental group were contacted by their Italian teachers after I had explained the study to them in person. After completion, respondents returned the questionnaire to their teachers who gave it to me. By contrast, SQ3 was

questionnaire by mail meant that I did not have any direct contact with the person, and therefore I attached a cover letter to it, as suggested by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009)⁷⁴.

As for interview administration, I contacted participants by email, where I explained the approximate duration, the topic and the methodology of the one-to-one interview (e.g. recorded for further analysis). In particular, I told participants that the interview would be a follow-up to the questionnaire⁷⁵.

Finally, to allow respondents to give their informed consent concerning participation and the use of data, the research instruments were preceded by an information form, where they could find a detailed description of my study. I informed respondents that anonymity and confidentiality would be guaranteed according to the policy of the institution where the study took place.

4.5 Data Collection procedure

I gathered the data for the actual study through nine steps:

- The TQ was designed, piloted and administered first. Having been a teacher of Italian FL for some years when I started this research, I had a general understanding of the way literature is used in FL teaching and of anecdotal evidence on FL teachers' views about it.

administered by email for a reason: since questionnaires are anonymous, through emails it was easier for me to identify the student who completed the questionnaire. Identifying the student was fundamental for data analysis for two reasons: 1) I needed to distinguish between students in the experimental group and those who took part only in the follow-up in order to evaluate their responses properly; 2) I had to compare the views of students in the experimental group throughout the different stages of the study, comparing their answers to questionnaire 1, 2 and 3.

⁷⁴ When I posted the TQ to those teachers that I did not know in person, I also included a cover letter. I introduced myself, briefly explained what the survey was about and why it was important; finally, I specified how to return the completed questionnaire. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) also recommend sending *pre-survey* and *follow-up* emails to the sample identified. Accordingly, I sent a pre-survey email to “give advance notice about the purpose and nature of the forthcoming questionnaire” (p. 66).

⁷⁵ SQ1 and SQ2 for students, TQ for teachers. Moreover, students were told that the interview would focus on their personal feedback on the experiment. Being aware of the fact that some students could feel uncomfortable sitting for an interview with their teacher, I wanted to reassure them. Therefore, in the email I also wrote that I selected them because of their interesting answers in the questionnaires and their responses to the experiment.

That made it easier for me to design the TQ to start data collection. Preliminary results from the TQ allowed me to have a better understanding of current teachers' attitudes and opinions and, subsequently, to design SQ1;

- The second step involved designing SQ1. A set of questionnaires was given out to FL students in order to gather their views on the use of literature in FL learning;
- Next, I designed the experiment. This involved the selection of appropriate CLTs and, afterwards, the design of activities to support reading. Relevant themes emerging from TQ and SQ1 to help in conducting the experiment and designing the activities;
- I conducted CO and TM analysis in relation to text one before, during and after each session of the experiment;
- The fifth step involved the administration of post-experiment questionnaires, i.e. SQ2, that I used to gather students' views after the experiment itself;
- After a first analysis of TQ, SQ1, SQ2, CO and TM, I designed the interviews. First, I designed the SI, then I proceeded with the TI. These interviews were aimed at gathering more data and at gaining a deeper understanding of students' and teachers' views;
- The experiment continued alongside my analysis of TM relating to literary text two;
- At the end of the experiment, I started the follow-up phase. I selected further CLTs and adopted a different teaching approach. During the follow-up, I conducted classroom observations;
- The last procedure was administering SQ3 to students at the end of the follow-up phase, to gather their feedback and personal views.

4.6 Data Analysis

Before I started analysing my data, I organised and processed it to make it manageable for analysis.

For the analysis of the data gathered in my study, I used content analysis, i.e. a method that “involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labelling the primary patterns in the data [...] to determine what’s significant” (Patton, 2002, p. 463). I opted for content analysis because it allows “‘hidden’ aspects of what is being communicated” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 284) to emerge from the text.

First, I collated data gathered from questionnaires and interviews, then from from CO and TM. In particular, I organised the data according to the topics of my three RQs (section 4.1): in fact, I had designed my research instruments to gather data relating to the topics identified in my RQs so that this initial separation of data was quite evident.

However, as my approach to data analysis combined *deductive* and *inductive* analysis, I was looking for themes that applied to predefined categories, but also for unexpected themes arising from the analysis process. Therefore, I started to write down some ideas and to look for patterns and recurrent themes emerging from the research instruments. I created major categories according to my RQs and sub-categories that could help me code the themes, either to fit existing categories or unexpected new ones.

To code the data I used a *thematic analysis*. Boyatzis (1998) describes thematic analysis as “the process for encoding qualitative information” (p. 4) and it entails the generation of codes which describe a “feature of the data” relevant to the researcher who is conducting the analysis and which help to organise the data in meaningful groups.

When the data had been collected, I listed all major categories and sub-categories and I associated the recurrent themes with each of them; I created tables to help keep track of the coded

data and to quantify the frequency of specific themes. In fact, as was suggested by Zacharias (2012), data emerging from questionnaires, interviews and observations can be analysed not only qualitatively but also quantitatively, i.e. counting “the frequency of occurrence of [a] topic” (p. 151).

Data I obtained from the research measures was analysed and then used to describe students’ and teachers’ attitudes towards CLTs and, consequently, to address each RQ. I compared and discussed the data, and triangulated the findings.

4.7 The role of researcher in qualitative research

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a central role. Highlighting the difference between quantitative and qualitative research, Denscombe (2007) describes this very well, saying that:

Qualitative research tends to be associated with the researcher involvement. The whole point of quantitative research is to produce numerical data that are ‘objective’ in the sense that they exist independently of the researcher and are not the result of undue influence on the part of the researcher himself or herself. Ideally, the numerical data are seen as the product of research instruments which have been tested for validity and reliability to ensure that the data accurately reflect the event itself, not the researcher’s preferences. Qualitative research, by contrast, tends to place great emphasis on the role of the researcher in the construction of the data. There is typically little use of standardized research instruments in qualitative

research. Rather, it is recognized that the researcher is the crucial ‘measurement device’, and that the researcher’s self (their social background, values, identity and beliefs) will have a significant bearing on the nature of the data collected and the interpretations of that data. (p. 250)

Considering the relevance of the researcher in qualitative research, I believe it is important that researchers are aware of their bias, assumptions and their cultural background, in order to be able “to distance themselves from their normal, everyday beliefs and to suspend judgements” (p. 300) on the topic of their investigation while it is ongoing. In fact, qualitative research calls for reflection upon researchers’ perspectives and views on the topic studied, as avoiding personal bias and subjectivity is not only impossible but also “ill-advised” in terms of the validity of a study (Denscombe, 2014, p. 301). In particular, not only is it important to be detached and not allow one’s prejudice to influence data collection and interpretation, but it is also important to describe the context of the research, i.e. how the research was “shaped by personal experiences and social backgrounds” (p. 300)⁷⁶.

For all these reasons and considering that my role in the experiment is that of a teacher investigating her own students (i.e. teacher-as-researcher, section 4.3), I feel that providing a little background on myself is useful at this stage. I am a native Italian speaker and I have been teaching

⁷⁶ This view is reiterated by Patnaik (2013) who, describing the concept of “reflexivity” in social sciences, claims that “by situating oneself in the research process”, i.e. acknowledging “one’s own attitudes, values and biases”, helps readers to understand better “the perspectives that led to the analysis and findings” (p. 100).

Italian as a L2/FL for about seven years. I have been teaching Italian in different countries (i.e. Italy, Spain, Turkey and England) and at different institutions (e.g. universities, private schools, public institutions). I obtained an MA in International Relations and, afterwards, I specialised in Language Pedagogy with a Master's degree. Studying Language Pedagogy, I acquired not only a teaching approach and methodology (i.e. the Communicative approach to language teaching) but also research skills as, for my final dissertation, I developed my own research project carried out in a university where Italian was taught as a L2.

I have always been a reader, with a strong passion for literature, which I approached first as a subject of study at school. Even though I did not study literature at university, I have always been interested in it and I cultivated my passion for it informally. In my personal experience, I have learnt a lot from reading L2/FL literature independently and voluntarily. Therefore, ever since I have been a teacher of Italian I have regularly used literature in my classes. In 2012, I designed a module of Italian L2 for refugees that was based on the use of literature (*Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a piazza Vittorio*, by A. Lakous). The book was used as complementary teaching material in a course for lower-intermediate learners at the centre for refugees where I was working. Based on my previous positive experiences with literature in L2/FL contexts, I felt confident enough about my abilities to carry out this study.

Even though my experiences with literature have always been positive, anecdotal evidence (e.g. informal discussions with colleagues) suggested that L2/FL teachers have a 'difficult' relationship with literary texts and that they very rarely use them in their classes. This perceived difference between my personal experience and that of my colleagues brought me to develop a strong interest in investigating the topic. Hence my interest in enquiring about the alleged benefits of literature for FL learners, and about current students' and teachers' views about it.

As in any qualitative research investigation, I am aware that my personal enthusiasm for literature as well as my previous experiences integrating literature in language courses may influence the findings of the present study and their interpretations. However, as I will explain in the following section, I took certain measures (e.g. triangulation, respondents' validation, etc.) in order to enhance the validity and reliability of my study. Moreover, my biases, my personal beliefs and attitudes and other possible factors affecting data collection and interpretation will all be reported. This will allow readers to understand the extent of my subjectivity as the researcher of this study and, consequently, to assess my study's level of reliability and validity.

4.8 Reliability and validity of the study

Reliability and validity are important criteria in any kind of research. However, such criteria do not seem to be easily judged in qualitative research (as opposed to quantitative research) for two main reasons: 1) it is “virtually impossible” to replicate events, participants and the social environment that characterised a specific qualitative research study; 2) the researcher is naturally involved in qualitative data collection and analysis so that “the prospect of some other researcher being able to produce identical data and arrive at identical conclusions are [...] slim” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 279).

Nonetheless, there are a number of steps that should be taken in qualitative research to ensure validity and reliability. *Validity* is enhanced, first of all, when qualitative researchers are able to demonstrate that the data they collected is “accurate” and “appropriate”, i.e. when data is “grounded” in fieldwork and/or experiments, it is triangulated and has been exposed to “respondent validation” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 279). In my study, validity was enhanced through methodological triangulation (section 4.2): I collected my data using multiple data-collection methods (i.e. questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations) and participants were asked to

confirm or reject statements I made in order to ensure “accuracy and completeness” (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 575) of the data collected. Data was evaluated and compared with the aim of producing strong evidence about students’ and teachers’ views on literature in a FL context. Findings relating to respondents’ views resulted from three different research measures. The validity of this research was thereby enhanced and my potentially biased view on the topic under investigation was minimised.

Transferability of results of a study is another relevant criterion that relates to validity. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), giving detailed information about a study should allow readers to assess whether findings emerging from that study may be applied to other contexts. Information about this study was provided through detailed description of the context, the experiment, the participants and myself, in my dual role as teacher-as-research. Moreover, although my study was limited to a relatively small group of participants, I believe that findings can be transferred to other contexts because respondents are representative of the wider teacher and student population of the institution where the investigation took place and of similar institutions. In fact, students and teachers who took part in this study may have similar characteristics (e.g. educational background, cultural references, language courses taught/attended, etc.) to other students and teachers in other institutions of the same kind.

The extent to which data and data analysis are reliable describes *dependability*. According to Denscombe (2014), dependability revolves around two questions: 1) “Would the research instrument produce the same results when used by different researchers (all other things being equal)?” (p. 298); 2) “If someone else did the research, would he or she have got the same results and arrived at the same conclusions?” (p. 298). In order to meet the criterion of dependability, researchers should demonstrate that their research is based on “procedures and decisions” that

readers can understand and that allow them to assess whether they are “reputable” and “reasonable” (p. 298). In my study, I adopted procedures and decisions suggested by the literature and that have proved valid in previous studies.

Confirmability, i.e. “the influence of the researcher(s) who conducted the enquiry” (Denscombe, 2014, p. 300) on the findings, is another issue that relates to validity. As discussed in section 4.7 above, subjectivity is almost unavoidable in qualitative research. However, having acknowledged and reported my bias, assumptions and limitations, and having fully described data collection and data analysis procedures, readers can assess the impact of my subjectivity on data interpretation and on conclusions.

Having described fully the methodology adopted in the study, I will now proceed to an analysis of the data collected and a discussion of results (Chapter 5).

Chapter 5

Results of the Study

Introduction

In this chapter, I report and discuss the findings related to the three research questions (RQs) that guided my study (Chapter 4.1). Each RQ is addressed bearing in mind students' and teachers' perspectives on each specific topic. Participants' responses to questionnaires and interviews are described, analysed and compared with each other. Moreover, findings from the experimental phase (Chapter 4.3) are also discussed, analysed and compared with the other findings. Data from classroom observation (CO) – i.e. field notes (FN) and extra notes (EN) – are used to complement data resulting from the other research instruments.

5.1 What students and teachers think about literature in the FL classroom

I start this chapter with a preliminary topic that emerged from the data collected: students' and teachers' beliefs about and attitudes to literature and towards its use in the FL classroom. Reporting on these findings is crucial in understanding better the findings related to the RQs themselves.

5.1.1 Students' perspective on literature

Data discussed in this section is derived from student questionnaire 1 (SQ1), more specifically from participants' answers to item 6 and 17 (Appendix G). I describe findings from SQ1 with the aim of 1) reporting current students' beliefs and attitudes regarding literature in the FL classroom, and 2) having a first insight into students' views in order to address RQ1 and RQ2.

Findings from SQ1 revealed that 56% (n=19/34) of the students in the non-experimental group and 94% (n=15/16) of the students in the experimental group appreciated literature in general (table 6, Appendix P). The majority of students, i.e. 68% (n=34/50), said that they like literature and gave a variety of reasons for this. Students in my study related their appreciation of literature to entertainment and/or to cultural, linguistic and aesthetic aspects of a CLT (table 7, Appendix P)⁷⁷; in order to classify students' answers in my study, I adopted Carroli's (2008) categories of perception that she created according to students' definition of "enjoyable literature" in her surveys (Chapter 1.5): "literature as entertainment", "literature as knowledge", "literature as reflection, stimulation and personal development", "literature as aesthetic pleasure", and "literature for L2/FL".

In SQ1 the most frequently mentioned reason for liking literature was 'entertainment'⁷⁸: students said that they like literature because it is "beautiful" (Student 1, S1), "interesting" (S1, S4 and S26), "engaging" and "fun" (S23) and "infinitely rich" in meanings (S37). Some students explained that they like literature because it is a source of pleasure: S13 said that "it is pleasant to read"; S29 considered reading literature "a good way to relax" and SE5 (Student in the Experimental group 5) thought that "reading books is a way [she] can relax and forget about things going on in [her] life". Many students referred to literature's power to absorb the reader (e.g. "I can lose myself in it", SE6; "I love losing myself in a story", S3) and to make the reader escape from everyday life (i.e. S2, S10, S33, S34, S36, S39, SE1, SE9, SE10 and SE11). Students in the sample also said that they like literature because it allows them to use their creativity and

⁷⁷ Table 7 shows the most frequently mentioned reasons used by students in my study to explain why they like literature.

⁷⁸ Carroli (2008) related the notion of "literature as entertainment" to the concept of affect, therefore she classified under this category students' perceptions of literature as captivating, engaging and interesting material.

imagination (i.e. SE2, SE4, S4 and S36). In general, students' answers that I classified under "literature as entertainment" related to the concept of affect and shared the view that literature is associated with good feelings (e.g. relaxation, interest, pleasure) and good experiences (e.g. being absorbed in a story and forgetting about everyday life) confirming Carroli's findings.

The second largest category of students' reasons for liking literature is "literature as knowledge", which is intended as literature that teaches something and educates the readers (Carroli, 2008). In SQ1, respondents considered literature a source of knowledge of culture, of society and of the world in general: S3 said that literature is "a fascinating way to learn about other cultures and points of view", while S15 stated that literature improves readers' "appreciation of other people and cultures". In this sense, literature seems to be seen as having a pedagogical role and reading it is perceived as a way to enrich readers' lives; readers' emotional involvement is not the focus here, but rather it is readers' curiosity and interest to learn something new.

Respondents also said that they like literature because it is "thought-provoking" (S23), it challenges readers with "new concepts and ideas" never thought before (SE9) and it "encourages [readers] to think" (S33); moreover, literature provides "another perspective on the world" (S34) and allows readers to access the "thoughts of another person" (S39), thus it enhances their way of thinking and improves them as individuals (S1). I considered these answers to fit into the category of "literature as reflection, stimulation and personal development" described by Carroli (2008) as literature that stimulates thoughts and "changes in perspective" (pp. 42-43)⁷⁹. As was found in the

⁷⁹ She further describes this category as literature "viewed as a dialectic process that leads to enquiry [...] and to changes in perspective", while "broadening one's horizons or seeing something in a new light" (Carroli, 2008, pp. 42-43).

“literature as knowledge” category, students seem to accord literature a pedagogical role: they see it as a way to access different ways of thinking and to broaden their horizons.

Another recurrent reason given by respondents to explain why they like reading literature is connected to literature’s functional role in learning the L2/FL (“literature as L2/FL”): literature is considered “useful” for vocabulary expansion (S4, S5, S13, S24, S39 and SE2) and for improving language skills in general (S3, S20, S21, S38 and SE1)⁸⁰.

Finally, only two students in the sample mentioned the importance of “aesthetic pleasure”, i.e. the artistic side of a text and the way in which a text is written, as factors affecting their appreciation of literature (S3 and SE16).

Overall, respondents had a positive attitude towards literature, with some exceptions: 20% of students (n=10/50) said that they do not like literature, and 12% (n=6/50) showed ambivalent feelings, as they highlighted both the reasons why they like it and the reasons why they do not. Some students simply believe that literature is not interesting (S7, S8 and S19), “not very relevant to current society” (S12) or not “enjoyable” (S37); other students do not believe that literature is useful for language learning (S17 and S8). However, the most frequent reason mentioned by respondents who do not like literature is that literature is “difficult” (S38, S40 and S22), “difficult to attain at a high level” (S12) or, in the words of S23, “unnecessarily complicated”. An interesting aspect emerging from the data is that some students related literature’s difficulty to their ability to understand it and to analyse it (quot. 15, 16 and 17; Appendix Q). The association between reading literature and negative attitudes to analysing/studying it was observed mainly in questionnaires where students said they do not like literature or had an ambivalent attitude to it. Some respondents

⁸⁰ This was found mainly in respondents’ answers to item 17 in SQ1 where students had to comment on literature in the FL context specifically (Appendix G).

mentioned negative experiences that they had as students of literature in school or at university (quot. 18 and 19; Appendix Q) as if literature were perceived primarily as a school activity that students do for a specific reason: i.e. for linguistic and stylistic analysis or for study. In fact, other respondents, explaining their feelings towards literature in general and as a resource in the FL classroom, mentioned the word “studying” in SQ1, as if they automatically thought of literature as a school subject (quot. 20, 21 and 22; Appendix Q).

In these students’ view, reading literature for pleasure and analysing/studying it differ greatly from each other: their feelings for and attitude towards literature seem to radically change depending on the activity they do with it. This could be considered to confirm Martin and Laurie’s (1998) findings about students’ attitudes to literature: they make the distinction between literature as “a private exercise” that readers do for their own enjoyment, and literature as a “public exercise” that implies sharing the task of reading/understanding a CLT “on a formal basis” (Chapter 1.3.1). Drawing on their findings, these authors claimed also that if students seem not to like literature, it is not necessarily because they are not readers; however, my data revealed that respondents who do not like literature were non-readers and that they read (in L1 and/or in L2/FL) only if they have to, i.e. for study but not for pleasure. By contrast, students who showed ambivalent feelings were all readers, as they said that they read both for studying and for pleasure, but highlighted their preference for the latter.

Furthermore, students’ attitude may be influenced by teaching methods and teachers’ instructional practices (Chapter 1.3.1): learners may develop frustration and lose self-confidence with literature if they have negative experiences with literature in school. In particular, this is very much the case when literature is approached strictly from a “literary’ point of view” (Or, 1995), involving literary and stylistic analysis of texts. In this sense, it may be useful to see how SE7, who

said that she loves reading CLTs on her own, described the way she felt during literature classes at school (quot. 23, Appendix Q). Recalling her school experience, SE7 said that in literature classes she felt pressured to give answers to questions on the ‘deep’ meaning of a text; she felt stressed, worried and “stupid” because she could not “analyse” a text the way it was required. In her words, when it came to literature in school, teachers often tended to “overanalyse” texts, i.e. “putting loads of ideas into something that doesn’t necessarily have that much depth” (SI, SE7, p. 3).

The impact of previous school/university experience on the way students perceive literature also recurred in the student interviews (SI). Some students seemed to have a specific idea in mind that they associate with the word ‘literature’, i.e. old texts and must-know authors (quot. 24, 25 and 26; Appendix Q). Such a view of literature evoked negative feelings in some learners, regardless of their personal taste for reading CLTs (Chapter 1.3.1). In the SI, respondents who had taken part in the experiment were asked to say what they first thought and what they expected after I, in my role as teacher, had told them they would work with two CLTs in the FL course (SI, items a and b; Appendix K). Some students said that at first they felt “scared” (SE5, SE7 and SE13), “daunted” and “worried” (SE7) and they hoped the text would not be “too complicated” (SE7) or “really difficult” (SE13); SE6 expected that the texts would be “boring”.

Data revealed that students’ positive and negative attitude to literature is influenced not only by personal taste but also by past experiences: in particular, it seems that positive and negative feelings for L1 literature, shaped during respondents’ lives and also during their studies, were transferred automatically to FL literature. However, one difference between the way respondents see L1 literature and FL literature emerged: whilst no one mentioned literature’s benefits in terms of improving vocabulary in the L1, vocabulary expansion and overall language learning were the most frequent factors used to justify the role of CLTs in the FL context.

5.1.2 Teachers' perspective on literature

Data related to teachers' beliefs and attitudes addressed in this section is derived mainly from participants' answers to item 18 in the teacher questionnaire (TQ, Appendix L) and item c in the teacher interviews (TI, Appendix M)⁸¹. The findings emerging from these questions are addressed here with the aims of 1) reporting existing teachers' beliefs and attitudes regarding literature in the FL context, and 2) outlining a starting point for investigating RQ3⁸².

Table 8 (Appendix P) shows that 60% (n=20/33) of teachers in the sample had a positive attitude to the use of CLTs in the FL classroom. In particular, one main aspect appears to stand out from my data: respondents' positive attitude is mainly due to the fact that literature is considered *useful* in terms of developing learners' FL skills. Teachers seem to share some arguments established in the literature in favour of using literary texts for FL teaching (Chapter 1.2). In their view, CLTs are useful for a number of reasons: ten teachers out of twenty-three⁸³ said that literature contributes to 'vocabulary acquisition' and 'grammar learning', and also to developing FL learners' 'writing skills' and 'reading skills' (quot. 27, 28, 29 and 30; Appendix Q). Language improvement is not the only key factor identified by the respondents to explain their positive

⁸¹ The question in item 18 is asked in the TQ and is addressed to all teachers in the sample; the question in item c is asked in the TI and is addressed only to those six teachers that I selected from the sample (Chapter 4.4.4.1).

⁸² In the analysis of the data, I considered as 'positive' the attitudes emerging when respondents mentioned personal positive feelings (e.g. enthusiasm), or highlighted beneficial factors of CLTs for students' learning experience (e.g. enhance imagination), and for FL learning (e.g. vocabulary expansion). On the other hand, I considered as 'negative' the attitudes emerging from respondents' answers that mentioned personal negative feelings (e.g. fear), highlighted negative features of CLTs in FL context (e.g. texts' difficulty), or mentioned students' negative reaction to literature. I categorised as 'neutral' respondents' answers that did not fit into any of these categories because neither positive/negative feelings nor any aspects of CLTs were mentioned explicitly.

⁸³ Twenty teachers with positive attitude and three with both positive and negative attitude, see table 8 (Appendix P).

feelings about literature in FL teaching. As some comments show, teachers also relate CLTs' usefulness in the FL classroom to their cultural value (quot. 31, 32, 33 and 34; Appendix Q).

According to my data, respondents tended to emphasise literature's *functional* purpose in the FL classroom but only with regard to specific skills, i.e. language and culture knowledge (table 9, Appendix P). In fact, it is interesting to notice that among the language skills that literature is claimed to develop, respondents rarely mentioned reading skills: only three teachers said that reading CLTs enhances reading skills (T12, T21 and T33); one teacher said that it is beneficial for a variety of reasons, among them the improvement of students' reading habits (T18). Finally, three teachers said that using CLTs in the FL classroom is beneficial as it promotes oral practice of the TL: those teachers said that literature creates opportunities for discussion and for sharing different opinions on a story (T17, T20 and T33).

Overall, the beneficial effects of integrating literature in the FL class identified by respondents are only partially consistent with those I had found in the literature relating to, for example, the development of language skills in a meaningful context, the improvement of cultural knowledge and the opportunity to practise the FL in an authentic context (Chapter 0.2). Furthermore, the reasons why literature is beneficial to FL learning are not only due to its functional use and, in this sense, literary texts seem to be different from other types of text that teachers may deploy in their classes. As I hypothesised in Chapter 1.1, what makes literature different is that it is a form of art and, therefore, it speaks directly to the readers' emotions. In fact, apart from beneficial effects on the linguistic and cultural levels, literature is also beneficial on an emotional level. Lazar (1996) believes that it encourages learners' emotional involvement in a story, thus allowing learning in an enjoyable way. Findings from my study show that these aspects are mentioned only by a few respondents in the questionnaire: only 16% of them (n=4/24) mentioned

the role of CLTs in stimulating students' creativity and imagination; one teacher pointed out the artistic value of literature as added value to the teaching/learning experience (quot. 35, 36 and 37; Appendix Q).

The emotional power of literature as a beneficial effect on FL learning occurred in two interviews: T29 thought that literature allows for studying the language in a "different way" because when students read a CLT they are involved in the story and forget that they are "studying". T32 also considered reading a CLT to be a different way of learning a language (quot. 38, Appendix Q).

Overall, the findings suggested that respondents' most frequent argument in favour of integrating literature in FL teaching is that it promotes language and culture learning; on the other hand, only a limited number of teachers expressed positive feelings for literature because of its power to touch the students' affective dimension. This could be considered to confirm my hypothesis that the nature of the literary experience is often neglected in the FL context (Chapter 0.1). However, as this aspect closely relates to the notion of motivation in FL learning, it will be discussed further in section 5.2, when addressing RQ1.

Table 8 (Appendix P) reveals that only four teachers out of thirty-three in the sample had a negative attitude towards literature in the FL classroom; three respondents had an ambivalent attitude (positive and negative). Respondents gave different reasons for such feelings: two teachers (T9 and T15) said that integrating CLTs in the FL classroom is becoming increasingly "difficult" and "hard" because students arrive at university with no experience of reading literature and do not consider it useful or beneficial for language learning. Therefore, those teachers feel that they have to "persuade" their students of the benefits of literature for FL learning, or, in the words of T15, that they have to "sell" their [CLTs'] usefulness to students".

The most recurrent theme in participants' (n=4/7) explanations of their negative feelings towards literature in a FL context relates to a sense of unease that they experience when dealing with CLTs. This is particularly evident in the words of those teachers who showed an ambivalent attitude to literature. All of them recognised the benefits of integrating CLTs in FL teaching, but also associated this with personal negative feelings: respondents said they feel "insecure" (T14 and T31) and experience "anxiety" and "fear of failure" (T11) when they have to use CLTs, as they do not feel competent enough. One teacher said that he might feel "detached" from the CLT he *has* to use (T31, *my emphasis*), especially when the text has been selected by someone else. Another teacher explained that she usually asks herself whether she is "presenting the text in a proper way" or in a way that allows her students to appreciate it as much as she does (T11), and this is what makes her anxious. In this respect, T29's fear about not having a strong knowledge of literature (quot. 39, Appendix Q) shed more light on the topic. If Gilroy (1995) found, as I did, that teachers were in favour of integrating literary texts in the FL classroom but did not do it much or often and called for more background literary knowledge, my findings may provide an explanation for this: teachers do not feel confident enough - or, as T18 declared in my study, not "completely confident" - when exploiting literary texts.

Overall, such answers suggested that two main reasons are behind negative attitudes to the use of CLTs in a FL context. One seems to be a kind of frustration teachers build up from students' negative responses, low motivation and limited ability to work with literature, regardless of teachers' personal attitude towards it. In fact, T9 and T15 did not mention any feeling of unease or fear when they employ CLTs in their classes; on the contrary, T15 said specifically "I do not feel less confident [...]". One may speculate that, as was found in other studies (Chapter 1.3.2), such

frustration cause teachers to refrain from putting their beliefs about reading FL literature into practice.

The second reason to explain respondents' negative attitude to literature in the FL classroom, seems to be of a different nature. Apparently, it has to do more with teachers' self-perception: even if they like literature *per se*, some respondents just do not feel they are able to use it effectively in their classes. In either case, what seems to be at stake is not whether teachers like or dislike literature in general, but rather teachers' affective dimension when they have to 'perform' with it.

There is something further: my data reveals that teachers' personal experience as students of literature plays a crucial role in determining their feelings for it. During the interview, T11 said that her lack of confidence when she uses CLTs to teach a FL was possibly shaped during her student-life: she said that her "idea that a literary text is difficult because it is rich in meanings" (TI, p. 7) comes from her own experience as a student of literature. In particular, she remembered the stress of "*having* to understand" (her emphasis) a literary text: she *had* to "understand it all", she *had* to understand its "beauty" and "why it was beautiful" (TI, pp. 7-8; *my translation from Italian*). In her view, this influenced her understanding of what it means to deploy a CLT in the classroom: remembering how 'bad' she was at understanding literature, now she does not feel 'good' enough to teach it.

The impact of their own school experience is also highlighted in the interviews of T15, T32 and T29 (quot. 40, 41 and 42; Appendix Q). Respondents' words may suggest that FL teachers undertake their professional career with a strong idea of what literature is, what it means to 'study' it, and consequently, what it means to teach it. Even though, in a FL context, literature is not the object of study but rather a resource to teach language, teachers' experience with literature during

their formal learning seems to influence their attitudes and practices. Furthermore, teachers' feelings may be influenced by the idea that literature is difficult, by the association of literature with canonical texts and 'important writers', and finally by what they think they *should* do with literature in the classroom. When FL teachers deploy literature, they sometimes forget what the focus of their teaching really is: instead of using literature for FL learning, they automatically think about literature as a subject of study (see T29's comment in quot. 43, Appendix Q) and they seem to perceive themselves as teachers of literature. The 'pressure' of having "to know everything" described by T29 was reiterated by another teacher during the interview: she said that she feels insecure using CLTs in the FL classroom because she is not competent enough "to answer all the students' questions" about literature (T11, TI, p. 1). Moreover, as was found with T29, T11 said that students' literary knowledge could be greater than hers, therefore deploying CLTs could be a "risk".

5.1.3 Summary

Some responses from the questionnaires and from the interviews analysed in the previous sections offered rich data that was used as a starting point to address the relevant RQs for my study.

My findings suggested that teachers and students have positive attitudes towards literature and its integration in the FL classroom. Teachers and students shared the idea that literature is relevant in FL acquisition primarily because they considered it beneficial for the improvement of students' language knowledge and abilities. The findings also revealed that literature often evokes ambivalent feelings: a substantial number of students and teachers shared positive feelings (i.e. enthusiasm) about literature *per se*, but negative feelings (i.e. unease, fear, inadequacy) about the use of literature in the class. Finally, some students and teachers seemed to have a specific idea of

literature that possibly derived from their school experience: the word ‘literature’ was primarily associated with canonical texts and with a specific teaching method that involves the study and the analysis of literary texts.

5.2 Research question 1: the impact of CLTs on FL students’ motivation

In the following section, I will discuss findings relating to participants’ motivation, drawing on data from SQs 1, 2 and 3 (Appendix G, H, I and J), the SI (Appendix K), classroom observations (CO) and teaching materials (TM) (Appendix A to F), the TQ and the TI (Appendix L and M). Data will be discussed and compared in order to address RQ1, taking into account students’ and teachers’ beliefs and practices.

RQ1: Does the use of CLTs influence university students’ motivation in the FL classroom?

5.2.1 Students’ views and experiences with CLTs in the FL classroom: is literature motivating?

Data collected in SQ1 illustrates that the majority of participants believes that reading CLTs in a FL is motivating (n=31/50, i.e. 62%; table 10, Appendix P). Students were not required to explain their answer in SQ1, it is therefore difficult to say why they feel motivated by literature.

However, open answers to item 6 and item 17 in SQ1 may reveal some insights. As discussed earlier (section 5.1.1), when students commented on CLTs in general and in the FL

classroom in particular, they primarily highlighted positive and negative feelings generated by the experience of reading literature⁸⁴ and the utilitarian function of CLTs for FL improvement.

One may have expected that positive feelings and the idea of literature being useful for language learning would correspond to the concept of CLTs being motivating in the FL classroom; and vice versa, students who had a negative attitude towards literature or did not consider it useful, would consider it demotivating. On the contrary, some apparent discrepancies emerged: in the experimental group (n=16 students), eight students (SE5, SE6, SE10, SE11, SE13, SE14, SE15 and SE16) who have a positive attitude towards literature were ‘unsure’ about its motivating power in the FL classroom; SE8 agreed on the motivating aspect of literature though she does not like it. Similarly, out of twenty-five students who like literature or have ambivalent feelings towards it in the non-experimental group (n=34 students), twenty-three find it motivating; in this group, too, correspondence between personal attitude and motivation was not identified in all instances.

This suggests that students do not find FL CLTs motivating or demotivating only based on their appreciation or dislike of literature. In fact, motivation seems to be stimulated also by factors other than personal taste and interest, such as the learning context, the teaching approach and the materials (Dörnyei, 1994; Ushioda, 2009). This emerged clearly in the comments of participants with an ambivalent attitude towards literature who linked their negative feelings for literature to previous experiences in school or at university (section 5.1.1). SE13’s words may help understand this better. She said that one of the reasons that brought her to the university where she was studying, was that the FL curriculum included the study of literature (quot. 44, Appendix Q). Nonetheless, in SQ1 she said that she was ‘unsure’ whether using literature in the FL classroom is

⁸⁴ E.g. enthusiasm, the joy of reading and of being absorbed in a story, fear, sense of unease (as above).

motivating. When she was asked to explain this in the interview, she replied that it depended on a recent demotivating experience she had had with reading a Spanish FL literary text (quot. 45, Appendix Q).

To understand better participants' comments we may categorise them into the three levels of motivation identified by Dörnyei (1994; Chapter 2.1). Some students seemed to find literature motivating as they have a general passion for it or for learning the FL (Dörnyei's Language Level), as emerges from quotations 46 and 47 (Appendix Q). These students are valuable for teachers who are willing to use CLTs: they already enjoy reading literature and it is likely they will continue to do so in the FL class. However, although it may be easier to work with CLTs with these students, I believe that they still represent a challenge for FL teachers: the teaching approach to reading and the texts selected need to satisfy their expectations in order for them to enjoy the experience. These students may, in fact, have more sophisticated literary tastes than the average FL students. From my perspective as teacher, this is what I experienced with SE12: although she was a reader, she showed little interest in the experiment (which she rated 'moderately motivating') and in in-class activities. She was often absent – when there, she would take part quite passively in discussions about the text –, and when I asked her whether she was enjoying the text, she told me she had finished reading it and did not know what stage we had reached with the activities.

Other students might also be influenced by their personality traits (Dörnyei's Learner Level), as shown in the case of SE7 during the experimental phase. The student had reached a really good level of language proficiency during the course and was a skilled FL reader; however, she perceived herself as bad at literature and was really unconfident, to the point that she was constantly feeling stressed by having to interpret the text 'correctly' and found the overall experience only 'moderately motivating' (quot. 48, Appendix Q). In SQ2, SE7 wrote that she did

not enjoy role-playing and character analysis (e.g. questions like “How do you think they feel?”, “Why do you think they said that?”): she felt “worried” because she did not know what to answer and would have preferred to read the CLT at home.

Finally, students’ motivation when literature is used in the FL classroom was found to be deeply influenced by the learning context (Dörnyei’s Learning-situation Level), with predominance of the role of the teaching approach and the literary texts selected (quot. 49, 50, 51 and 52; Appendix Q). I believe that this is a crucial point (a detailed discussion is given in section 5.4): teachers seem to have an important role because students’ motivation – even among non-readers – depends greatly on what teachers do with literature.

In the following sections I will describe in more depth what makes literature motivating for the students when it is used in the FL classroom.

5.2.1.1 What makes literature motivating for students

In order to discuss participants’ views about the motivating power of CLTs in the FL classroom, I will report in this section data collected in SQs 1, 2 and 3 and in the SI. Data is supplemented by FN and EN written before, during and after CO.

The focus of this section are students who took part in the experimental phase of the study, i.e. the experiment and the follow-on experiment (Chapter 4.3 and 4.3.5). Findings relating to the experimental group are discussed first, followed by findings about the follow-up group⁸⁵.

⁸⁵ As explained in Chapter 4.3, the experiment and the follow-on experiment took place in different semesters, with slightly different groups of participants and using different teaching approaches and materials. For this reason, in this section, data will be presented separately.

5.2.1.1.1 Students in the experimental group

Relevant data emerged from a comparison between SQ1, completed by students in the experimental group before the experiment, and SQ2, completed after. Table 11 (Appendix P) reveals a significant variation in respondents' opinion about the motivating power of literature in the FL classroom: while before the experiment 50% of participants (n=8/16) were 'unsure' whether CLTs are motivating when deployed for FL learning, after the experiment only one student (6%) was, and all the others, representing 94% (n=15/16), agreed or strongly agreed that CLTs are motivating.

This suggests that the three-month experiment might have had a positive impact on the students, resulting in a change in their opinions on the topic. It is possible to assume, therefore, that the effects of a FL literature reading programme on students' attitude are visible after quite a short period of time.

This is confirmed by some comments in the questionnaires (quot. 53, 54, 55, 56 and 57; Appendix Q) where students – especially those who shifted from 'unsure' to 'agree/strongly agree' – recurrently referred to the experiment as an experience that was *not* as they had expected: it “was not too difficult” (SE16), not “stressful” (SE15), “not too boring” (SE3) and, therefore, motivating. At the beginning of the experiment, even if all of them (100%, n=16/16) agreed or strongly agreed that literature is helpful for FL learning and the majority of them (75%, n=12/15) agreed or strongly agreed that it should be used in the FL classroom, students were not sure whether CLTs could be motivating. They seemed not to expect that FL literature could be not only useful but also easy to read, entertaining or enjoyable.

As discussed in section 5.1.1, students have a specific idea of literature and of what it means to 'work with' literature in school or at university. In this sense, my data may reveal something further: students tend to assume that FL literature is demanding and full of difficult language. The

experiment was perceived as something ‘new’ by the majority of participants who found themselves unexpectedly able to read, to understand and also to enjoy a FL literary text.

In SQ2, respondents indicated on a five-point Likert scale how motivating it was for them to read text one (item 13, Appendix H): as shown in table 12 (Appendix P), 63% of participants (n=10/16) selected ‘very’ or ‘extremely motivating’.

I divided participants’ explanations of the reasons why the CLT was motivating into three categories: it was *entertaining*, *useful for language and culture learning*, it was *different*.

- *The FL literature was entertaining*

The most recurrent reason given to explain what made the text motivating was that it was *entertaining* (mentioned by eleven participants out of sixteen, i.e. 69%); this corresponds to what participants had said about the reasons why they like literature in general, in SQ1 (section 5.1.1). As we will see in more depth in section 5.4.1.1, the fact that the story was a contemporary piece of literature and that students could relate to the topic, made reading it enjoyable and entertaining (quot. 58, 59 and 60; Appendix Q).

Participants also referred to the activities that accompanied the CLT and that I designed with the aim of supporting their reading. In particular, in the students’ view, the activities were helpful in understanding the plot and the characters (e.g. SE5, SE9, S14), encouraged use of language just learned (e.g. SE12 and SE13) and were not perceived as difficult or daunting (e.g. SE1 and SE3).

It emerged that the teaching approach adopted and the activities deployed (Chapter 4.3.3) made a big difference in the way students felt towards literature: while they often experience negative feelings (and demotivation) when CLTs are taught, studied and analysed (section 5.1.1),

positive attitudes are shown when CLTs are ‘simply’ read (with the help of pre-reading, reading and post-reading activities), personally interpreted and discussed. These findings are consistent with those in Davis et al. (1992), Carroli (2009) and Yilmaz (2012) described in Chapter 1.3.1, according to which a more student-centred approach has the potential to enhance students’ positive attitude towards FL literature. This point will be fully addressed in section 5.4, as it relates not only to motivation but also to the role of the teacher (RQ3).

The positive attitude developed by some participants towards the activities was also reported during CO: I noticed that some students (SE2, SE3, SE4, SE5, SE6, SE9, SE10, SE11 and SE13) were more engaged in the activities carried out in the experimental classes than in the normal classes. SE5, who is described as “very engaged” (FN5) in my field notes, said that “in a way [she] wanted to go to these lessons [i.e. experimental classes] more than to the other ones [i.e. normal classes]” because in her opinion “it was nice to have something [...] a bit different, a sort of break from [explicit] language learning” (SI, p. 2). Similarly, as reported in my CO (quot. 61 and 62; Appendix Q) I noticed different behaviour (e.g. more engaged, more focused, more active) in some other students. In the interview, SE13 confirmed what I had repeatedly noted during CO about a positive change in her behaviour in the experimental classes (quot. 63, Appendix Q).

Overall, after a few sessions where we would read the text, the more students engaged in the story, the more confidently they seemed to use the FL (i.e. Italian) to speak about it. In fact, I noticed an increased use of Italian in the experimental class and recorded it in the CO (quot. 64 and 65, Appendix Q). Furthermore, I noticed that some students would reuse the vocabulary and a few idiomatic expressions learnt in the CLT and would also take the initiative to expand their vocabulary (e.g. looking up new words) to discuss the story, which happened much less with vocabulary learnt from the textbook during the normal class. Commenting about a session on text

two (i.e. *A Milano non c'è il mare*), I noted that students replied to a comprehension question on the protagonist's feelings⁸⁶ using some key words found in the text and researched independently to explain it (quot. 66, Appendix Q).

I believe that a combination of factors (that mainly emerged in the SI) contributed to this increased use of Italian in the FL classroom: 1) students were engaged in the story and, therefore, they felt that there was something meaningful to talk about (e.g. SE5, SE4 and SE9); 2) I designed the activities to stimulate their personal response to the text which made them feel more relaxed towards the language (e.g. SE9 and SE13); 3) they were learning new vocabulary that was useful to talk about the CLTs; 4) I encouraged them to talk as I was aware of their perception of the difficulty of 'talking about literature'. All these factors – described by some students in the interview as crucial to their increased use of Italian (quot. 67, 68, 69 and 70; Appendix Q) – contributed to enhancing participants' motivation for learning the FL and for reading the CLTs.

- *The FL literature was useful for language and culture learning*

Participants' motivation was also explained by the fact that they perceived they were *learning the language and the culture*: students said they learnt vocabulary, grammar, expressions and aspects of Italian culture, such as multiculturalism in contemporary Italy (SE11 and SE13) and how it would be “to live there as part of a family from a different culture” (SE16), and the role of food as a distinctive element of Italian identity (SE3, SE6 and SE8).

Reading FL literature was entertaining while, at the same time, helpful. A relevant number of students (n=8/16, i.e. 50%) mentioned this to explain their motivation. This finding is crucial if

⁸⁶ Exercise 11, text two activity sheet (Appendix B).

we consider that language and culture learning through reading FL literature is sometimes more of a belief than a real experience for students. This is true especially for non-reader students and for those who do not read much for pleasure. Saying that reading FL literature allows for language and culture learning sounds like an obvious statement that it is hard to disagree with; but to experience it is another matter. In this sense, SE6's and SE9's words are enlightening: the students say they realised, only after having read a CLT in Italian, how beneficial reading literature can be for language learning (quot. 71 and 72; Appendix Q).

SE5 believes that FL teachers should “explain that it [i.e. literature] will help you” because as “the students get into their head that it does help, they'll be more willing to do it” (SI, p. 4). Students who are not used to reading may have the idea that reading a CLT in a FL is “this big task” (SE13, SI) and would never try it.

Even though entertainment was the salient dimension for participants' motivation, the latter is also enhanced by teaching material that is considered relevant by learners: a literary text needs to entertain and to provide opportunities for knowledge (of the language and of the culture). Reading FL literary texts in the experiment was relevant for the students, as they felt an improvement in their language and culture knowledge: they learnt Italian and had insights into the contemporary society and culture of Italy.

- *The FL literature was different*

Reading FL literature was motivating because it was perceived as something *'different'*: 50% of participants (n=8/16) felt that they were being exposed to a different kind of learning, of language and of material. Students described the experimental classes as motivating because they allowed for “learning new language in a new way” (SE10, SQ2, p. 2), with a new method (SE2, SQ2) where

“the focus was taken off the textbook work, whilst still engaging with learning the language” (SE1, SQ2, p. 2).

Participants’ idea of ‘different’ was linked to two concepts that relate to motivation: what Dörnyei (2001) calls “the novelty element” (Chapter 2.3.1), i.e. something unusual and/or unexpected in the FL class, and authenticity.

Working with FL CLTs once a week during the language course was described as a more informal way of learning, in a sense that learning was perceived to be less structured than during the normal class. SE4 said that she “had something else to look forward to” (SI, p. 1) that was not the regular language class. SE5 thought that it wasn’t “necessarily relaxing” but it was “less hard work than having to do just grammar exercises” (SI, p. 4). In many instances, the CLTs used were described as ‘different from the textbook’ (quot. 73, 74 and 75; Appendix Q).

The type of language students were exposed to in the CLTs was also new to them. They reported learning every day vocabulary and expressions (SE4, SE8 and SE12), “not only the complicated and specific words to the textbook, but also little words” (SE6, SI, p. 1) or “strange words” that may be less important but are “fun” and “nice” (SE13) to know. In participants’ view, the CLTs helped learning cultural aspects that could not be learnt from the textbook (SE9); moreover, they said that learning was not monotonous and repetitive as the textbook sometimes happened to be (SE4, SE5, SE6, SE9 and SE13). Participants’ comments seemed to support scholars’ claims that authentic texts promote FL learning, on a cognitive and on an affective level (Chapter 2.6): in my study, students’ motivation was enhanced by learning real language used in real contexts and by the fact that authentic texts represented a break from the classroom routine.

FL literature also resulted in a motivating experience because of its intrinsic authenticity. The CLTs were described as ‘different’ because they were perceived as a “natural”, “real” and

“more adult” way of reading and of exposing oneself to the target language and culture (e.g. SE4, SE5, SE6, SE8, SE13). SE5 and SE6 did not feel as if they were being taught a language in a lesson; rather they felt that they were learning the language by reading and “enjoying what was happening” in the story (SE5, SI, p. 2). Similarly, SE9 said that while reading the text she was focused on the story and not on the grammar itself, which allowed her to learn and to understand the grammar more naturally. This finding is in line with Krashen’s (1989) and Nafisah’s (2006) claims that reading literature encourages unconscious and natural FL learning (Chapter 1.2), while entertaining the reader.

It seems that one of the advantages of bringing literature into the FL class is that language use becomes memorable and meaningful, overcoming the ordinary utilitarian logic of language teaching. In fact, this was found in the experimental phase, too: some students felt that literature gave them something meaningful to talk about, as the next comments show. SE13 believes that talking about the CLTs made her realise that she could “actually say something interesting” in the FL, as opposed to the kind of “very basic” talk you do when you are learning a new language and, in her words, “you speak like a child” (SI, p. 2). Likewise, SE6 and SE9 said that literature allowed for a different kind of FL speaking: there was more “substance” because in the story “there were new ideas” as opposed to the textbook where students “were kind of given the ideas and just had to see if they are true or false” (SE9, SI, p. 5); the FL was used to talk about opinions and interpretations “rather than saying this means this, and this is the right answer to this” (SE6, SI, p. 2).

We may conclude that the task of talking about the CLTs was perceived as authentic: in accordance with the definition of authentic task given in Chapter 2.5.2, participants felt that literature allowed them to learn the TL and to perform with it through (authentic) communication.

Reading literature also stimulated a sense of rewarding and achievement, and an increased confidence (SE2, SE4, SE6, SE8, SE9, SE13 and SE14) with regards to the FL in 44% of participants (n=7/16). As Guariento and Morley (2001) and Berardo (2006) have proposed (Chapter 2.6.2), these positive feelings seemed to originate from participants' awareness that they were indeed able to read an authentic text in the FL (quot. 76, 77 and 78; Appendix Q). I argue that such feelings might have been even stronger as participants were at an elementary level of Italian FL and did not expect to be able to understand a piece of authentic literature. All the students in the interview (except SE7) said that they were surprised at how much of the story they could understand. Before they started reading text one, many of them assumed that they would not be able to read a relatively long text in Italian, especially because it was literature (quot. 79, Appendix Q).

As mentioned earlier, in Chapter 2.6.2, there is still confusion about the link between motivation and authenticity, as different studies have arrived at mixed results. However, I believe that, as participants' comments illustrate, exposing FL learners to a piece of authentic literature that is at their proficiency level has great potential. Successfully coping with such texts certainly enhances students' confidence, particularly when they are at lower FL levels and this, as was the case for some participants, may boost their motivation in the long and demanding process of learning a new language.

5.2.1.1.2 Students in the follow-up group

Tables 13 and 14 (Appendix P) show results from SQ3, completed at the end of the follow-on experiment by nineteen out of twenty-eight students (i.e. n=14/15⁸⁷ in the experimental group and n=5/13 from the students who only took part in the follow-on experiment; Chapter 4.3.5.1). Findings revealed that 79% (n=15/19) of respondents believe that CLTs are motivating in the FL class.

Participants' descriptions of what made the literature reading experience motivating were similar to those made by students who took part in the experiment (as above). Motivation derived from *entertaining* topics and themes in the texts (e.g. SE2, SE6, SE12 and SE16) that allowed for students' engagement, as well as from appreciation of the different literary genres (e.g. SE2, SE4 and SF4). Students also liked to be doing something *different*: SE3 found that the CLTs brought into the FL classroom "a variety that the textbook can't really provide" (SQ3, p. 2), while SF4 felt it interesting "to read things in Italian that aren't just the main books that would spring to mind if you were asked to name an Italian book" (SQ3, p. 2). Sense of achievement (SE4, SE7, SE8 and SF5), reward (SE13 and SF4) and increased confidence (SE14) in the FL were mentioned as factors enhancing motivation, too: SF5 said that reading and understanding a text "that you may not have fully understood a few days or weeks before" (SQ3, p. 2) showed him that he was making progress.

Moreover, the functional role of literature was very relevant to participants' motivation in terms of *language and culture learning* (SE2, SE11, SE12, SF1, SF2 and SF4); some of them liked that learning happened in context (SE3, SE11 and SE13), as opposed to learning through the textbook. SE11 explained that, although reading literature may prove very hard, it is helpful and

⁸⁷ As explained in Chapter 4.4.1.2, the number of students in the experimental group decreased from sixteen to fifteen after one learner left the Italian course.

“very motivating as it enlightens your knowledge” and gives the opportunity to “experience cultures and lives you might not have previously known about” (SQ3, p. 2)⁸⁸.

On the other hand, students who expressed moderate motivation reported that some of the CLTs were difficult to understand because of the language (SE16 and SF1) or were not interesting because of the topic or the genre (SE5, SE9, SE14, SF2 and SF3). As the CLTs used with this group were shorter than those used in the experiment, SE5 and SE12 felt that it was more difficult to get into the stories and that they were less involved. At times, in fact, students’ motivation was not particularly tangible in the classroom. I found myself doubting my choice of CLTs and wondered whether I could do anything to improve the reading experience.

The fact that among the students who only took part in the follow-on experiment only five out of thirteen responded to SQ3 could be interpreted as sign of potential lack of engagement. This might have been a consequence of the teaching approach I had chosen for the follow-on: learners read the CLTs individually, with a limited number of group activities and in-class discussions, which did not help them feel part of the reading experience. Though it is not possible to draw any clear conclusions as these students did not answer the questionnaire, one may speculate that they were not particularly touched by the reading programme itself, and might have had no motivation to give their feedback on it. These students’ view would have informed my study with a different perspective – potentially less positive – from the one expressed by the majority of students who completed SQ3.

One last finding deserves attention. Some students who took part in both the experiment and in the follow-on experiment (SE5, SE8, SE11 and SE12) mentioned the impact of the teaching

⁸⁸ For a detailed explanation of the main motivating aspects emerging from the reading experience, see the full quotation of SE11’s words (quot. 80, Appendix Q).

approach on their *motivation to read* the CLTs, which, presumably, would have an impact on the students' overall motivation. According to these students, having to read one CLT at the same time as a class (as opposed to reading different texts freely selected by each student) and having activities to support the reading was more effective and therefore, in their view, more motivating. They believe that such an approach helped them gain more from the CLTs in terms of understanding the plot and the themes, and they felt more engaged.

I perceived such feelings, too: during the follow-up experiment, I found it more difficult not only to motivate the students but also to perceive their potential motivation. In my FN15 I wrote that, compared to the enthusiasm perceived during the experiment, I noticed “a huge difference” in students' reaction to the follow-on reading experience; I wondered whether “students [would] need more guidance with reading literature” and felt that “their interest and motivation need[ed] to be stimulated more” through in-class activities.

In the following section I will describe the issue further, taking the FL teachers' perspective into account.

5.2.2 Teachers' views and experiences with CLTs in the FL classroom: is literature motivating?

Teachers' comments about the motivating power of literature for FL learners were quite limited. It was difficult to elaborate on participants' comments on this topic as they seemed to have little to say and limited experience to describe. Even those teachers who regularly use literature in their lessons seemed to struggle with describing students' motivation in concrete terms. Moreover, the role of literature in stimulating the learners' affective dimension and motivation in the FL class, even when mentioned, was almost never the main reason for them to use CLTs. This was an

unexpected finding, as motivation is claimed to be one of the main beneficial factors in deploying literature in FL courses (Chapter 0.2); it highlights a potential gap between teachers' views and scholars'.

In the TQ⁸⁹, I noticed three different ways of talking about literature's motivational power: 1) teachers who believed in it and have had positive experience(s) with literature in their classes; 2) those who assumed that CLTs can be motivating but did not truly believe in it and had (very) little experience; 3) teachers who do not consider CLTs motivating for the students. Teachers in categories 1 and 2 gave similar explanations of the ways in which literature can be motivating; however, those in category 2 tended to have mixed feelings about the topic as they thought that CLTs are motivating but were pessimistic about whether students find them so. Therefore, in some cases, it was difficult to understand what they truly believed.

As table 15 (Appendix P) illustrates, a small minority of teachers (9%) considered CLTs not motivating for the students who tend "to assume that texts are too difficult/irrelevant and won't engage with them" (T1, TQ, p. 3) and cannot be easily persuaded about "the benefits" (T9). For T15 literature may be demotivating as it is often seen as a "mysterious kingdom" and students think they "haven't got the concepts or the understanding of the codes" as if there was "a kind of strange secret world they don't understand the terminology [of]" (T1, p. 3). She noticed "limited impact" when she deployed CLTs, explaining that only some students feel challenged by literature and that "increased motivation" was not particularly evident (TQ, p. 3). T9 said that literature can be demotivating unless it is "handled in a non-threatening way" (TQ, p. 3). The fact that T9 refers to the *way* of using literature is relevant: as students in the sample reiterated (section 5.2.1), teaching

⁸⁹ See item 21, p. 3 of the questionnaire (Appendix L).

methodology and teaching activities have a large impact on their experience with literature and on their motivation.

By contrast, 46% of teachers in my study believed that literature is motivating for FL students. Their opinions about and experiences with students' motivation were in line with those outlined by the theory: teachers reported on students' sense of achievement when reading a piece of literature in a FL (T14 and T30); they also referred to literature's imaginative power, which "allows the student to think [and to] dream" (T24, TQ, p. 3), makes the lesson more entertaining (T24, T25, T30 and T32), pushing learners to "try out more" (T10, TQ, p. 3) and, also, "balance[s] their effort in language learning by means of an enjoyable experience" (T4, TQ, p. 3). According to other teachers (T6 and T30), CLTs stimulate FL learners' motivation because they learn the language naturally and unintentionally (see Chapter 1.2): students do not approach a CLT with the intention of studying the grammar but with a desire to understand a story. As described by T6, when she used CLTs, her students "were not scared of making mistakes, but rather focused on the creative side of the task" (TQ, p. 3) which made learning less stressful.

Finally, for some participants (24%), the potential motivating effects of CLTs on FL learners depend on the student: literature is not motivating in itself but can be so if a student is a literature reader (T20), has a personal interest in it (T12 and T17) or is deeply motivated to learn the FL (T11, T29 and T31). In this sense, some students "engage very well", whereas others "can be put off by the complexities" of CLTs (T17, TQ, p. 3) or may think that literature is too difficult to understand (T11).

An aspect that recurred in the interview but was not mentioned very often in the questionnaire, is that literature is considered to be motivating because it is creative and imaginative. T17, for instance, says that literature does not merely imply "technical exercises" in the FL but it

creates “an imaginary world [...], a fictional world” that is supposed to engage the readers and “bring [them] along” with the story. According to T29, literature has something more than other text types (i.e. non-literary) as it offers more opportunities to “narrate yourself” because of its power to touch on human emotions experienced by everyone. However, T29 said, this factor is not sufficient on its own: the teacher has to be able to make use of literature in the classroom, allowing the students to express themselves, to give their own interpretations of a story.

Even if the creative and entertaining aspects of literature were described by some teachers as relevant and distinctive features of literary texts, they were almost never mentioned as factors determining teachers’ choice to deploy them in the FL classroom. The first reason why teachers in the sample deploy literature in a FL context is because it is a vehicle to language and culture learning (section 5.1.2). This, I believe, may suggest that teachers do not focus on the entertaining aspect of literature and is in contrast with the view of students in my study, according to whom entertainment is the salient quality of a piece of literature as it absorbs them in reading.

As mentioned in section 5.1.2, literature’s emotional power did not receive much attention in participants’ comments as only T29 and T32 spoke about it as a reason for deploying CLTs in a FL context. T32 believes that literature stimulates FL learners’ motivation because it is “artistic and beautiful” and may work as an “incentive” for them to learn the FL better (TI, p. 2)⁹⁰.

Teachers also mentioned the fact that using literature is different from using the textbook. T12 believes that it is easier for a teacher to approach a CLT “in a way that gets the students to be creative” (TI, p. 3), while it is much harder with the textbook as it is less flexible. This was confirmed by the students (section 5.2.1) and by my field notes during CO, as I noted that the

⁹⁰ The teacher explains this further (quot. 81, Appendix Q) in his answer to item e in the TQ (Appendix L).

students were “much more creative” (FN6) in the use of the FL: Italian was used to convey irony when talking about the characters and to imagine events that might have happened in characters’ lives to explain their behaviour.

T29 also perceived literature as different from the textbook: whilst the latter is written for FL students to learn the language and has a fixed structure, i.e. each unit aims to teach something specific, a CLT results from the writer’s desire to communicate a message, so that the students may feel freer in their use of the FL and do not feel under pressure to give the right answers to textbook exercises. This, according to T29, results in a motivation boost. T32, in line with students in the experimental phase (section 5.2.1), considered CLTs as a break from the classroom routine and, therefore, he believed that it may be more stimulating. Finally, T11 added that literature’s intrinsic authenticity makes a difference in terms of motivation because it gives FL learners something meaningful, something authentic to talk about (i.e. it enhances oral practice in the FL).

5.2.3 Summary

In my study, measurable impacts of the experimental phase on participants’ motivation were found according to three variables:

- students’ increased active participation in the experimental class (e.g. volunteering, participation in in-class discussions, active use of Italian as a FL);
- students’ increased engagement in in-class reading and home-reading assignments (e.g. completion of reading assignments, engagement in the stories read, number of texts read);
- students’ increased feeling of comfort and reduced anxiety towards reading FL literary texts: sense of achievement, reward and confidence.

According to students' comments, motivation was derived primarily from enjoyment. In this sense, as I hypothesised in Chapter 1, literature seems to offer something additional compared to non-literary texts: it has the power to entertain the readers, involving them in characters' emotions and stories while enhancing a 'different' FL learning, i.e. more authentic and rewarding. However, motivation did not come uniquely from the type of CLTs used, as many variables came into play: the text, the activities to support reading, the teaching approach and the students' personal preferences, attitudes and expectations.

Teachers' views were more mixed and, at times, difficult to categorise. Some believed in the motivational power of literature and mentioned the same motivational factors that emerged from students' views. Others, though in principle accepting that literature can be motivating in the FL class, were quite pessimistic or discouraged regarding the actual motivation of students when having to read literature. Furthermore, in contrast with the majority of scholars, motivation was never mentioned by teachers as the primary reason in favour of the use of literature in a FL context.

5.3 Research question 2: the impact of CLTs on FL students' reading habits and reading skills

In the following section I will discuss findings relating to participants' reading skills and reading habits in the FL, drawing on data from SQs 1, 2 and 3 (Appendix G, H, I and J), the SI (Appendix K), CO and teaching materials (Appendix A to F). Data will be discussed and compared in order to address RQ2, taking into account students' and teachers' beliefs and practices.

RQ2: Does the incorporation of CLTs in the FL classroom have an impact on university students' reading habits and skills in the foreign language?

5.3.1 Students' perspective

5.3.1.1 Students' reading habits

Students who participated in the first part of the study (the experimental group and the non-experimental group, Chapter 4.3.1 and 4.3.5.1) were asked questions about their reading habits in L1 and FL in SQ1. The numerical data collected from the questionnaire indicated that 80% of the students (n=40/50) read CLTs in their own language and 76% (n=38/50) in a FL; whether reading in L1 or FL, the majority of participants read both for study and for pleasure (table 16, Appendix P). It is interesting to note that the percentage of students who read only for pleasure in FL is overall lower than that of students who read for pleasure in L1 (5% vs. 22.5%) and the percentage of students who read only for study is higher in FL than in L1 (39% vs. 7.5%).

Even if it is not possible to draw conclusions about participants' reading habits in general based solely on these findings, my data provides insights into participants' reading habits with CLTs: participants were overall familiar with literary texts in the L1 and in FL contexts, and with two distinct purposes for reading them (i.e. study and pleasure).

My data also reveals what L1 literature students usually read. The vast majority read fiction: novels and short stories were the most recurrent genres indicated by 95% of participants (n=38/40); 27% of students (n=11/40) also read plays, 25% (n=10/40) read poetry, only one student reads manga and, finally, a small percentage (12.5%, n=5/40) also read other materials (e.g.

autobiographies; religious texts; magazines)⁹¹. The incidence of prose fiction as the most recurrent literary genre read by participants is consistent with findings in previous studies on students' reading preferences (Chapter 1.3.1). Preference for prose fiction also emerged from students' choices during the follow-on experiment, where participants had to freely select literary texts to read from different genres. Only a few students ventured to explore other, maybe less familiar, genres. Table 17 (Appendix P) indicates that short stories and fairy tales were the most selected text types.

All texts selected for the experiment were short (i.e. up to 11 pages), in order to encourage participants to read more than one text. A further reason for the choice was that students prefer to deal with literary texts that are not too long (Ghazali *et al.*, 2009), as SE11's comment reveals (quot. 82, Appendix Q), and to avoid "big books or novels" (SE4, SI), especially when their FL proficiency level is not advanced.

When given the choice to select the CLTs that they wanted to read, participants selected and completed on average three texts each (from a minimum of two to a maximum of five texts overall) for the duration of the follow-on experiment (i.e. three months). Some students appeared more independent than others in terms of selecting what to read and deciding whether a text was likely to be interesting for them, while others looked "lost" as if "they were not used" (FN15) to picking up something to read for themselves. In some cases, the most important criterion that seemed to guide those students' choices was the relative difficulty of a text: they would ask me which texts were 'easy'. I was disappointed that no one asked me for advice on the plot of a particular text, although I had encouraged participants to do so: I expected participants would be

⁹¹ Some participants selected more than one option given in the list of different literary genres in the questionnaire, see item 3.1 in student questionnaire 1, Appendix G.

more curious about the stories of the texts than about their potential difficulty, or else that they would be more precise in asking me about the challenges of a text, e.g. linguistic difficulty or cultural references. I also expected a higher level of interest in reading CLTs that are less common in the FL classroom, like graphic novels: I was very enthusiastic when I chose these texts, because not only had I enjoyed reading them myself, but they were also lighthearted and nicely written stories that I considered appropriate for young students.

Students' reading habits were described in the study not only in terms of *what* and for *which purpose* students read; they were also described in terms of *whether* and *for which reasons* students who took part in the experimental phase desired to read further in a FL. In fact, as described in Chapter 4, it was my intention to understand whether the experience of reading literature in the FL classroom could promote further reading in a FL in general. A comparison between data I gathered in SQ1 and SQ2 revealed that the experiment had a positive impact on participants' reading habits as it enhanced their desire to read further. Table 18 (Appendix P) illustrates that, at the end of the experiment, all students (n=16/16, i.e. 100%) said that they wanted to read more in a FL. By contrast, before the experiment, in the same group only ten students would read in a FL and six would not; two students would not even read in their L1 (table 17, Appendix P). However, not all participants were consistent with their stated intention, as 75% of them (n=12/16) read text two over the summer term. I assigned text two to read over the summer term and provided online reading activities (Chapter 4.3.3) for students to complete, which I monitored. The majority of participants (n=12/16) read the text and did the activities, though, in many instances, not all of the activities. In fact, only 5 students out of 16 completed all of them⁹². This may suggest that

⁹² This data was recorded in my EN3.

beginning FL readers' reading habits need to be sustained and stimulated: students seemed, in fact, more willing to read during the course, with me guiding them through the text and the activities. Reading individually, without my (weekly) 'supervision' in the classes, may have made them feel less compelled to reading. I believe that learners' stated desire to read further in the FL would have been better nurtured by reading text two during the course: another positive reading experience in the classroom might have enhanced their confidence to read in the FL and, potentially, prepared them for further independent reading.

The reasons given by participants to explain why they intended/desired to read further in a FL (quot. 83, 84, 85 and 86; Appendix Q) related primarily to the beneficial effects that reading a CLT had on their knowledge of the foreign language and culture (e.g. SE1, SE6, SE7, SE9, SE10, SE11, SE12, SE14). However, as table 19 (Appendix P) shows, participants mentioned other reasons such as the "enjoyable" aspect of learning through reading FL CLTs (e.g. SE2 and SE16) and the resulting "motivating" effect (e.g. SE3 and SE10).

In other instances, participants reported a feeling of self-confidence (e.g. SE1), a sense of achievement (e.g. SE4), and motivation to try and read more as FL CLTs proved more "accessible" (SE15) and less "daunting" (SE13) than they had expected. Overall, the importance attached to FL reading in terms of language improvement or enjoyment/achievement, seemed to boost participants' desire to read further, which is what Ellis (1994, p. 75) defines as "resultative motivation" (Chapter 3.2). The benefits and the pleasure students gain from reading FL CLTs were explained clearly by SE4, SE13 and SF4 (quot. 87, 88 and 89; Appendix Q).

Even if my data does not reveal much about whether participants have actually started to read more in a FL after the experiment, i.e. whether they have developed or have started developing new reading habits, the fact that all of them said they wanted to do so suggests that their attitude

has changed. Attitude is the driving force of the act of reading and the fact that the effects of one single FL reading programme manifested themselves in such a short period seems to support the evidence in favour of reading extensively in the FL classroom. In fact, having successfully read a text in Italian, the majority of participants felt that they wanted to try it more, even though that was not really something they had thought about before (e.g. SE4, SE6, SE8, SE9 and SE11). More specifically, SE6 said that the Italian texts made her “more interested in literature” (SI, p. 1) and SE10 said that “as a result of our studies of literature [i.e. the experiment]”, she decided to take a module in Italian literature (SQ3, p. 2).

The follow-on experiment, where a different teaching approach and methodology were adopted (Chapter 4.3.5), had similar results (table 20, Appendix P): out of nineteen students who completed SQ3, eighteen (95%) said that they would probably or definitely read further in a FL, one student was not sure as he is not a reader himself (SF5). However, there was a shift from “definitely yes” in SQ2 to “probably” in SQ3 on the part of some participants who seemed very motivated in the experiment (SE6, SE9 and SE13); also, a student who described herself as a non-reader, shifted from “probably” in SQ2 to “definitely yes” in SQ3. Unexpected changes can only be described; they are quite hard to explain without discussing them with each participant. It could be that a different approach to FL reading somehow affected their desire to keep reading. SE6 and SE9, for instance, did not seem to enjoy the follow-on experiment as much as they enjoyed the experiment and commented that they preferred reading a text as a class in order to enjoy and understand the plot better. This is only an assumption, and does not even apply to all cases as SE13, though shifting from “definitely yes” to “probably”, said that she preferred the approach used in the follow-up and described herself as still very motivated to read in the FL.

Overall, even if it is not possible to know whether the experience of reading FL literary texts will have a long-term effect on students' reading habits, the majority of respondents in my study⁹³ said that they intended to read further in a FL. This suggests that reading extensively in a FL course - deploying either self-selected texts or texts selected by the teacher - provides students with the opportunity to read, which, as my findings reveal, would not happen so often and so naturally outside the FL classroom. Moreover, reading FL CLTs extensively seems to have much potential to encourage students to read further in a FL and to try more independent reading. This could be a starting point to enhance students' reading habits, to give students new input and to challenge them with an activity (i.e. reading literature) that is often considered boring and difficult, but may reward and motivate them much more than expected.

5.3.1.2 Students' reading skills

As discussed in section 5.1.1, students in this study tended to see FL literature as instrumental in language development with particular reference to vocabulary acquisition and learning of grammar. Interestingly enough, none of the respondents said that reading literature could also improve their reading skills or their level of literacy in general, except for SF4 who explained that reading in FL is "so important" because she is a language student and, therefore, "it is crucial that [her] reading skills are on the same level as [her] oral and aural skills" (SQ3, p. 2). The fact that no other student mentioned this could result from a lack of awareness of how the act of reading itself works: it seems in fact quite natural that students had never thought of reading as a skill which, once acquired in early education, can be improved and trained. This may also be a consequence of the fact that the

⁹³ 100% in the experimental group and 95% in the follow-up group.

ability to read is often taken for granted and L2/FL teachers themselves are not used to granting much attention to its development and to its explicit teaching in the classroom (section 5.3.2.2).

Even if participants did not seem to recognise that reading in a FL implies learning to read better and developing reading skills, they were able to indicate some difficulties in the reading process. In particular, when asked to describe problems they encounter when reading FL⁹⁴, the most recurrent difficulty described was that of decoding unknown or difficult words in the text (e.g. S4, S7, S21, S33, S34, SE2, SE3, SE8 and SE12)⁹⁵. As quotations 94 and 95 (Appendix Q) reveal, students often feel that the only way to cope with unknown or unfamiliar vocabulary is dictionary work and translation, which are described as helpful techniques for text comprehension but, at the same time, result in hard work that is also time-consuming. This is not to neglect the role of language knowledge for a successful reading experience in a L2/FL⁹⁶: L2 reading is primarily influenced by the level of a reader's language proficiency, with vocabulary knowledge playing a crucial role (Chapter 3.4). In this sense, looking up words in a dictionary and translating passages from a text are necessarily part of the language learning experience and should not be discouraged completely. However, such activities pertain to a specific way of reading, i.e. intensive reading (Chapter 3.6.2), and cannot be applied to the reading of longer texts without hindering reading fluency. L2/FL learners should be equipped with more effective reading skills to cope with unfamiliar vocabulary, and should be directed by their teachers to use those reading strategies that encourage extensive and fast reading. This point was stressed by SE12 who, in SQ2, completed

⁹⁴ See item 17 in SQ1 (Appendix G).

⁹⁵ See, for instance, quot. 90, 91, 92, 93, 94 and 95 (Appendix Q).

⁹⁶ In this paragraph the terminology L2/FL is used instead of just FL. This is because I refer to studies (from Chapter 3) that were conducted mainly in L2 context.

after the experiment, said that her strategy for coping with difficult vocabulary is “to work past” words that are not necessary to general understanding (quot. 96, Appendix Q).

The importance accorded by participants to knowledge of vocabulary in the L2/FL is not surprising: Klapper (2002) claims, in fact, that language learners are often worried about understanding a text word-by-word and may be excessively word-bound. In this sense, he says that:

Many L2 learners find it difficult to suppress the desire to understand everything in a text, to accept that with many pieces of L2 writing they can get away with using only the minimum of syntactic and semantic clues to meaning. It is curious that many learners feel guilty about adopting such tactics, when they already employ them in English [i.e. their L1], even though they may not always be aware of the fact. (p. 13)

In my experiment, I found that convincing students of the effectiveness of guessing or ignoring unknown words for the sake of reading fluency and general understanding was not easy. I felt that I should guide them through the process of learning how to read a long (literary) text in FL. As described in Chapter 4.3.3, students were introduced to the reading programme and to the methodology adopted. Furthermore, in order to encourage participants to read for general meaning and to familiarise themselves with the appropriate reading strategies, specific activities were designed (e.g. introduction of key words before reading; glossary; general comprehension questions).

What follows is an example of an activity that I designed to enhance students' confidence that understanding is possible even if it is not total. Before reading text one, I asked them to read the very first paragraph and answer a general comprehension question (picture 1):

Picture 1⁹⁷:

paragrafo 1 di **Curry di pollo**

■ A volte vorrei essere orfana. È una cosa terribile da dire, lo so. Non sono un'ingrata, forse mi sono espressa male. Voglio un bene da matti ai miei, lo giuro. È solo che vorrei che fossero diversi... Normali, cioè. Come i genitori di tutti gli altri ragazzi della mia classe al Liceo Petrarca.

Che cosa pensa la figlia dei suoi genitori?

p. 1

After replying to the question, I gave students the same text with some of the unknown words glossed (in Italian or in English), as follows (picture 2):

⁹⁷ “Sometimes I wish I were an orphan. It’s a terrible thing to say, I know. It’s not that I’m ungrateful, maybe that just came out wrong. I love my parents a lot, I swear. It’s just that I’d like it if they were... different. Normal. Like all the other kids’ parents in my class at Petrarch High School.” (*Curry di pollo*, L. Waida. *My translation from Italian*). Students were asked the following comprehension question: “What does the daughter think of her parents?”

Picture 2:

The slide features a green background with a dark red arrow pointing right at the top left. The title is 'paragrafo 1 di Curry di pollo: parole nuove' with a magnifying glass icon. The main text is a paragraph with several words highlighted in red. Annotations in red boxes are placed around the text: 'ungrateful' above 'ingrata', 'Amo moltissimo i miei genitori' above 'genitori', 'I swear' and 'that is to say' to the left of 'giuro', and 'scuola secondaria' below 'Liceo'. The page number 'p. 1' is in the bottom right corner.

paragrafo 1 di **Curry di pollo**:
parole nuove 🔍

ungrateful *Amo moltissimo i miei genitori*

■ A volte vorrei essere orfana. È una cosa terribile da dire, lo so. Non sono un'**ingrata**, forse mi sono espressa male. **Voglio un bene da matti ai miei, lo giuro**. È solo che vorrei che fossero diversi...
I swear *that is to say* Normali, **cioè**. Come i genitori di tutti gli altri ragazzi della mia classe al **Liceo** Petrarca.
scuola secondaria

p. 1

This introductory activity helped participants understand that they were meant to read without relying on the dictionary too much and, more importantly, without feeling the need to stop every time an unfamiliar word came up. This activity (and others of the same type) was intended to help students to develop confidence with and awareness of what was accessible to them, as I wanted them to focus on things they already knew and break the habit of worrying about what they did not know yet.

During my experiment, I guided participants to make use of reading strategies that would help them to read more fluently and to comprehend the text. In order to enhance reading fluency, as discussed in Chapter 4.3.3, I glossed at the side of the text some of the unknown words, idiomatic expressions and grammar points, while some others were introduced to the students via pre-reading activities (e.g. matching words and images/definitions; filling-the-gap exercises). Such activities were also useful to support literal comprehension of the text. However, as Alderson (2000) explains, during the process of reading there are three different levels of understanding: literal,

inferential and critical comprehension (Chapter 3.1). I designed activities accordingly. To help students develop reading strategies such as inferring meanings from the text using context clues, I would introduce them to the main topics of the story (picture 3) and I would make them think about the main features of the characters (picture 4):

Picture 3⁹⁸:

DISCUSSIONI CON I GENITORI

IN CUCINA con la mamma,
IN SALOTTO con il papà

- PER LA PRIMA VOLTA ASCOLTIAMO "LA VOCE" DEL SIGNOR KUMAR E DELLA SIGNORA KUMAR (*dialoghi*)
- ANANDITA DISCUTE CON LA MAMMA IN CUCINA, IL PADRE SENTE LA DISCUSSIONE DAL SALOTTO E INTERVIENE...
- DURANTE LA DISCUSSIONE CONOSCIAMO 3 NUOVI PERSONAGGI:

SAMANTHA (la migliore amica di Anandita)
MARCO (il ragazzo di Anandita)
la **NONNARUPA** (mamma del signor Kumar, nonna di Anandita)

⁹⁸ I introduced the events (“Discussion with the parents”), the setting (“The father is in the dining room and hears Anandita fighting with her mother in the kitchen”), and the characters (“Samantha, Anandita’s best friend; Marco, Anandita’s boyfriend; Rupa, Anandita’s grandmother”) that students would encounter in the part of text they were going to read. Another example of this type of activities is given in exercises 1 and 2.1, text one activity sheet (Appendix B).

Picture 4⁹⁹:

In gruppi

-> LA FAMIGLIA KUMAR

10 minuti di tempo!

3 minuti di tempo!

Scrivete nei *post-it* **PAROLE, AGGETTIVI, FRASI** che rappresentano il personaggio. Poi preparatevi a presentare il *poster* alla classe.

pancia prominente

vuole essere orfana

alta e snella

To encourage them to formulate a hypothesis about the text and to make predictions – which is the core of the process and the product of reading (Chapter 3.1) – I would ask them to guess what could happen next and/or how characters would react to specific events (picture 5).

Picture 5¹⁰⁰:

19. Immagina come continua la storia...

Anandita presenta Marco ai suoi genitori. Lo presenta come un suo compagno di classe e ragazzo di Samantha. I suoi genitori capiscono che Marco non è il ragazzo di Samantha ma è il ragazzo di Anandita: che cosa succede in casa Kumar? In gruppi di tre, immaginate il dialogo fra la mamma, il papà e Anandita. Preparatevi a recitare il dialogo in classe.

⁹⁹ In this activity, I ask students to write sticky notes on a poster containing a drawing of the three main characters. In particular, they are required to write words, adjectives and sentences that are representative of each character. At the end of the activity, students present their poster to the class. Another example of this kind of activities is given in exercise 3, text one activity sheet (Appendix B).

¹⁰⁰ “Imagine how the story evolves... Anandita introduces Marco to her parents. She says he is a classmate and Samantha’s boyfriend. Anandita’s parents find out Marco is not Samantha’s but rather Anandita’s boyfriend: what happens next? Work in small groups and imagine the dialogue between the mother, the father and Anandita. Prepare to perform the dialogue in the class.” (exercise 19, text one activity sheet, Appendix B).

As reading entails not only literal and inferential comprehension but also critical comprehension (Alderson, 2000), students were encouraged to evaluate and to interpret information obtained from the text through post-reading activities, such as explaining characters' feelings and emotions (picture 6) and making comparisons with their own life experience (picture 7).

Picture 6¹⁰¹:

11. Nel testo che hai letto i genitori di Anandita parlano con lei e le dicono le loro opinioni sul suo look. In piccolo gruppi, rispondete alle domande.

1. Come si sente Anandita con i suoi genitori?
2. Come si sentono i genitori con lei? Perché si comportano in questo modo?
3. La tua famiglia come si comporta con te?

Picture 7¹⁰²:

Es 2 – prima di leggere

Vivi a Birmingham da quando avevi 2 anni. Adesso hai 10 anni, come tutti i ragazzi della tua età vai a scuola, hai i tuoi amici, le tue passioni, ecc. La tua famiglia ti comunica che fra un mese dovrete trasferirvi a Praga, in Repubblica Ceca, dove tuo padre ha trovato lavoro. Come ti senti?

¹⁰¹ “In the part of text you read, Anandita’s parents comment on her look. Answer the questions, in small groups. 1) How does Anandita feel with her parents?; 2) How do Anandita’s parents feel with her? Why do they behave this way?; 3) How does your family behave with you?” (exercise 11, text one activity sheet, Appendix D). Another example of this type of activities is given in exercise 21, text one activity sheet (Appendix B).

¹⁰² “You have been living in Birmingham since you were two. Now you are ten and, like everyone your age, you go to school, have friends, have hobbies, etc. Your family announces that, in one month, you will have to move to Prague, in the Czech Republic, where your father has just found a job. How do you feel?” (exercise 2, text two activity sheet, Appendix D).

All these activities were accompanied by an explanation to students of the reasons why they were relevant, in an attempt to explore the claim by Afflerbach *et al.* (2008) that explicit teaching of relevant reading strategies is beneficial to student readers.

According to participants' answers to SQ2¹⁰³ and the SI¹⁰⁴, 56% of them (n=9/16) said that their way of reading in FL had changed after the experiment. The most recurrent 'new' strategy reported was that of guessing or ignoring the meaning of unknown words (e.g. SE2, SE4, SE5, SE6, SE9, SE13, SE14, SE15 and SE16). Such strategies seemed to have already been automatised into reading skills (Afflerbach *et al.*, 2008) by SE7 and SE12 who, according to their comments, were more experienced readers and were able to read fluently with an appropriate balance of top-down and bottom-up strategies. For the other students mentioned above, attempting to understand the CLTs without the customary use of the dictionary was described as a new way of reading and, at times, seemed surprising (quot. 97, 98 and 99; Appendix Q). Some students, when explicitly asked to say whether they thought their way of reading in FL had changed after the experiment, seemed to reconsider the role of translation in FL reading (quot. 100 and 101; Appendix Q). Similarly, SE5 perceived a change in her way of reading in a FL (i.e. from literal translation to general understanding) and that change influenced not only her reading ability but also her enjoyment of the text (quot. 102, Appendix Q).

Those participants who succeeded in reading the text without translating it and limited the use of the dictionary as advised, described how they dealt with unknown vocabulary and grammar and with those parts of the text that proved more difficult to understand. Referring to the *conditional*, a mood that the students did not know yet when the experiment was carried out but

¹⁰³ Item 14 and 15, p. 2 of the questionnaire (Appendix H).

¹⁰⁴ Items h-k, p. 1 of the interview (Appendix K).

that recurred in some passages of text one, SE5 said that she understood what the mood was after encountering it throughout the text “by a process of elimination” that she described as follows: “[it] is not an imperfect, it is not the past, I do not think it is a future, so it must be that!” (SI, p. 3). SE13 described a similar approach to vocabulary when she says that the glossary helped “to have a couple of words [the students] wouldn’t know”, specific words such as “peacock” and to work around them to get the meaning of a sentence by a process of guessing: “Oh, I know this word ‘peacock’ and everything else has probably to do with that” (SI, p. 4). SE6 referred to inferring the meaning of unknown grammar structures by relying on the context, i.e. seeing the specific grammar point “in a sentence, with which words it is used and how it is used” (SI, p. 3) helped her understand it. SE9 and SE4 would also rely on the context to decode unfamiliar grammar points and/or words by “get[ting] the general meaning first and then look[ing] up the bits [she] was not so sure and try[ing] to think about what they meant” (SE9, SI, p. 3) or by thinking of “similar words” already known (SE4, SI, p. 1). Background knowledge was mentioned by one participant as a tool to understand new grammar points. SE4 stated that she could recognise some *subjunctives* in the text: drawing on her knowledge of other FLs (i.e. Spanish and French) she already had a sense of how this mood is used and could therefore get its meaning; in her own words: “I don’t know how to form it, but I can recognise it, like I know it was there. [...] I quite liked that!” (SI, p. 2).

The strategies described by participants are very relevant when reading in L2/FL: in fact, scholars stress the role of schemata and background knowledge to decode and infer textual meanings, and also the relevance of reading strategies such as guessing meanings (Chapter 3.1 and 3.6.1). The implementation of such strategies by participants was encouraged by the approach chosen and by the activities designed for reading the CLTs.

The activities designed to support reading, which I considered crucial for students at beginners' level of Italian, proved helpful for them as they enhanced understanding of the text: SE5, for instance, said that she would rely on in-class discussions and group work to clarify the meaning of specific phrases or idioms. SE4 considered the exercises useful because they “made [her] remember the story and from that [she] remembered bits of vocabulary” (SI, p. 1). SE6 described the exercises and the “structure of the lessons” as “really helpful” to get more meaning out of what she was reading (quot. 103, Appendix Q). Finally, describing the relevance of the glossary by the side of the text, SE4 said that she experienced reading fluency in Italian (the FL) (quot. 104, Appendix Q).

My findings indicated that the experiment helped participants to try a different approach to FL reading and, even if it is hard to say whether they acquired long-lasting FL reading skills, they were certainly encouraged to reflect on the skills and strategies that they already possessed; they were helped to become more aware of how effective these were for them and to consider other options, i.e. to familiarise themselves with other reading strategies and to change their beliefs about what FL reading is.

5.3.2 Teachers' beliefs and practices in reading FL CLTs

Asking FL teachers whether they think that reading literature is beneficial for students sounds like a rhetorical question. Indeed, all participants seemed to believe that reading is useful and appeared to support its development in the FL classroom. However, understanding what they mean when they speak about reading FL literature, which may not be so straightforward, is crucial to better understand their views and their practices. In the following sections, I will discuss findings on

teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to the development of students' reading habits and skills when CLTs are deployed in the FL classroom.

5.3.2.1 Developing students' reading habits in the FL: teachers' views

Table 21 (Appendix P) illustrates that 78.6% (n=26/33) of participants believe that when they deploy CLTs in the classroom their role as teachers is to allow students to develop reading habits. As mentioned in section 5.1.2, teachers do not accord great importance to reading in the FL; however, they seem to encourage students to engage in it. Encouraging and recommending students to read in the FL is the most recurrent practice described by participants (e.g. T12, T15, T17 and T21) to enhance students' reading habits; apart from verbal recommendations, no specific practices to promote reading habits in the FL were reported by teachers. When teachers were asked to describe what impact the use of CLTs has on students' reading habits in the FL¹⁰⁵, some of them revealed a certain degree of scepticism (quot. 105, Appendix Q). Participants said that it is not really possible to change the reading habits of students (e.g. T1, T6, T24 and T29) so that, unless they are already readers in their L1, they are unlikely to develop the habit of reading in another language (e.g. T20). Furthermore, another recurrent answer to the question was that participants do not know how to measure the potential impact of CLTs on students' reading habits (e.g. T12, T17 and T21) because they have never thought of measuring it, not even by asking students' verbal feedback after a reading activity because “[they] haven't done it [i.e. reading CLTs] consistently enough” (T3) or because “[they] do not have enough experience [with reading CLTs] to say” (T4).

¹⁰⁵ See TQ, item 22, Appendix L.

On the other hand, some participants believe that reading FL CLTs can stimulate students' reading habits. A few of them reported on direct experience (i.e. T5 and T26); others stated their belief that reading FL literature may indeed have an impact on students' habits but did not have any direct experience, because either they rarely use literature (i.e. T14 and T19) or they use it but do not follow up on students' additional reading outside of class time (i.e. T12 and T17). T17 said that it could be interesting to follow up on students' reading even though this "has never been a focus of the language class" (TI, p. 3).

In the interviews, the majority of teachers (n=5/6) said that the impact of FL literature on learners' reading habits is subjective, i.e. it depends on the students' interest and on their reading habits in L1. Furthermore, according to T12, reading habits need "nurturing" (TI, p. 4) and do not result from one isolated reading experience. More specifically, T11 and T29 explained that with non-reader students it is obviously harder, but nonetheless it is worth trying because it is possible, if not to change their habits, at least to make them want to read more (quot. 106 and 107, Appendix Q).

Another aspect mentioned by participants in the interview (i.e. T17, T29 and T32) is the connection between reading habits in the FL and the affective dimension of reading. As discussed in Chapter 3.2, a positive attitude towards and a positive experience with FL reading may enhance students' desire to read further. According to these teachers, allowing students a positive experience with reading FL CLTs (i.e. motivating and appropriate to students' proficiency level and interests) is the crucial point in developing reading habits (quot. 108 and 109, Appendix Q). However, even if these teachers realised how important the affective dimension is to foster students' interest in FL reading (and potentially their reading habits), teaching practice does not always reflect such a belief. Teachers' practice, in fact, was almost never described as aimed at

developing a positive attitude towards FL reading in order to stimulate students to read further; they were more focused on the development of specific reading skills and/or language improvement (section 5.1.2).

Another issue that relates to students' reading habits in the FL and that Yamashita (2013) considers to be a component of reading attitude, is the intention to perform actions to promote reading (e.g. going to the library; Chapter 3.2). In the interview, T15 said something interesting about that: she claimed that some students do not know which CLTs to read (quot. 110, Appendix Q). Though this seems "unconceivable" to her, the fact that students who would like to read may not know what to read or how to select a text that is appropriate for them appears, on the contrary, quite normal, especially if we consider that, as I will discuss in section 5.4.1.2, FL teachers often feel 'lost' themselves when it comes to selecting the 'right' text for their students. In fact, simply recommending to students they read or go to the library and pick up a book may not be enough to enhance their reading habits. Maybe, FL teachers have to face a much harder challenge: if they truly want their students to read in the FL, they need to provide them with time to read, with opportunities to do so in class and at home and with those reading skills they need in order to read extensively and with pleasure. To do so, FL teachers themselves should be equipped with knowledge of L2/FL reading theories, pedagogical practices, and reading materials appropriate to their educational aims.

As far as knowledge of L2/FL reading theory is concerned, data reveals something interesting. From participants' answers to TQ and TI, a confusion between two very different terms emerged: 21% of teachers (n=6/28), when asked to speak about reading habits, would describe students' reading skills, as quotations 111, 112 and 113 illustrate (Appendix Q).

My findings also revealed that participants were not familiar with the concepts of ER, free voluntary reading or with teaching practices to implement in-class reading of long texts. This may appear surprising when compared to the number of studies available on L2/FL reading and on approaches to learning and teaching it. However, such findings are consistent with what Borg (2010) found drawing on literature about L2/FL teachers' engagement *in* and *with* research, i.e. that in the field of L2/FL teaching, such engagement "remains a minority activity" (p. 391). To me, this sounds like a missed opportunity for professional development of FL teachers: I do not believe instructors must translate implications from research into classroom instructions; however, it is desirable for teachers to be aware of research in the field, to critically understand it and to adapt researchers' recommendations to their specific teaching context.

In conclusion, my data suggests that participants rarely enquire about their students' actual reading habits (either in L1 or in FL), have a vague idea of whether reading CLTs may stimulate students to read further in a FL, and based their answers almost exclusively on their personal beliefs about L2/FL reading.

Teachers' lack of awareness of the literature on L2/FL reading and of the potential for using certain teaching approaches and reading programmes may shed more light on the reasons why literary texts are not often deployed in the FL classroom. In fact, one may ask whether FL teachers truly believe that reading (literature) in the FL is as important as they state. Finally, even though this is beyond the scope of the present study, it may be worth asking whether teachers truly consider FL reading teachable.

5.3.2.2 *Developing students' reading skills in the FL: teachers' views*

Table 22 (Appendix P) indicates that the vast majority of participants in the study (71.5%, n=24/33) believed that reading CLTs can enhance students' learning of the FL, which is consistent with the fact that the majority of them (n=23/33) deploy or have deployed literature in their classes (section 5.1.2). However, only four teachers out of twenty-three said that reading FL CLTs is beneficial for students' development of reading skills and reading habits (section 5.1.2). As I will discuss in this section, this finding suggests that FL teachers may not think of CLTs as material that can be used to enhance students' reading in the FL overall, but rather they focus primarily on language work based on the texts (e.g. vocabulary and grammar). Moreover, this reveals that teachers may not feel that reading in the FL is an ability that needs to be learnt or taught explicitly.

Teachers' comments on the connections between the use of CLTs and FL reading were not spontaneous in most cases: they resulted from explicit questions asked in the TQ and in the TI¹⁰⁶. The fact that only a few teachers, when talking about reading literature in a FL, spontaneously referred to the importance of reading ability in a FL is relevant, as it highlights a potential contradiction between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices. FL teachers in my study considered reading important (if not fundamental) and assumed or complained that students do not read much; surprisingly, however, they do not seem to promote reading in their courses. As I will discuss in section 5.4.1.2, lack of time, curricular requirements and the personal attitude of the teacher (e.g. sense of unease, negative feelings) are possible reasons why reading FL literature receives, at times, such little attention. However, even when teachers devote time to reading CLTs

¹⁰⁶ An example of such questions is the following item: "Do you believe creative literary texts are more effective in encouraging students' reading habits and developing their reading skills than non-literary texts?" (TI, item j, Appendix M).

in the FL classroom, their efforts are focused on what they defined ‘learning of/about reading’. In some cases, participants’ idea of learning to read in a FL was limited to learning vocabulary, translation of literary extracts, close reading and analysis of the text (e.g. T12, T15, T17, T21, T22 and T33)¹⁰⁷. T12 and T21, for instance, think that reading CLTs in the FL classroom is useful in encouraging close reading. Similarly, T17 said that literature improves learners’ analytical skills (quot. 114, Appendix Q).

Other teachers, by contrast, would work on the development of reading skills through pre-reading, reading and post-reading activities (e.g. T5, T11, T14, T26, T29, T30 and T31) which, as seen in Chapter 3.6, are helpful in strengthening learners’ reading ability in general¹⁰⁸.

The type of activities commonly used by teachers in the study and the texts that they bring into the FL classroom (i.e. short extracts of literary texts; section 5.4.1.2) reveal that their concept of FL reading corresponds mostly to intensive reading. Teachers in my study never spoke about the importance of fluency or about techniques deployed to develop it, apart from T22’s comment which is in strong contrast with the theory on L2/FL reading (Chapter 3.6.2) as she said that “focusing on close reading and grammatical details is a crucial part of building fluency in reading” (TQ, p. 3).

Confirming Kuzborska’s (2011) findings, participants seemed to believe that FL reading consists primarily of learning the FL and of decoding it throughout a written text. Furthermore, extensive reading did not seem to be an option for them and the use of long CLTs was very rarely described (section 5.4.2.2). In many instances, participants did not even consider the idea that short

¹⁰⁷ This was found also by Kuzborska (2011) in her investigation of teachers’ beliefs about and practices of reading.

¹⁰⁸ T11, for instance, describes some of the activities deployed to guide the process of reading and help students make sense of the literary text (quot. 115, Appendix Q).

extracts and long texts are different and may be deployed for different reasons, i.e. to develop distinct FL (reading) skills.

Only a few teachers seemed to be aware of the differences between different styles of reading, e.g. close reading vs. reading for general meaning, reading for study vs. for pleasure (quot. 116, 117 and 118; Appendix Q). However, interestingly, none of these teachers explained how students can develop an understanding of the differences between different styles of reading, or how students are supposed to develop the necessary tools to cope with FL reading or how to learn reading without relying on the dictionary to translate every word. This, I believe, should be taught by teachers and experienced by students in the FL classroom, especially if we consider that, in the words of T17, “reading actual physical books seems to happen a lot less [...], particularly with our recent students” (TI, p. 3), i.e. students may not be that experienced in FL reading.

Teachers in my study seemed to share a common belief that their ‘action’ to promote reading in the FL classroom is limited to providing students with short texts to improve language knowledge and to answer comprehension questions (quot. 119, 120 and 121; Appendix Q). The linguistic focus of teachers’ practice with reading FL literary texts emerges in T29’s comment (reiterated by T30) as she says that she makes advanced students read such texts with the aim of “analysing the most difficult syntactic constructions and working on difficult vocabulary [...]” (TQ, p. 2). In this sense, reading a CLT seems to be, for her, a way to challenge learners with a higher level of language difficulty; however, it is important to notice that she did not mention which reading skills/strategies she teaches the students to enable them to read a text characterised by such “difficult” language.

Even though no one said it explicitly, one may speculate that participants’ practices mirror unstated beliefs such as: 1) students know how to read or they will learn naturally as they progress

in the study of the FL; 2) it is not necessary to help learners develop specific skills and strategies to become better readers and to learn how to read fluently; 3) the problem with FL reading is primarily a language problem. In fact, participants did not seem to consider the fact that – as stated by the literature on L2/FL reading (Chapter 3.4) – learners’ difficulties with reading may also derive from poor L1 reading ability.

The pedagogical implications of participants’ beliefs are that FL teachers take action to help learners enhance only one component of FL reading, i.e. FL proficiency, neglecting the importance of the other component, i.e. L1 reading ability. The proficiency level is a stronger predictor of L2/FL reading than L1 reading ability (Chapter 3.4) so it is indeed sensible that teachers are concerned about teaching learners the TL through explicit language work (i.e. translation, vocabulary and grammar). However, I believe that they should supplement the language study with work on reading ability. This may be even more important if we assume, as some scholars have claimed (Chapter 3.4), that when L1 reading ability is strong, it may compensate for low L2/FL proficiency in L2/FL reading.

Furthermore, according to the transfer hypothesis, knowledge and skills already acquired in one language are deployed by learners to support understanding and learning of another language (Karim, 2010): this means that, if teachers promote reading programmes and activities aimed at enhancing students’ L2/FL reading ability, the improvement in reading that students experience can potentially be transferred to not only other FLs but also to their L1. In other words, explicit teaching of reading skills and strategies would enhance students’ reading ability overall and would support them in their future reading experience in any language.

5.3.3 Summary

In this section I have examined students' and teachers' views on reading habits and reading skills in the FL in relation to the reading of CLTs. On the one hand, students who took part in my experiment and in the follow-up showed an increased interest in FL reading and a desire to read further. Although, as mentioned already, this does not necessarily mean that their reading habits have changed, it is to be considered encouraging. In fact, it reveals that students may be successfully introduced to reading FL literary texts and may be encouraged to keep reading on their own. Moreover, participants in the experiment perceived an improvement in their FL reading skills resulting from the reading programme and the literary reading materials specifically designed for them. Whether such skills have been assimilated by students, i.e. they will be permanent, is very hard to tell; as some teachers in my study stated, reading habits and reading skills need nurturing: I believe that FL students may only benefit – both as language learners and as readers – from repeated and diverse reading experiences in the FL classroom.

On the other hand, data discussed in this section suggested that teachers care about FL reading and promote it in their courses. However, they primarily promote intensive reading with the aim of developing language proficiency and close reading skills. Very limited attention is given to extensive reading and to the development of reading fluency, relevant concepts that participants were often unfamiliar with. It was also suggested that a lack of awareness of current L2/FL reading research and of approaches to teach L2/FL reading could explain some teachers' pedagogical choices when it comes to deploying CLTs in their courses.

5.4 Research Question 3: deploying literature in the FL classroom: the role of teachers

In the questionnaires and in the interviews students and teachers made direct or indirect reference to the role of teachers when CLTs are deployed in the FL classroom. In many instances, respondents mentioned the role of teachers spontaneously, even if no questions were addressed to them on that topic specifically. That was a first interesting finding: I interpreted the recurrence of spontaneous comments about *what* teachers do and *how* they do it to indicate the relevance accorded by participants to the role of teachers when literature is introduced in the FL classroom. Participants' spontaneous comments, along with their answers to items in the questionnaires and in the specifically designed interviews, were used to derive relevant data to address RQ3:

RQ3: What role do teachers play in the use of CLTs in the FL classroom?

Comparing students' and teachers' views, three main factors emerged and seemed to be crucial to the role of teachers when CLTs are used for language teaching:

- The selection of CLTs;
- The teaching approach and the methodology;
- Teachers' attitudes.

5.4.1 CLTs selection

5.4.1.1 Why is it so relevant?

In section 5.2.1 I discussed students' opinions about motivation and I described how learners' motivation depends on the text that they have to read. In fact, using a literary text that is appropriate to learners is essential to their enjoyment of it and their motivation to read it (Chapter 1.5). This

relates to students' motivation but at the same time, indirectly, to the role of the teacher: teachers have the important task of understanding their students' needs, interests and tastes in order to choose a CLT that they might enjoy. Therefore, text selection appears to be *so* relevant because it touches on two factors that are central to the learning process: students' motivation on the one hand and teachers' competence on the other.

My data suggests that in the students' view specific criteria should guide text selection: the type of literature, i.e. modern/contemporary texts as opposed to canonical texts; the story, i.e. the topic, the plot and the characters in the text; the level of language difficulty (quot. 122, 123, 124, 125 and 126; Appendix Q). Students who participated in the experiment and read the Italian short story *Curry di pollo* stressed the importance of the story being told in the text: the students considered the content of the text as a factor affecting their enjoyment and their ability to understand the language (quot. 127, 128 and 129; Appendix Q).

Students' comments seem to be consistent with the reasons they gave to explain why they like literature (section 5.1.1). The recurrent idea that the content of a text determines the extent to which they enjoy and engage in reading, mirrors the fact that 65% of participants said that they like literature because they find it entertaining (section 5.1.1). Moreover, in SQ1 most participants indicated 'general interest in the language' and 'general interest in the culture' as their first reasons for studying Italian, while 'interest in the literature' was rated six on a seven-point scale¹⁰⁹. Students' interests, a key element to consider in the process of text selection (Tseng, 2010), are all the more important if we acknowledge that they greatly influence students' expectations. In fact, participants' interests in CLTs appeared to be deeply connected to what they said they expect to

¹⁰⁹ See SQ1, item 1 (Appendix G).

learn from the integration of literature in the FL classroom, i.e. language (grammar and vocabulary) and knowledge of the foreign culture and society.

It is interesting to note that students' and teachers' views about the role of literature in the FL class coincided as both students and teachers think that literature needs to be used primarily as a tool 1) to teach/learn the FL and 2) to improve learners' knowledge of the foreign culture. However, their views appear to differ when it comes to which text should be used and, possibly, to what the meaning of 'culture' is. I believe that the selection of canonical literary texts – identified by students in my study as “old texts” – implies a concept of culture that teachers may feel important to teach but that does not necessarily coincide with what students understand as culture. In this sense, it could be helpful to consider what T12 said about CLTs that are to be deployed in FL teaching (quot. 130, Appendix Q): she believes that literature should allow students to develop “a historical perspective” on the world and also to “critically think” about the past in order to be able to understand the present (T12, TI). Though I believe that literature may have such a role and that it proves very effective in teaching students history and in making their critical skills stronger, this seems to be very different from what students want to learn from literature in the FL classroom. SE13's comments may help to better understand students' expectations of literature in a FL context and, consequently, their expectations of texts. The student said that when she hears the word 'literature', she thinks of important authors such as, in Italian literature, Dante and Petrarca and she goes on to describe her experience with *Curry di pollo* as a way to learn through an easy-to-read and enjoyable book (quot. 131, Appendix Q). The student highlighted the fact that the text read was not a masterpiece of literature and, therefore, she did not classify it as “really educational”; however, in her view, she could still learn some elements of “modern Italian culture” from it (SE13, SI).

Students in my study seemed to be more interested in culture conceived as life-style and cultural habits of a population, than culture conceived as historical and artistic production. Students who took part in the experiment, for instance, perceived the literary text *Curry di pollo* as a source of cultural knowledge in the sense that they learnt about “Indian and Italian culture” (SE5), about “Italian family” (SE5, SE9 and SE13) and about “the emotions of the characters” (SE13); SE9 said that through the reading of the text “you learn more about people’s attitudes” and consequently that helps “to explore more the kind of ideas in Italy and things like that” (SE9, SI, p. 1). This concept of culture may determine students’ tastes and expectations which should be carefully investigated to make text selection an easier task for FL teachers.

5.4.1.2 How do teachers select CLTs (and for what purposes)?

Out of thirty-three respondents, twenty-nine use or have used CLTs in the FL class. In the TI teachers were asked to describe how they select the CLTs and their answers varied slightly. First of all, not all teachers interviewed seemed to have a specific method for selection: T17 is not used to searching CLTs on his own since he is not in charge of the course he teaches, though he freely selects the texts he wants to use from “a wide range of passages” already established in the syllabus (TI, p. 1); T11 and T29 stated that they primarily use CLTs if they appear in the textbook or if they are an integral part of the course programme.

All teachers, however, described some relevant criteria that they apply for selecting a CLT. T11, T15, T17 and T29 said that one factor that guides their choice of a literary text is the ‘language’, i.e. whether the language used in the text offers the opportunity to work on specific grammar points, language structures or vocabulary. T15, in particular, said that it is important to

find a text “that has a good mix of relatively basic vocabulary but also more complex descriptive vocabulary” (T15, TI, p. 1).

‘Language’ is not only a factor that teachers consider in terms of which elements of grammar and vocabulary students can learn by reading a text: teachers also consider language as a potential barrier to understanding, therefore they assess the level of language difficulty of a text before bringing it into the FL classroom¹¹⁰.

The second most frequent factor guiding teachers in literary texts’ selection is the topic. T11, T29 and T32 select CLTs according to the story they tell. These teachers said that, if students can relate to the story and/or to the topics of the course they are teaching, then they may want to use it as complementary teaching material. Other factors to be taken into account during the selection, such as students’ familiarity with cultural elements in the text (T11 and T12), teacher’s knowledge of and familiarity with the text (T32), the literary merit of a text (T29) the length of a text (T11, T12 and T15), were also mentioned by participants in the interview.

In particular, the length of a text seems to be crucial to teachers’ choices: this seems to be confirmed by the fact that 62% of participants in the study (n=18/29) use or have used excerpts from novels or short stories instead of using a full text. By contrast, 37% of teachers (n=11/29) said they use or have used full texts but mainly in the form of a poem (or a “short poem”, T19) and, less commonly, in the form of a short story (table 23, Appendix P). Teachers in my study seemed to take for granted that excerpts (or very short CLTs) are the *only* possible way to exploit literature in

¹¹⁰ T12 stated that vocabulary should be “reasonably known” by the students and that the grammar should not be “too difficult” (TI, p. 1); T17 said that he tends to use texts where the language is closer to “modern-day usage”, while for T11 and T29 it is very important that the level of language difficulty is appropriate, i.e. the language of a text should be generally understandable by the students.

the FL class: none of the teachers felt the need to explain why they prefer to use extracts or short CLTs, apart from T11 and T17 who, when asked directly in the interview, stated that this choice is dictated by time constraints, i.e. the limited duration of a course that does not allow for reading a full text. It might be expected that teachers who only use literature if they find it in the textbook would opt to use excerpts because this is how CLTs are usually deployed in textbooks. However, considering how little teachers know about the research on ER in the FL context (section 5.3.2), one could speculate that they may not feel comfortable in using longer texts as they do not know exactly how to exploit them in the classroom.

One initial difference between students' and teachers' views emerged clearly: students' concerns about "old" literary texts are not shared by teachers. In this regard, only T15 stated that she tries to select texts that are "contemporary" and that she avoids texts that are "too old". In the TQ, only a few teachers specified which kind of literature they deploy in their classes: out of twenty-nine teachers, three use or have used classic literature (T19, T30 and T31), five teachers declared they use literature from the 19th and 20th centuries (T1, T5, T17, T21, T30 and T31), three teachers said they mainly use contemporary literary texts and, finally, one teacher generally uses "fiction adapted for school-age readers" (T27, *my translation from Italian*). These teachers named some of the authors they usually bring into their classes, i.e. Shakespeare, Zola, Pirandello, Svevo, Dante, Golding: looking at teachers' choices, we may assume that the literary merit of a text is indeed a crucial factor to them, even if only one teacher mentioned it explicitly. This may suggest that teachers take what literature is for granted: when they choose a text, they are guided first by their own concept of literature that, as I discussed earlier (section 5.1.2), is deeply influenced by beliefs that were shaped when they were students in school. This is relevant because this concept

of literature may affect educators' choices more than their students' tastes and interests and, I would add, without teachers being entirely aware of it.

Overall, teachers in my study seemed to have ambivalent feelings about the selection of CLTs: they recognised its importance, but also perceived it as problematic. One might say that selecting texts, any kind of texts, i.e. literary and non-literary, is what teachers always do when they decide to bring a text into the FL class: they may choose songs, news articles, adverts etc., and they will always be confronted with the difficult task of selecting the *right* one. However, according to teachers in this study, CLTs are much more challenging for them to select and “it is quite easy to make big mistakes” (T12, TI, p. 1). Data suggests that CLT selection is perceived by teachers as a demanding and delicate process. In the interviews, participants reported feelings of “pressure” (T15 and T12), “frustration” (T15), lack of time (T12, T15 and T29) and lack of experience (T11 and T29) to explain why the use of CLTs is so limited in the FL context. T15's words reveal a common feeling that was also apparent in other participants' answers, i.e. the frustration resulting from the personal involvement and from the amount of time she devotes to searching for a good text that students end up not liking (quot. 132, Appendix Q). Similarly, T12 believes that many teachers would like to use CLTs more in their FL classes but, especially at beginners' level, they do not find any literature in the textbook “so they would have to introduce it separately and that creates a lot of work” (TI, p. 7). T12 and T15 also said that they feel pressured by the institution where they work in terms of number of texts that they want to use in their courses and in terms of ‘imposing’ their choices on students because the institution requires them to plan the content of a course in advance (quot. 133, Appendix Q).

Another issue was described by T11 and T29, who said that they would like to have more familiarity, i.e. more experience and confidence, with the selection of CLTs. When these teachers

were asked whether they thought that special training on how to use CLTs was necessary for FL teachers¹¹¹, they said that they could certainly benefit from being taught how to choose the appropriate CLTs “quickly” (T11) and from being aware of which texts actually work in a FL context (T29). Moreover, T29 claimed that CLTs are “more difficult” to select – especially at lower levels of FL proficiency – precisely because of their literariness (quot. 134, Appendix Q). While choosing CLTs for the follow-up phase, I reported the same feeling of unease due to the difficulties I encountered in the process, e.g. time-consuming search and extra work (quot. 135, Appendix Q) or lack of sources of advice (quot. 136, Appendix Q). These comments are even more legitimate if we consider that literature is rarely introduced in FL textbooks, in particular at beginners’ level. I looked in textbooks in current use¹¹², in the few online resources available¹¹³, and in websites of ‘Italian literature for foreigners’, ‘young adult Italian literature’ and ‘Italian literature at university’. As my search revealed, Italian literary texts for FL learners are not common in textbooks and online; on the rare occasions where they are used, they are canonical literary texts and are presented in the form of short extracts. On the internet, I checked whether a list of suggested Italian short stories and novels for FL learners existed but did not find anything.

Finally, only one teacher referred to the specific learning goal he wished to achieve as a relevant factor affecting his decisions on which CLTs to use. T32 said that he used literature as complementary material to allow students to approach and familiarise themselves with authentic texts and to practise their general comprehension skills. He specified that he did not like to use

¹¹¹ TI, item n (Appendix M).

¹¹² E.g. *Contatto*, A1-A2 (Loescher); *Un nuovo giorno in Italia*, A1 e A2 (Loescher); *Espresso 1* (Alma Edizioni); *L’Italiano all’università*, A1-A2 (Edilingua); *Giocare con la letteratura* (Alma Edizioni); *Spazio Italia 1* (Loescher); *In Itali@* (Hoepli); *Qui Italia* (Mondadori Education).

¹¹³ E.g. <http://italianoperstranieri.loescher.it/materiale-didattico/esercizi-e-attivita>; <http://www.ioparloitaliano.com/>; <http://www.scudit.net/mdindice.htm>; <https://www.almaedizioni.it/it/almatv/>; <http://www.impariamoitaliano.com/>.

literature for language analysis as he found CLTs “too dispersive”, i.e. too rich and diverse in language structures. Therefore, considering the specific learning goal he wanted to achieve, he selected a text according to its content, to the story.

It is rather surprising that only one teacher out of six who took part in the TI mentioned among the factors guiding their selection the specific learning goal they wish to achieve when they use a CLT. In fact, I believe that the success of a CLT in the FL classroom may also vary depending on the teaching goal: a text could be the *right* one for a translation but it could be the *wrong* one for giving students the opportunity to enjoy a reading experience. Since this aspect relates closely to teaching approach and methodology, it will be fully discussed in the following section.

5.4.2 Teachers’ approach and methodology

5.4.2.1 Why is it so relevant?

Students in my study believed that the selection of a CLT and the way it is used, i.e. the approach and the methodology adopted by the teacher, are crucial to the experience that students have with literature. In fact, after expressing their concerns about text selection, participants’ second most frequent concern about literature in the FL classroom was *what* they have to do with a literary text¹¹⁴.

As mentioned in section 5.1.1, data revealed that students tend to associate their concept of “old [literary] texts” with a specific teaching approach that they identify as the study of literature and “[literary] analysis”, activities often perceived by learners as difficult and boring. In the SI, it was possible to understand what precisely students considered to be “literary analysis” and to get

¹¹⁴ This emerged slightly in students’ answers to SQ1, although it occurred repeatedly in the SI (Appendices G and K).

an insight into *what* they enjoy doing with literature in the FL class. SE5 commenting on her own experience with reading *Curry di pollo*, employs the phrase ‘analysing literary texts’, which recurred in many other participants’ comments: she said that reading and enjoying what happens in a story was better for her, as she did not enjoy analysing things such as the author’s motives or very specific textual features (quot. 137, Appendix Q). Similarly, SE7 – who described herself as “really really not confident” with literature (SI, p. 3) – said that she enjoyed the sessions on *Curry di pollo* “because there was not too much pressure” and added that she would not have liked it if it had been a “quite intense and difficult text” with “lots of questions on ‘why is this here? why do you think the character feels like this?’” or on ““why do you think the author chose this in particular for this scene?’” (SI, pp. 3-4).

By contrast, a common aspect of working with *Curry di pollo* which students appreciated was discussing the characters and their emotions. Students in my study enjoyed giving their own opinions on the story and interpreting the characters’ feelings and behaviours, as opposed to being taught about the story and the author (SE4, SE5, SE6, SE9 and SE13). Confirming previous research on the positive effect of the teaching approach on students’ engagement with a text (Chapter 1.4), students in this study appeared to feel involved and confident during the reading of the CLT: a student-oriented method that is not focused primarily on literary elements, but rather on students’ personal encounter with the text and the story (Chapter 1.4), resulted in a stimulating experience for the students. In fact, students in my experiment enjoyed expressing their opinions about the characters and also enjoyed comparing the story to their own life experience¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁵ This is also confirmed in SQ1 where participants had to reply to item 15 (Appendix G) about what they expect their teachers to do with CLTs (table 24, Appendix P).

In this sense, what SE9 said in the interview may help in understanding the students' point of view. When SE9 was asked to clarify a passage of SQ2 where she commented on *Curry di pollo* writing that she felt she “could expand [her] ideas on the story by also expanding [her] Italian use” (SQ2, p. 3), she explained that giving opinions on the text made her feel more relaxed as opinions cannot be right or wrong (quot. 138, Appendix Q). While literary analysis is perceived as difficult by many students in this study, who feel pressurised to give answers that are not “in front” of them (SE7), giving their opinions and discussing their personal interpretation of the story was considered natural (e.g. quot. 139, Appendix Q) and students seemed to feel freer to express themselves. SE4, for instance, said that she appreciated the discussions of the story, saying that she liked “thinking outside of the book [i.e. the short story]” (SI, p. 3).

In regards of the teaching approach they were exposed to in my experiment, some students compared it to their past experiences with literature, saying that the approach adopted here was more measured and made them feel more involved (quot. 140 and 141, Appendix Q). Reading the text in chunks and doing follow-up exercises instead of what SE13 described as “[read] the whole thing and tell me what you think!” (SI, p. 3) was considered beneficial in terms of understanding the story (SE4, SE5, SE6 and SE13). All these factors contributed to make participants feel at ease with the CLT.

Another recurrent theme in the interviews is that students enjoyed group activities because they felt that they were reading the story all together (SE4, SE5 and SE13) making it “less scary” (SE7) and “a lot easier” (SE13). All students interviewed mentioned the group work as one of the favourite aspects of their reading experience: the activities in group were described as “fun” (SE4 and SE9), “more interactive with everyone” (SE4) and beneficial for learning (SE6; quot. 142, Appendix Q). Reading the text in class as a group and doing activities together, as opposed to

individual reading at home followed by a “question-answer session” (SE5), was also seen as more engaging and less stressful than traditional literature classes (SE7 and SE13). Students felt less pressure individually as they could rely on their peers to negotiate the meaning of the text and to get to understand better when something was unclear (SE5, SE7 and SE13). Students’ positive attitude towards group work and their willingness to collaborate in trying to understand the text was tangible even from my perspective as teacher: in FN6, I describe students’ perceived behaviour during a group activity in which they were asked to invent a dialogue between two characters of *Curry di pollo*¹¹⁶, a task which, they said, encouraged them to be much more collaborative (quot. 143, Appendix Q).

My findings suggest that students accord great importance to the role of the teacher: in their view, teachers are responsible not only for choosing a text that is appropriate to them, but also for making the experience of reading it worthwhile and engaging (quot. 144, Appendix Q).

Overall, it seems that for students it is not just a matter of whether to read literature or not; the way teachers introduce literature, the way they use it and the activities they ask learners to do with it are all crucial factors that influence the students’ appreciation of the CLTs selected and, ultimately, of the reading experience itself.

5.4.2.2 How do teachers use CLTs?

The approach and the method adopted to introduce CLTs in the FL classroom is also relevant for teachers. This emerged in the TQ where, although there was no open question about teachers’ views on the topic, ten participants out of thirty-three (30%) mentioned it spontaneously. In fact,

¹¹⁶ Exercise 8b, text one activity sheet (Appendix B).

confirming what was claimed in the theory (Chapter 1.4), some participants in the questionnaire seemed to consider teaching approach and method as preconditions to an effective use of literature and to a positive response from students. Some teachers said that literature could be beneficial in the FL classroom if it is “well presented” (T8) and “if used appropriately” (T14, *my translation from Italian*); T33 goes even further by saying that “[c]reative literary texts are generally considered boring and hard by students, which is mostly due to the fact that such texts are not always introduced to the class in a fun way” (TQ, p. 3).

Moreover, some teachers shared the students’ view that the activities designed to work with a CLT are very important: they should be “well-structured and directed towards a consideration of feelings and experiences close to the students” (T29, TQ, p. 4) and should allow FL learners to interpret a text personally because the main focus is “language learning” rather than “literary knowledge” (T6). Moreover, in the interview, T17 said that “it is not just using literature for the sake of using literature, it is just using it well” (TI, p. 2). This comment may reflect what T29 and T32 said about how to use a literary text in the FL classroom ‘well’: T29, for instance, said that it is of the utmost importance that teachers do not “improvise”, i.e. they should plan carefully what they intend to do with the literature and what they ask students to do, avoiding things such as saying to students “we will read the text and then I will ask you what you think about it” (TI, p. 6). Similarly, T32 thought that teachers should “give detailed instructions” (TI, p. 5) to the students on what they need to do, in order to prevent them from sitting passively in silence. This seems to reflect the students’ concerns about having activities to do alongside the reading of a literary text (section 5.4.2.1) as a way to interact with the text and with each other and, also, in order to perceive that they are performing a meaningful task.

All teachers who took part in my study and who use or have used CLTs in a FL context described a range of different activities they use when deploying literature in the classroom. The majority of teachers seemed to adopt what Carter and Long (1991) describe as language-based method (Chapter 1.4) that primarily aims to use literature as a tool to analyse and practise the FL. In fact, teachers said that they deploy literature to allow students to practise comprehension skills, to promote linguistic work on vocabulary and grammar (e.g. T5, T11, T12, T14, T22, T24, T28, T29, T30, T31 and T33) and, a limited number of them also use it to promote oral skills through discussions and debates (e.g. T4, T5, T11, T12 and T20). Quotations 145, 146 and 147 (Appendix Q), where T14, T22 and T33 describe in detail how they use CLTs, are representative of the kind of work students are asked to carry out when reading FL literature¹¹⁷ which implies reading for comprehension, language/textual analysis and discussion of the topic. If the approach and the techniques deployed by these teachers are very common among respondents in the sample, another recurrent technique described is translation of excerpts from a novel or a short story that, as T21's words reveal, is intended to teach students grammar and vocabulary (quot. 148, Appendix Q). The use of translation is reiterated in the TI, where both T15 and T17 said that they use it not only to enrich students' vocabulary but also to "assess" (T15) and to "test" (T17) students' understanding of linguistic structures and their "command of accuracy and [...] the way they deal with complex and easy sentences" (T15). Overall, the activities chosen by teachers seem to mirror their beliefs about the role of literature in the FL classroom which they use mainly with an instrumental motivation in mind, i.e. to teach vocabulary and grammar (section 5.4.2.2)¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁷ These comments were selected from participants' answers to TQ, item 20 (Appendix L).

¹¹⁸ This emerged also in participants' answers to item 15 in the TQ (Appendix L), shown in table 25 (Appendix P).

According to participants' answers to the questionnaire, teachers also seemed to believe that literature should be used to motivate students to use the FL (table 26, Appendix P). However, this belief is hardly reflected in teachers' practices. In fact, I believe that the language-based method may neglect the potential of literature itself, i.e. its emotional, imaginative and creative powers, that are claimed to be factors deeply affecting students' motivation (Chapter 1.4), and may run the risk of treating literary texts reductively, like any other written input in the FL classroom. T15, for instance, seems to treat FL CLTs as texts for linguistic and stylistic analysis: her focus is very much on language, vocabulary and text structure and she believes that "sometimes whether you like it [a CLT] is not the important question, it is about whether you understand how it works" (TI, p. 5), as if the emotional and entertaining aspects of literature were not as relevant as the ability of students to understand it. This appears to be even more relevant if we consider what students in my study said they like about literature and about the experience of reading: they like losing themselves in a story, discussing the characters' emotions and interpreting the story personally (section 5.1.1).

T11 and T29 – who have ambivalent feelings about literature (section 5.1.2) and rarely use CLTs in their classes – mentioned this aspect, when they said that they would benefit from training on how to exploit the potential of literature fully (quot. 149 and 150, Appendix Q). The potential of literature and the desire to use it as 'different' teaching material also mentioned in T32's interview. The teacher said that working with literature in the FL classroom is not about doing "technical" work on the language, i.e. translation or linguistic analysis; rather, it is about having an experience and "living the text". According to him, giving the students "an experience" with CLTs means allowing them to appreciate the "work of art" and the feelings that it inspires (quot. 151, Appendix Q).

Overall, teachers in the sample seemed to have different ideas on what to do with literature in the classroom. They see themselves as “facilitators” (T15 and T17, TI), as they want to facilitate students’ approach to a literary text, taking for granted that working with literature is somehow difficult; some teachers describe themselves as “mediators” or “guides” (T12, T29 and T32), i.e. they feel they have to guide students through a literary text, supporting their reading; finally, some teachers feel like “motivators” (T11, T29 and T32), because they want to encourage and motivate students to read a text. It could be that, when literature is brought into the FL classroom, a teacher needs to be all of these. Adopting an appropriate approach to and methodology for introducing literature in the FL classroom may help support such a complex role.

5.4.3 Teachers’ attitudes

My findings revealed that what is important when deploying CLTs in the classroom is not only the teacher’s competence (i.e. text selection, approach and methodology) but also, in fact, his or her attitude. Students in this study mainly mentioned teachers’ enthusiasm and their role as motivators as factors influencing their experience with literature. Similarly, teachers think that their attitude is relevant and they should have an accurate idea of what their role is when they use CLTs.

According to the students interviewed, the extent to which teachers enjoy the texts they are using has an impact on their appreciation of literature. Students claim that the teacher’s enthusiasm and enjoyment stimulate them to participate more actively in the class and to feel more motivated to read (quot. 152, 153 and 154; Appendix Q). This aspect was highlighted by Carter and Long (1991) who ascribe a central role to the teacher’s attitude in terms of students’ response to literary texts:

The greater the invention and the enthusiasm of the literature teacher, the greater the likelihood that the learners will like, or come to like, the literary text which has been presented, and from there proceed to look at further texts and teach themselves to like them too. [...] In the teaching of literature the infectious enthusiasm of a teacher can be crucial. We can enthuse about a literary text in a way few other subject teachers have opportunity to do. (p. 23)

During the experiment, I tried to communicate my personal enthusiasm as reader for the CLTs I selected and, at the same, the pleasure that deploying literature in the FL class gives me as a teacher (Chapter 4.3.2.3). In an attempt to understand if this had happened during the experimental classes, I asked students in the SI whether they noticed any difference between my approach in the normal and in the experimental class¹¹⁹. In particular, SE5 and SE13 said that they felt I was enjoying teaching the experimental class more, that I was “sort of happier [...] than just teaching from the textbook” (SE5, SI, p. 4) and that it stimulated them (quot. 155 and 156, Appendix Q). In this sense, the students in my study seemed to expect me, in my role as teacher, to be a sort of motivator: not only by being enthusiastic about and engaged in the CLTs used but also by encouraging them to read (quot. 157, Appendix Q).

The importance of the teacher’s attitude was reiterated by T29 in the TI: she thinks that it is up to teachers to introduce literature in a way that students would not be put off or scared by. She believes that “literature is for everybody, because we all have experiences in our lives, we all

¹¹⁹ SI, item p (Appendix K).

have something to say, we all have feelings” (T29, TI, pp. 5-6, *my translation from Italian*) so the teacher needs to transmit this idea to the students – “it takes months, maybe years” – that literature is for everyone in order to encourage them to read it. She believes that if teachers use literature just because they have to, it does not have any impact on learners. This is why teachers should bring a CLT into the FL classroom with a positive and encouraging attitude, explaining to their students the reason why they are asked to read it. In her words, a possible answer to students’ concerns about reading a CLT might be to tell them that the text could enlighten them, make them think differently and motivate them (quot. 158, Appendix Q).

Also T11, T12 and T32 claimed that teachers should adopt an encouraging and motivating attitude when they work with literature in the FL context. According to T32, depending on the teacher’s attitude, the students may feel “more or less inspired” (TI) by a CLT. However, as T31 argued in the TQ, showing enthusiasm for and engagement with a text and motivating the students to read it may be difficult when the texts are imposed by the syllabus, i.e. they are not selected by teachers themselves. I also perceived all these feelings described by students and teachers during classroom observations. Similarly to what teachers in this study claimed, I also felt that my role as teacher was to motivate the students and to encourage them to read with confidence; to do so, not only did I show enthusiasm for the CLTs I was using, I also told the students that I enjoyed reading them and that I was sure they would like them, too. Moreover, I perceived the difference – described by some students (see above) – between my engagement with the CLTs and with the textbook, as emerges from my field notes (quot. 159, Appendix Q).

Data gathered in my CO suggests that the teacher’s enthusiasm does not relate exclusively to the CLTs selected and, more importantly, does not appear to be stable once a text has been selected. According to my field notes, my enthusiasm and engagement as a teacher with the CLTs

were influenced not only by my personal taste and attitude but also by my students' attitudes. At times, I felt less enthusiastic and consequently less confident with the texts because of the way the students responded to them; also, such a change in feelings seemed to influence in turn my own perceptions of students' responses (quot. 160 and 161, Appendix Q).

Finally, the way teachers use literature in the FL classroom influences their attitude: T17, for instance, stated that his personal passion for literature might decrease when he uses "grammatical translation" as he feels "more detached" from the text (TI).

It emerges that the teachers' attitude while using CLTs in a FL context is relevant to both students and teachers and has a strong impact on the way they perceive and experience it. The attitude of teachers is influenced by many factors: their own attitude to literature in general is naturally the starting point. However, that is not enough as, even when the attitude is positive and the teacher feels enthusiastic and motivated to use CLTs, such feelings are not stable over time and may change according to factors such as learners' attitude and response and teachers' self-confidence.

5.4.4 Summary

In this section I have reported and discussed findings about the role of the teacher when literature is integrated in the FL classroom. It emerged that students and teachers involved in my study accorded a crucial role to the teacher: students expect FL teachers to select a CLT that is appropriate to their needs and interests, to create activities to guide reading and comprehension and to engage them; moreover, students expect teachers to be enthusiastic about the literature they deploy, as teachers' positive attitude and engagement prompt them to do more and better. All these aspects are relevant to FL teachers as well. However, in the difficult process of text selection and in the

preparation of the activities, teachers seemed to be guided more by their personal beliefs and intuitions than by pedagogical theory and knowledge about the use of literature in a FL context. Finally, even if some teachers were aware of the impact of their attitude on their students' response to FL CLTs and conceived of themselves as motivators, the teachers' attitude to literature seemed to matter more to students than to teachers.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter summarises the insights of my study and its implications for pedagogy and for research. The study's limitations are also included.

6.1 Conclusions and implications of RQ1

One of the aims of my study was to understand if and how 'Creative Literary Texts' influence FL learners' motivation. Literature's motivational power is considered by scholars the strongest reason for its integration in the FL curriculum (Chapter 0.2); this was also one of the beliefs (in my role as teacher-as-researcher) that inspired this research. Findings revealed that CLTs did motivate students to engage with the foreign language and culture, thus allowing authentic use of the FL – through reading literature and speaking about it – and giving them a rewarding feeling. However, literature's motivational power is a complex construct and results not only from its intrinsic positive qualities (Chapter 1.2) but also from the way CLTs are used: based on my findings, I would say that CLTs have the *potential* to enhance motivation but are seldom motivating in and of themselves in the FL classroom. This is because a number of conditions seem to be necessary to give learners a motivating reading experience. Learners' beliefs and previous experience influence their approach to CLTs and the extent to which they allow themselves to be motivated. Students in my study seemed to need reassurance that they were allowed to 'simply' enjoy reading a piece of FL literature and 'simply' say what they felt for or thought about it (using the FL). I found that it was

important for students to fully understand the reasons why CLTs were brought into the FL class and what they were expected to do with them.

Literary texts are special and different from non-literary ones but, according to my findings, bringing them into the FL classroom does not necessarily add anything to the learning experience in terms of motivation if students' needs for enjoyment, entertainment, language and culture learning are not properly addressed. In the FL context, students' motivation does not seem to be enhanced by using literature solely to promote textual analysis and technical work on the language (e.g. translation, analysis of lexis and syntax); finding pleasure in reading a literary text, being able to understand it and expressing personal opinions while, at the same time, learning its language and culture, emerged as the aspects that motivated students the most.

Teachers who participated in this research were aware of the motivational power of literature but such power seemed to remain untapped in their teaching practices, with only a few exceptions. The intrinsic qualities of CLTs, such as creativity, imagination, emotional power and entertainment, which make literature 'different' were often mentioned only in theoretical discussions and were rarely mirrored in the teaching approach and activities deployed by instructors.

In the first place, the potential of CLTs to enhance FL learners' motivation needs to be fully acknowledged and understood by teachers; it needs to be taken into account when they decide to bring CLTs in the FL classroom and they undertake the long and difficult process of text selection. This, I believe, could be the starting point for a use of literature in FL learning oriented at promoting and sustaining students' motivation. CLTs are a great resource that remains underused: preconceptions, fears, time-constraints and lack of materials are some of the difficulties that may discourage even the most enthusiastic teachers; however, the pleasures gained – both by students

and by teachers – from a motivating experience with literature in the FL class rewards all the effort and is worth attempting more often at least.

6.2 Conclusions and implications of RQ2

A second aim of this study was to understand whether CLTs have an impact on students' reading habits and skills in the FL.

My findings revealed that reading CLTs in the classroom boosts students' desire to read further depending on how successful, in terms of *enjoyment*, *learning* and *reward*, the experience is for them. Participants in the experimental phase enjoyed reading the CLTs, learnt language and culture and felt rewarded; consequently, they *said* they wanted to read further in a FL. It is difficult to know whether participants will actually do so in the future: the study suggested that a single positive FL literature reading experience is powerful as it positively influences learners' attitude towards FL reading in general and the reading of CLTs in particular. This may encourage FL teachers willing to use literature in their classrooms to make time and create opportunities to read, and to do so consistently, as the development of long-term reading habits seems to need nurturing.

Affect emerged as a crucial factor: unless the reading experience is motivating, students' desire to read is not likely to be enhanced; motivation is in turn linked to FL reading skills, as they allow students to access a CLT in an authentic manner, i.e. not merely as a text used for language work but as an artistic expression in the FL that students are eventually able to enjoy. Hence, in my opinion, helping students develop the FL reading skills appropriate to reading literature is fundamental: participants were taught specific strategies to promote better extensive reading, experienced their effectiveness and were challenged to change their approach to reading CLTs in

the FL. If this is repeated and sustained in the FL classroom, it is very likely that such strategies will turn into skills independently used when reading in the FL.

However, much depends on what the purpose of introducing literature in the FL class is. If the purpose is to make students appreciate the pleasure of reading a piece of FL literature and learn from that (i.e. learning with pleasure), it is crucial to acknowledge the potential of reading literature (section 6.1), to understand the difficulties of reading extensively in a FL and to provide appropriate tools for the task. FL reading habits and skills seem to benefit from exposure to literature, but they seldom develop naturally just by reading (extracts) of literary texts, especially when students are non-readers. Therefore, explicit teaching of FL reading skills and appropriate teaching approaches to reading literature are necessary; the role of the teacher, which will be discussed in depth in the next section, is also of the utmost importance.

Based on my findings, teachers' views did not reflect the insights of research on L2/FL reading; teachers seemed to base their teaching practices primarily on their beliefs about reading and about what reading literature means to them, with limited awareness of what it means for FL students.

6.3 Conclusions and implications of RQ3

Understanding the role of the teacher when CLTs are deployed in the FL class was the third aim of this study.

According to findings, students and teachers shared the idea that the role of the teacher is crucial for text selection and teaching approach; the attitude of the teacher also emerged as a factor affecting the CLT reading experience. More specifically, the CLT itself, the way it is introduced and deployed in the classroom, the teacher's enthusiasm and his or her ability to motivate learners

were found to be relevant because they affect the students' response to the text in terms of motivation to learn the FL, motivation and desire to read further in the FL and, finally, in terms of FL reading skills development. This is not to say that the outcomes of a FL CLTs reading experience are entirely dependent on the instructor: the students' response is also influenced by the students' own interests and overall motivation, reading habits and skills in their L1 and in other FLs, and by the students' beliefs about literature and their previous experiences with it. However, my study suggested that teachers can make a difference and that there is still a great deal to investigate with regard to teaching approaches and techniques to make literature worth reading in the FL class.

Considering the importance placed upon what teachers do, it is somehow surprising that the majority of respondents base their teaching practices primarily on their personal beliefs, which are seldom supported by knowledge of FL reading theories and of research-based approaches to using literature in a FL context. These may be precious tools for teachers willing to use literature in their classes, as they already have to cope with difficulties such as the lack of materials and contextual constraints (e.g. lack of time, curricular requirements). More familiarity with L2/FL theory on the topic would help teachers understand better what literature can do in the FL context (beyond teaching vocabulary and grammar), assist them in defining the learning goals, and also help them make more informed choices regarding their teaching approach.

Even though the three RQs were conceived as separate, the study revealed that they are in fact linked to one another: CLTs are motivating when they are accessed by students through understanding and enjoyment, which are in turn enhanced by learning those FL reading skills necessary to read a piece of literature; teachers who deploy CLTs using an approach that aims to

promote reading literature for pleasure and that integrates techniques to strengthen their students' FL reading skills, have an opportunity to inspire a change in students' FL reading habits, too.

Affect was found to be a key element, confirming researchers' claims that the value of literature in the FL class lies predominantly in its motivating power. However, far from being an obvious fact, enjoying reading FL CLTs seems to me more of an achievement, especially for non-readers. Literature, though potentially powerful, cannot achieve everything unaided, as teachers need to allow students to discover the pleasure of reading it, something which is often neglected and can only happen when relevant reading skills are being taught, based on an approach consistent with the purpose for using literature in the FL classroom.

6.4 Limitations

One limitation of this study relates to the sample size: the number of students and teachers who participated was relatively small and, therefore, findings are not to be generalised. Moreover, findings relate to the specific context where I conducted the study and, for this reason, they are not absolute; rather, they may be used to expand the existing theory on the role of literature in L2/FL teaching/learning as they can be transferred to other comparable contexts. In fact, participants are representative of the wider population of students and teachers in institutions similar to the one where the study took place. As explained in Chapter 4.8, the study provides detailed information and description of the context so that readers are able to gauge the extent to which findings are transferable.

A peculiarity of my study consisted in the implementation of the experimental phase within a curricular FL course: I was the researcher and also the teacher of the course and had to comply with its requirements. This imposed on me, in my role as teacher, some choices at a methodological

and practical level: decisions about which activities to carry out in the class, what should be the focus of the linguistic work on the texts and about the amount of time devoted to reading the CLTs were sometimes influenced by the need to prepare students for their final exam. Had the experimental phase been conducted in a different context where students did not have to pass an exam, some of these choices would have been different: I would have provided more texts and more time for reading them in class and for group discussions; also, I would have spent more time in encouraging students to read for pleasure. Sometimes I perceived the potential contradiction of telling the students to read for pleasure and the fact that reading the CLTs became part of the course programme, therefore linked to the exam itself. If this limited the extent to which students perceived the pleasure of reading, it is a limitation that many L2/FL teachers would realistically face should they decide to integrate literature in their language courses. Even though ER theory has provided a possible solution to this (i.e. give students the freedom to choose what to read from a variety of texts), I believe that future studies could explore other possible ways to integrate extensive reading of literary texts in the L2/FL classroom, taking into account the actual difficulties faced by teachers. Implementing an ER programme is, in fact, not an easy task as it requires time, resources (i.e. a number of texts accessible to students) and a certain level of freedom for the teacher to change a course programme.

Another peculiarity of my study resulted from the way Italian language courses are organised in the institution where it was conducted, which determined a change in the sample size from the experiment to the follow-on experiment. As explained in Chapter 4.3.1 and 4.3.5.1, the number of participants in the two groups changed slightly and this implied a variation in the teaching approach and materials. Whereas I was able to work more closely with students in the relatively small experimental group, reading CLTs in a bigger group – where students read different

texts in a short space of time – made it harder to follow each student’s progress, to monitor their reading and to engage them in in-class discussions. The study would have had additional outcomes if I had been able to better monitor the group through, for instance, more group activities, student-teacher conversations, opportunities to give/receive feedback on the ongoing reading experience, extra class time.

Another limitation concerning the follow-on experiment relates to text selection. Despite my very best effort to ensure that the CLTs selected were suitable and relevant for the students, some of them turned out to be linguistically difficult or uninteresting. It was actually quite hard to find many literary texts of different genres that might appeal to the students while at the same time being linguistically and culturally accessible to them. Obviously, the lack of materials available in Italian FL textbooks and resources online made it a harder task. However, I also believe that my ability in text selection would improve in time.

Another area that could be improved is classroom observations. I had conducted observations before and I believe I have improved a lot during this study; however, I feel that participant observation needs skill and experience. At the beginning of the experiment, I felt insecure about observing motivation and was unsure about what to observe exactly: this difficulty affected the first field notes and it is possible that some relevant data went unrecorded. Moreover, my personal enthusiasm for literature and my desire for the experiment to succeed may have influenced the interpretation of results. I believe that having a second observer in some of the classes would have helped me have a broader perspective and would have provided additional, unbiased comments. However, I also believe that the benefits of investigating my own class overcame the limitations once these were under control. In this sense, triangulation of methods and of participants’ perspectives enhanced the reliability of the study (Chapter 4.8).

Finally, another limitation relates to student questionnaires and interviews in the case of participants who were also students in my courses. Even though I believe that being their teacher and having observed them in class helped me interpret participants' answers, the fact that they were my students might have affected the truthfulness of some of their comments as they may have wanted to please me or feared repercussions. To avoid this, some precautions were taken: 1) students were aware that the experiment would not affect their final mark and would not be part of the exam; 2) students were told that the focus of the research methods was their personal views and there were no right answers; 3) the interviews were conducted after the exam.

6.5 Final thoughts and recommendations for future research

Overall, the experience of using CLTs as complementary material to teach Italian FL was successful both for the students, who learned language and culture with a 'new' tool, and for me as a teacher, for it increased my confidence and motivation to use literature more often in my classes. CLTs were found to be great tools for language teaching, in conformity with the learning aims of the course. Students' language proficiency and knowledge of Italian culture improved and, even if such an improvement might have been achieved without reading literature, participants definitely enjoyed it for it was experienced as a break from the textbook and from a more traditional teaching/learning dynamic.

As a teacher, I have learned that integrating literature in a FL course requires effort, time, commitment, a strong desire to offer students a different way of learning and also the willingness to relinquish some control to the students. I had to reconsider my initial enthusiasm by understanding the actual difficulties behind the decision to introduce literature in FL teaching, such as the limited availability of materials (especially at lower level), the pressure of having to follow

the course programme at the same time and, finally, the stress of coping with students' expectations about being prepared for the exams.

I have better understood the importance of the teacher's emotions and how they may influence the perception of students' responses. From a teacher's perspective, a piece of literature that is carefully selected because of its emotional power and its potential to teach the FL but is not well received by the students may actually be very discouraging; students' lack of engagement or understanding of a CLT may demotivate the teacher and undermine future attempts. This may prompt further research into the role of the teacher's emotions, as they seem to play a crucial role in the decision whether to use literature.

Whereas my study looked at the role played by affect primarily from a student's viewpoint, the affective dimension of teachers and how it affects their practice with literature could be analysed more closely by other studies. In fact, if the relevance of motivation in students' learning is widely recognised by mainstream research (to the point that the use of literature in the L2/FL context is supported mainly by its role in motivating learners), too little attention is still paid to teachers' motivation and to how it can be enhanced. Though it did not emerge clearly from this study, one may speculate that more confidence and/or more experience in the use of literature for language learning on the part of teachers could also affect their motivation to use it. Hopefully, other studies will focus on this interesting aspect in the future.

My findings also open several avenues for further research on teachers' beliefs and on the role of formal or in-service training. The apparent contradiction between the teachers' belief that students should read literature for its overall beneficial effect and the fact that literature is often absent from their teaching practice should, I believe, be analysed more closely. Teachers need to be aware of research in the field and adapt it to their specific teaching context; training on the role

of literature in the FL context, which is still unclear to many, and on possible ways to teach language through literature is also needed.

Finally, my study revealed that there are ways to introduce literature in a FL course even at lower levels of language proficiency. Students in my experiment were beginners and lower-intermediate and yet they enjoyed and learned from reading literature: in fact, I found that their motivation and sense of achievement were particularly enhanced *because of* their low proficiency level as they did not expect to be able to successfully read a piece of FL literature and to discuss it. Hence, future studies ought to examine the potential of literature and different methods of deploying it from the earliest stages of FL learning, overcoming the assumption that literature is too difficult for beginners and focusing on what reading it at such level implies, what skills are needed and how to develop them. Understanding this would allow us to define which characteristics a literary text should have in order to be appropriate for low-level learners, a process that could start from a comprehensive review of materials available in L2/FL textbooks and on how they are deployed.

The relevance of reading extensively in a L2/FL deserves more attention, too. As my study revealed, it *is* teachable, even though learning it needs time and perseverance. The lack of extensive reading practice in the L2/FL classroom that emerged in this study – which is presumably linked to teachers' lack of knowledge about theories of reading – should be addressed by future studies in other contexts (e.g. non-university L2/FL courses). I would recommend, in particular, that future research takes into account the effect of extensive (literature) reading practice on L2/FL students' reading habits. As explained in section 6.2, this study found that students' desire to read further in a FL is enhanced by a motivating experience with literature; however, in order to understand whether long-term reading habits in a FL may actually develop, more research is needed. Other

studies could usefully address this issue taking into account that reading habits need nurturing: observing students' responses for a longer period of time, e.g. over a one- or two- year L2/FL course where extensive literary texts are constantly deployed as a resource to improve reading and language learning, may shed more light on this under-researched topic and provide more evidence in support of the integration of literature in the L2/FL curriculum.

I hope that these findings will inspire more research and that they will be helpful to other L2/FL teachers willing to try and bring the pleasure of the literary experience into their classes.

Appendix

Appendix A: Text One – *Curry di pollo*

CURRY DI POLLO

LAILA WADIA

Cenni sull'autrice

Laila Wadia è giornalista, scrittrice, traduttrice e interprete. È nata a Bombay, in India, ed è arrivata in Italia da adulta, stabilendosi subito a Trieste, dove vive da vent'anni. Oltre alle sue attività, lavora come Collaboratore Esperto Linguistico presso l'Università di Trieste. Riconosciuta come una "scrittrice della migrazione", Laila Wadia scrive racconti che parlano di personaggi legati all'Italia ma con una storia intrecciata anche ad altri paesi: persone e personaggi con una "identità oscillante".

Cenni sul libro

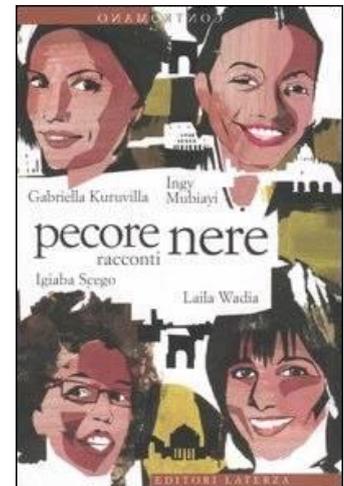
*Il racconto **Curry di pollo** è stato selezionato dalla raccolta **Pecore Nere** (racconti di Gabriella Kuruvilla, Igiaba Scego, Ingy Mubiayi Kakese e Laila Wadia, Editori Laterza). Pubblicata per la prima volta nel 2005, raccoglie otto storie incentrate sui temi delle identità che condividono diverse culture di appartenenza.*

Le quattro autrici possono essere inserite nel filone della "letteratura della migrazione" che affronta i temi postcoloniali e del confronto delle identità, sia da un punto di vista politico che sociale, riflettendo anche sul concetto della lingua madre.

In particolare: Gabriella Kuruvilla e Igiaba Scego sono nate in Italia, la prima a Milano, da padre indiano e madre italiana, la seconda a Roma, da entrambi i genitori somali. Ingy Mubiayi Kakese, di padre zairese e madre egiziana e Laila Wadia, figlia di indiani, sono invece originarie rispettivamente del Cairo e di Bombay, ma risiedono da lungo tempo in Italia.

Dove trovare il libro completo

*Puoi trovare **Pecore Nere** alla **Main Library** dell'Università!*



Curry di pollo (Laila Wadia)



A volte vorrei essere orfana. È una cosa terribile da dire, lo so. Non sono un'ingrata, forse mi sono espressa male. Voglio un bene da matti ai miei, lo giuro. È solo che vorrei che fossero...diversi. Normali, cioè. Come i genitori di tutti gli altri ragazzi della mia classe al Liceo Petrarca. Ho sedici anni e vivo a Milano, diamine. Non posso *non* andare in discoteca, non posso *non* farmi il piercing, non posso *non* avere un ragazzo – lo fanno e ce l'hanno tutte le mie amiche. Sono stufo di inventarmi delle scuse per non dire la verità. I miei sono dei Flinstones indiani che pensano di vivere ancora in una capanna di fango nell'oscuro villaggio di Mirapur, nell'India centrale, con le loro due mucche e le tre capre. Invece, da più di vent'anni abitano qui nel centro di Milano. Ma per loro non è cambiato niente. Dentro di loro vivono ancora circondati dalla puzza dello sterco di vacca, dall'umidità spaventosa delle piogge monsoniche e anche, devo ammetterlo, dal profumo degli alberi di mango in fiore. Per loro una casa con l'acqua corrente, un gabinetto interno e il frigorifero sembrano non fare alcuna differenza, anzi. Quasi quasi rimpiangono il fatto di non dover più andare al pozzo a prendere l'acqua, l'abitudine di alzarsi all'alba per dare da mangiare alle galline, la fatica immane sotto il sole cocente nei campi.

chickens

enorme

caldissimo

Nonostante la lunga permanenza in Italia, mamma si veste sempre all'indiana, sfoggiando un sari sgargiante dopo l'altro, si pettina sempre all'indiana, cucina sempre all'indiana, parla sempre indiano. Scommetto che se ci fosse un modo di russare all'indiana lo farebbe.

I bet that if there was an Indian way to snore, she would do it.

Mio padre, invece, in estate e in inverno indossa lo stesso maglione blu-violetto con il collo a V, troppo largo sulle braccia e troppo stretto sulla pancia prominente. Non ha più capelli da pettinare o oliare da un bel po' di tempo. Sebbene parli un italiano comprensibile, ragiona ancora come un contadino indiano.

A volte la loro ostinata nostalgia mi fa impazzire.

«Ma perché hai lasciato il tuo villaggio se era così 'figo'?», domando esasperata quando papà si sparpaglia davanti alla tv nella poltrona di velluto verde un po' sgualcito e stinto, con l'impronta indelebile della sua nuca sulla testiera. Mio padre e la sua poltrona verde vivono in simbiosi e hanno finito per assomigliarsi. Papà è grande e floscio proprio come la poltrona, e giorno dopo giorno la vita sfrega via una parte di lui come lui fa con i braccioli consunti del suo amato ricettacolo. Meno male che, a parte per il naso a patata, non gli somiglio affatto. Sono più simile alla mamma: snella, alta e color miele di castagno (lo dice il mio ragazzo). Con il suo sudore di onesto lavoratore, ed il coraggio di uomo venuto in Italia con visto turistico e cinquantamila lire, ora proprietario dell'impresa di pulizie Shakti

escrementi di mucca

cattivo odore

WC

nessuna

they regret

well

dawn

Anche se

coloratissimo

Anche se

(lui) pensa

farmer

if it was so 'cool'

he sprawls

segno che non si cancella

essere simili

flaccido

cancella

la poltrona

Per fortuna

chestnut honey

sweat

tourist visa

«15 dipendenti e 100 milioni di fatturato, netto netto, tutto fatto da me!»), papà pensa di lasciare il suo segno indelebile sull'Occidente. Ma non si rende conto che la sua è un'impronta che verrà lavata via non appena se ne tornerà nel suo adorato Mirapur ad ammirare le sue due mucche e le tre capre e a costruirsi una nuova capanna di fango dopo ogni monsone.

(lui) non capisce

fabbricare

«Ma dai, non posso andare in giro con le trecchine oleate, mamma!»
«Sì che puoi», risponde mia madre. La sua voce è ferma, mentre con la sua mano da giocoliera gira il pane indiano nell'olio bollente. «Ora che hai rovinato i tuoi bei capelli con questo stupido colore devi pur rimediare in qualche modo. Un po' di olio di cocco gli ridarà lucentezza».

juggler

caldissimo

«Ma se tutte le donne indiane si mettono l'henné in testa!» «Tu che ne sai? Non sei mai stata in India».

«Me l'hai detto tu!».

«Appunto. L'henné. Che è una pianta indiana e fa bene. Non questa cosa che ti sei fatta fare tu. Sembra che un pavone inferocito ti abbia beccato in testa».

«Si chiamano riflessi ramati, mamma. E vanno molto di moda. Ce l'hanno tutte le mie amiche. Samantha li ha uguali uguali».

«Ah, questa sera quando vedo Samantha gliene dico due, vedrai».

dico a lei cosa penso io

«Perché, i pavoni attaccano gli esseri umani? Pensavo che fossero delle bestie mansuete. Sono così belli».

non aggressive

in the flesh

«Ma tu che ne sai? Non lo hai nemmeno mai visto un pavone dal vivo».

falso

feathers

È vero, abbiamo solo un vaso cinese finto antico, pieno di piume di pavone un po' polverose, nell'atrio. Che mi ricordi, non ho visto un pavone nemmeno allo zoo di Milano. Per mia madre questa è la grande tristezza del mondo occidentale: i giovani non crescono spalla a spalla con le altre creature del Signore. Forse la sua passione sfrenata per gli animali deriva dal fatto che lei stessa somiglia a una mangusta. Ora non chiedetemi com'è fatta una mangusta, perché non ho mai visto neppure una mangusta, ma lo so che è così perché mio padre mi ha raccontato migliaia di volte delle manguste nel suo villaggio in India. Sono proprio come mia madre: scaltre e scattanti.

vicino

Dio

mongoose

«Sam è la mia migliore amica. Non ti azzardare a dirle niente!». «Amica! Che amica è una che ti convince a rovinare i tuoi bei capelli lunghi e neri! E hai ancora il coraggio di portarli tutti sciolti. Sembra che tu abbia una scopa arrugginita sulle spalle». La mamma e la teiera sbuffano all'unisono. «Ora, se non ti metti l'olio in testa farò il curry di pollo per Samantha e questo suo amico Makku a cena stasera», minaccia.

intelligenti e rapide

It looks like you have a rusted broom over your shoulders

«Marco, si chiama Marco».

the teapot

they snort

«Makku?».

(lei) intimidisce

«Ma-R-co. È un banalissimo, comunissimo nome italiano, mamma. E poi ti prego, ti supplico, non dire che farai il curry neanche per scherzo. Ti prometto che mi metterò

una bottiglia piena di olio di cocco in testa durante il weekend. Per oggi lasciami andare a scuola così!». Il mio piagnucolio raggiunge le orecchie di mio padre che sta ingurgitando dieci litri di tè speziato e un quintale di pane indiano con una serie di verdure asfissiate dall'olio, dalla curcuma e dai semi di senape.

«Anandita!», mio padre alterna un ruggito con una serie di rutti piccanti. «Vieni qui! Fatti vedere!».

Striscio dalla cucina in salotto e prendo il mio posto a tavola. Mi verso un po' di crusca e latte in una scodella e aggiungo dello zucchero, senza guardarlo.

«Bè? Che succede? Che è 'sta storia di non voler portare l'olio nei capelli? Mia madre ha portato l'olio nei capelli tutta la vita e quando, pace all'anima sua, è venuta a mancare alla venerabile età di settant'anni, li aveva ancora lunghi, lisci e corvini».

«Lo so, lo so», sospiro. Ho sentito la storia della nonna Rupa almeno un milione di volte. «E poi se hai sentito tutto perché me lo domandi? Lo sai già, no?».

Mio padre cambia discorso e si scola un altro mezzo litro di tè con la grazia di un cinghiale.

«Perché mangi queste schifezze?», mi domanda, tirando a sé la mia scodella e facendo una faccia disgustata come se l'avesse vista piena di vermi.

Me la riprendo e gli rispondo seccata: «Nessuno ti sta dicendo di mangiarlo, e poi se proprio vuoi sapere perché lo mangio, lo mangio perché fa bene».

«Questo sterco di coniglio fa bene? Ti credo che vai in giro con una testa mezza rossa e mezza nera come una zebra che ha preso un'insolazione! Non puoi che avere la testa piena di segatura se mangi questa roba qua! Non so dove trovi l'energia per studiare. Un po' di buone verdure con qualche fetta di pane indiano fritto – ecco cosa ci vuole per affrontare bene la giornata. E guarda come ti pavoneggi con questi pantaloni a zampa di elefante. Li portavo io trent'anni fa quando sono venuto in Italia, ma me ne vergognavo già allora. Sembri contenta di andare in giro come il tuo povero padre che è venuto a cercare fortuna in Occidente con una valigia di cartone in mano!».

Non gli rispondo. Non vale la pena sprecare

fiato. Tanto so come andrà a finire: mi dovrò sorbire la storia di come lui ha fatto i soldi dal niente, di come devo essere grata di avere un padre che ha messo su un'impresa di pulizie che fa addirittura i lavori nei Ministeri – non era mai successo prima, non si sono mai fidati di una ditta gestita da un extracomunitario. Mio padre ce l'aveva fatta. Da Mirapur a Milano, una lunga strada in salita. E io dovevo prenderne esempio, bla, bla, bla. Il tutto punteggiato da lunghi silenzi durante i quali si è grattato le orecchie, massaggiato la pancia e i piedi, ha fatto versi da pifferaio stonato per liberarsi dalle verdure che gli si sono infilate tra i denti.

E alla fine, la solita minaccia: «Ah, è ora che cominci sul serio ad informarmi con mio fratello per trovarti un buon marito indiano dal nostro villaggio».

whimper

glugging

piene

100kg

a roar

spicy

I crawl

I pour

rest her soul

he guzzles

l'eleganza

a boar

as if he had seen it full of worms

nervosa

sawdust

stuff

passare

It is not worth wasting my breath

I will have to put up with

gratefu

ha aperto

uphill

alternato

he scratched

rumore come un piper out tune

squeezed

intimidazione

Alla tua età tutte le donne di Mirapur sono già maritate. Mia madre, pace all'anima sua, aveva già dato alla luce tre figli alla tua età».

sposate

Comunque oggi, invece di chiedergli perché ha lasciato il suo villaggio incantevole dove i campi di grano cantavano nel vento e gli alberi di cocco danzavano nella pioggia, per questo schifo di città con le strade pavimentate e le case fatte di mattoni, solo per pulire i cessi della Pubblica Amministrazione, me ne starò zitta, buona buona. Non ribadirò il fatto che sono nata e cresciuta in Italia, che in Italia nessuno si sogna di far sposare una figlia di sedici anni, e che non voglio sposarmi con un mungitore di vacca o con il campione degli arrampicatori di cocco di Mirapur. Mi sposerò solo con Marco, il mio bel ragazzo dagli occhi zaffiro e i capelli di Brad Pitt. Non mi agolerò che non voglio mettermi il vestito indiano come fa la mamma. (A Marco piace la minigonna.) Che non voglio mettermi il puntino sulla fronte come fa la mamma. (Marco dice che ho una pelle vellutata come un camoscio.) Che non voglio portare i sandali infradito. (Marco adora i tacchi alti.) Anche se quest'anno gli infradito vanno di moda, addosso a me non stanno bene come alle mie amiche. Quest'estate c'era un tale sfoggio di tuniche e pantaloni indiani, borse di iuta con foto di Bollywood, foulard di chiffon ricamati con le perline – pareva che tutti volessero essere indiani. Io, però, no.

wheat fields

fantastico

bricks

loos

starò in silenzio

I won't reiterate

a guy who milks cows

the coconut tree climbing champion

I won't whine

flip flops

heels

such a show

sciarpa

It looked like everyone wanted to be Indian

Comunque, oggi non farò niente che possa dare fastidio ai miei genitori, perché questa è una giornata troppo speciale.

disturbare

Ho invitato Marco a cena (e Samantha per fare da copertura). Marco è il mio ragazzo da 45 giorni, 3 ore e 12 minuti, ma i miei non lo sanno. Non sanno neanche che ho un piercing all'ombelico, che quando dico che vado a studiare da Samantha la domenica pomeriggio in verità andiamo in discoteca, che butto via il sacchetto con il pane indiano farcito di verdure strangolate nell'olio e nelle spezie che la mamma mi fa portare a scuola per merenda. Le cose che non sanno non possono fargli male. Le cose che sanno fanno andare in escandescenza mio padre e puntualmente introducono il suo mantra: «Ah, è ora che cominci sul serio ad informarmi con mio fratello per trovarti un buon marito indiano dal nostro villaggio. Alla tua età tutte le donne di Mirapur sono già maritate. Mia madre, pace all'anima sua, aveva già dato alla luce tre figli alla tua età».

piene

fanno arrabbiare

snack

Ma stasera viene Marco. Oh Dio, quanto sono nervosa per questa cena! Io non sono mai stata a casa sua e lui non è mai stato a casa mia. Ci siamo sempre incontrati o a scuola (lui è un anno più grande di me) o a casa di Samantha. Ho beccato sua madre al telefono qualche volta ed è sempre stata gentile. «Sì, cara. Ti passo subito Marco». Ha la voce di una che si fascia il collo con un foulard di Trussardi. Quando gliel'ho detto, Marco ha confessato che se i suoi sapessero che ha una ragazza extracomunitaria diventerebbero neri dalla rabbia. Votano Lega e pensano che Bossi* sia fin troppo «tollerante». Ho colto la palla al volo e ho detto

Ho sentito

si arrabbierebbero

I seized my chance

che anche i miei non farebbero salti di gioia se sapessero che la loro figlia ha una relazione con uno di qui, e che non votano affatto, anche se mio padre ha la tessera della CGIL**.

they would not jump for joy if they knew

[* The Lega Nord (literally Northern League) is a regionalist political party in Italy. It is well known for its xenophobic, anti-immigrant or otherwise intolerant political campaigns. Umberto Bossi is the party's former leader.

** CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labour) is the biggest national trade union in Italy.]

Mamma ci raggiunge a tavola con due pacchetti (uno per me e uno per papà) di pane indiano farcito con verdure defunte avvolte in carta stagnola che riesce a tamponare la fuoriuscita d'olio per dieci minuti circa.

wrapped in tin foil

morte

to mop up

«Allora faccio pakora di spinaci e poi un bel curry di pollo stasera per Samantha e Makku», dice, sciogliendo e rifacendo la sua lunga treccia nera.

undoing

La guardo seccata.

«Ah, no, non Makku, Makko», si autocorregge.

Vedendo i miei occhi mutarsi in pozzi di petrolio la mamma si mette a ridere. «Scherzo! Scherzo! Farò le penne al pomodoro, come d'accordo». Mia madre ride come un ruscello che salta di roccia in roccia.

turn into oil wells

inizia

a rivulet jumping from rock to rock

Tiro un sospiro di sollievo.

I breathe a sigh of relief

«Ma a Samantha piacciono tanto i miei pakora con gli spinaci», aggiunge lei.

make an effort

Non so se sta ancora scherzando ma è tardi e devo andare a scuola. Bacio prima lei e poi mio padre. «Ti prego, mamma, mi hai promesso di sforzarti di parlare in un italiano corretto. A che cosa ti è servito il corso che hai fatto all'Università Popolare? Sai, Marco non è mai stato in una casa indiana prima».

apre molto

fantastico

«Mai stato in una casa indiana prima?». Mio padre sgrana gli occhi come se fosse la cosa più innaturale e blasfema di questo mondo. «Povero ragazzo. Proprio per questo dovresti far fare a tua madre il suo strepitoso curry di pollo. Questo Marco ne andrebbe matto. Tua madre segue la ricetta che usava mia madre, pace alla buon'anima sua. E sappi che mia madre sapeva fare il miglior curry di pollo di tutto il distretto di Mirapur».

a Marco piacerebbe moltissimo

Incrocio le dita e spero che non riesca a far cambiare menu a mia madre durante la mia assenza. Già sono nervosissima pensando alla reazione che avrà Marco quando vedrà mia madre vestita da indiana, e la sentirà parlare un italiano stentato. Sono tutta un fremito all'idea che mio padre possa cominciare uno dei suoi monologhi sulla bellezza dei villaggi indiani senza fognature e acqua potabile e sulla decadenza della vita occidentale malgrado i suoi bidet e la sua vasta scelta di carta igienica profumata. Sono tre giorni che non dormo pensando se ho fatto bene o ho fatto male ad invitarlo a cena. Veramente è stato lui ad insistere che lo

poco corretto

I shudder

sewage systems

despite

facessi. «Ora che stiamo insieme da 45 giorni forse è meglio che venga a casa tua. Se i tuoi mi conoscono forse non ti faranno tante storie per uscire la sera.»

non faranno tante obiezioni

Non ho avuto il coraggio di dirgli che forse sarebbe stato proprio il contrario, però gli ho fatto giurare di non fare trapelare niente della nostra relazione. L'avrei presentato come un mio compagno di classe e come il ragazzo di Samantha.

non far sapere (agli altri)

Ore otto. La stufa è accesa e fa caldo ma ho le mani ghiacciate. Mamma pure è nervosa. Non abbiamo quasi mai ospiti e non ha mai cucinato la pasta degli italiani prima d'oggi. È una cuoca strepitosa e la sa fare bene la pasta, ma da come aggiusta e riaggiusta il sale della salsa e il drappo del suo sari arancione capisco che è agitata almeno quanto me. Anche papà è agitato ma non lo dà a vedere. Sfoglia il giornale facendo un gran rumore, tradendo il fatto che non lo legge per niente. Non che lo legga da cima a fondo gli altri giorni. Lo compera solo per vedere se ci sono bandi di gara per imprese di pulizie. Ora sono sicura che non riesce neanche a mettere a fuoco le tette di Megan Gale che ricoprono un'intera pagina. Si liscia la calotta pelata di continuo e molto probabilmente sta ripassando i discorsi dotti che intende impartire alla gioventù viziata d'Occidente. Sta pensando se cominciare con il raccontargli la sua storia d'immigrato con una valigia di cartone in mano e la successiva ascesa da domestico tuttofare a imprenditore o se iniziare il suo monologo con un'arringa sulla bella, sana vita contadina indiana priva di vizi e ozi.

betraying

dall'inizio alla fine. tutto tender notices

boobs He strokes his bald pat

spoiled young people

crescita

handyman

closing statement

without vices and idleness

I trip up

stilts

jingling anklets

camminano

sentire

tank

Ore otto e cinque. Sono qui! Corro ad aprire la porta e inciampo.

«Vedi cosa succede se ti metti quei trampoli ai piedi», mormora papà da dietro il «Corriere della Sera». «A Mirapur tutte le donne vanno in giro a piedi nudi, con cavigliere tintinnanti in puro argento. Quando incedono con passo leggero e sensuale sembra di udire una melodia celeste. Qui invece vi mettete un carrarmato sotto i piedi».

«Non cominciare, ti prego», dico tra me e me.

Sam nota la mia espressione tirata e mi dice di rilassarmi. Marco mi stringe la mano per dire che è tutto ok. Preme il suo dito mignolo forte contro il mio – è il nostro bacio segreto.

He presses his little finger against mine

Per un quarto d'ora va tutto liscio. La prima pagina del «Corriere», mio padre e la meteorologia tengono banco. Per fortuna fa molto più freddo del solito e si riesce a parlare di correnti artiche e venti dell'est per un bel po', argomenti che non conoscono colore o razza o estrazione sociale.

va tutto bene

have the floor

the first bombshell drops

Poi, cade la prima tegola.

«Dimmi, Marco, tuo padre cosa fa? Il tuo lavora in banca, vero Samantha?».

«Mio babbo lavora come muratore, Signor Kumar», risponde Marco.

«Muratore????»

bricklayer

steaming tray

Mamma, provvidenziale, entra con un vassoio fumante di penne al pomodoro.

«Mangiare pronto. Venire. Veni Makko, tu sedi qui.

Samantha vicino suo Pappa». Le perdono tutto.

I forgive

Ci serviamo e Marco, pensando di far bene fa scivolare il discorso sulla bontà della pastasciutta e del suo «appeal» internazionale.

he lets the topic move onto

Le sirene si accendono nella mia testa, ma stranamente papà non gli risponde per le rime.

non risponde all'attacco

Non è abituato alla pasta e la masticazione di

chewing

questo cibo non familiare sembra richiedere tutte le sue energie,

fisiche e mentali. Poi deglutisce il primo boccone di grano duro

he swallows

come un pellicano farebbe con una rana

Like a pelican with a leaping frog

salterellante, si schiarisce la gola e

domanda: «E quanto guadagna?»

Faccio un sospiro profondo affinché non mi scoppi la testa prima

esplode

di far cadere appositamente la forchetta a terra.

«Anche Anandita non è abituata a mangiare queste cose e con

on purpose

queste forchette», dice mio padre annuendo per convincere se

nodding

stesso. «A noi non piace questa roba, a noi piace il curry. E

mangiare con le mani. Ma Anandita ha detto che a te non piace il curry, Marco».

Voglio morire.

Marco si mimetizza con la pasta. «No, no, mi piace il curry, Signor Kumar».

he blends in

«Vedi!», mio padre sbuffa. «Anandita, cosa ti avevo detto?».

he grumbles

«Non lo sapevo», rispondo sottovoce.

«Dove hai mangiato il curry, Marco? Scommetto che in vita tua non hai mai mangiato un curry così buono come quello che fa mia moglie».

«Ne sono sicuro Signor Kumar. L'ho mangiato sulla pizza una volta: pizza con funghi, panna e curry».

Mio padre fa un rumore a metà strada fra un conato di vomito e un singhiozzo. Ci giriamo preoccupati per lui.

retching

hiccup

Il mio povero ragazzo, ignaro del rigor mortis che ha provocato in mio padre, continua imperterrito: «E una volta abbiamo preso un pacchetto di riso ai gamberetti e curry. Lo ha fatto la mamma una sera. Era proprio buono. Basta aggiungere un cucchiaino di parmigiano e una noce di burro».

unaware

unperturbed

shrimps

Ora che mio padre sa che il padre di Marco fa il muratore e che mangia il curry sulla pizza, non c'è niente al mondo che potrà rivalutarlo ai suoi occhi. È scaduto di brutto, proprio come la bustina di risotto ai gamberetti.

He has plunged in value

«Era meglio fare il curry, no?». Mio padre si gira verso Samantha per trovare un po' di solidarietà vera. A Sam il curry di mia madre piace davvero. A dire la verità a Sam piace tutto, basta trovarlo pronto. A casa sua non c'è mai niente di pronto, e otto volte su dieci non trova nemmeno i suoi genitori – passano più tempo in giro per i bar che a casa.

Mio padre batte le mani come una foca addestrata. «Moglie! Moglie!», urla infervorato. «Vedi se c'è un po' di curry di pollo rimasto da ieri. Meglio il curry avanzato che questi tubi di gomma qui».

eccitato

a trained seal

left-over

rubber

Dio aiutami. Non so se sopravviverò a questa cena.

I will survive

Mia madre alza le braccia, sembra **sconsolatissima**.

tristissima

«Niente. Finito curry. Solo pasta pomodoro».

Mia madre è un angelo. Le farò un monumento. Le porterò dei fiori ogni giorno per il resto della sua vita. Mi metterò dell'olio di cocco in **testa** ogni santo giorno (o **almeno** di notte).

at least

Sai come è

Hai presente la faccia di uno che sta ascoltando

l'estrazione dei biglietti della lotteria **il giorno della befana**? Con quel bel **montepremi** multi-miliardario? La faccia di **uno che azzecca** tutti i numeri fino a quella maledetta ultima pallina rossa impazzita? Bè, quella era la faccia di mio padre.

on Epiphany day

prize money

one who gets

«Non è possibile, non è possibile». La delusione **s'impossessa** delle sue corde vocali.

takes hold

«Ci inviterete un altro giorno per il curry, Signor Kumar», dice Samantha sorridendo.

Assolutamente

«Per forza, per forza», risponde papà. «Devo far provare a questo **giovannotto** la sublimazione dei sensi. Devo fargli

ragazzo

dimenticare gli orrori della pizza al curry o del risotto al curry in busta. Sai, mia moglie segue la stessa ricetta che usava mia madre, pace all'anima sua. Faceva il miglior curry di pollo dell'intero distretto di Mirapur. Prima **macinava** tre tipi di peperoncini con le altre spezie – senape, coriandolo, cardamomo, papavero, cannella, chiodi di garofano -, poi li friggeva con la cipolla e l'aglio e infine ci aggiungeva un pomodoro, il latte di cocco e il pollo. Ora volete che vi racconti un po' della bella vita che si fa nella campagna indiana? Niente smog, niente povertà e quelle stupide cose che vi fanno vedere in tv con gente ammalata e moribonda. Noi a Mirapur abbiamo solo vacche grasse e capre felici e campi di grano che ridono nel sole...».

she grinded

«Anandita passa Pappa vassoio con peperoncino e spezie per mettere su pasta. Così lui brucia bocca e **sta zitto** poco poco», dice la mamma.

sta in silenzio

Ci mettiamo tutti a ridere.

«Vedi, vedi Marco», papà dice con espressione **bonaria**.

benevola

«Meno male che tu hai scelto una ragazza italiana e non una **peperina** indiana come quelle di questa casa. Vedi cosa **mi tocca sopportare** ogni giorno per un piatto di curry di pollo?».

devo

put up with

Thank goodness you chose

ragazza con una forte personalità

Marco sorride imbarazzato e Sam **mi strizza l'occhio**. Marco mi fa **cenno** di passargli il peperoncino e le spezie. Mentre allunga la mano per prendere il vassoio, preme forte il suo mignolo contro il mio. Per fortuna papà ha cominciato a raccontare la storia della sua vita e mamma si sta aggiustando il drappo del suo sari. I miei genitori non si accorgono di niente.

she winks at me

gesto

they do not notice

Appendix B: Text One – Curry di pollo – Activity sheet

Curry di pollo (Laila Wadia)

ESERCIZI

Prima di leggere (p 1)

A. INTRODUZIONE DEI PROTAGONISTI E DELLA STORIA

I) ANANDITA

1. Completa il testo con le parole mancanti.

piercing - verità - anni - amiche - discoteca - ragazzo

Ho sedici _____ e vivo a Milano, diamine. Non posso *non* andare in _____, non posso *non* farmi il _____, non posso *non* avere un _____ – lo fanno e ce l’hanno tutte le mie _____. Sono stufa di inventarmi delle scuse per non dire la _____.

Sono stanca

II) I GENITORI DI ANANDITA

2.1. Leggi e cerca di capire questa frase. Se ci sono parole che non conosci chiedi all’insegnante.

I miei pensano di vivere ancora in Mirapur nell’India centrale. Invece, abitano qui nel centro di Milano.

2.2. Questa frase nel testo è più lunga. Qui sotto ci sono le altre parti della frase (in ordine): prova a inserire queste parti nella frase. Chiedi all’insegnante le parole che non conosci. Fai attenzione alla punteggiatura!

sono dei Flinstones indiani che

una capanna di fango nell’oscuro villaggio di

, con le loro due mucche e le tre capre,

da più di vent’anni

Ma per loro non è cambiato niente.

2.3 Riscrivi la frase:

III) LA STORIA

3. Completa le frasi con i verbi al *passato prossimo*. Attenzione ai participi irregolari!

1. La famiglia Kumar (*arrivare*) _____ in Italia più di vent'anni fa.
2. I genitori di Anandita (*lasciare*) _____ il villaggio di Mirapur, in India, per venire in Italia.
3. Il padre di Anandita (*venire*) _____ in Italia con un visto turistico e poi (*aprire*) _____ l'impresa di pulizie "Shakti".
4. La mamma di Anandita (*mantenere*) _____ il modo di vestire e di pettinarsi indiano.
5. Il padre di Anandita (*perdere*) _____ tutti i capelli.
6. Anandita (*ereditare*) _____ dalla mamma il fisico e il colore dei capelli.

Adesso leggi il testo (p 1): BUONA LETTURA!



Dopo la lettura (p 1)

4. Scrivi altre due frasi sulla parte di racconto che hai letto.

1 _____

2 _____

5. Completa le frasi con le parole mancanti. Per ricordare le parole usa le immagini, se ci sono!



1) I signori Kumar sono in Italia da molti anni ma Anandita dice che vivono ancora circondati dalla _____ degli escrementi di mucca.



2) Quasi quasi i signori Kumar rimpiangono il _____ e il lavoro faticoso nei _____.



3) I genitori di Anandita hanno una ostinata _____ del loro paese e delle loro tradizioni.

4) Il signor Kumar pensa come un _____ indiano.



5) Il signor Kumar è grande e _____ come la sua _____.



6) Il padre di Anandita è proprietario di un' _____ di _____.



6. Vocabolario: scegli 5 parole nuove importanti nel testo che hai letto. Vicino alla parola scrivi il significato in inglese.

 PAROLE NUOVE 

Prima di leggere (p 2 e 3)

B. CASA KUMAR: DISCUSSIONI CON I GENITORI

I) IN CUCINA: L'OPINIONE DELLA MAMMA SUI CAPELLI DI ANANDITA

7. Questo è un dialogo fra Anandita (A) e la mamma (m). In coppia, inserite nel dialogo le battute della mamma.

A. «Ma dai, non posso andare in giro con le **treccine oleate**, mamma!» (*oiled tresses*)

m. _____

A. «Ma se tutte le donne indiane si mettono l'henné in testa!»

m. _____

A. «Me l'hai detto tu!».

m. _____

A. «Si chiamano riflessi **ramati**, mamma. E vanno molto di moda. Ce l'hanno tutte le mie amiche. Samantha li ha uguali uguali». (*coppery*)

1. **m.** «*Tu che ne sai? Non sei mai stata in India.*» (*How do you know?*)
2. **m.** «*Appunto. L'henné. Che è una pianta indiana e fa bene. Non questa cosa che ti sei fatta fare tu. Sembra che un pavone inferocito ti abbia beccato in testa.*» (*an enraged peacock*) (*pecked*)
3. **m.** «*Si che puoi*» (...). «*Ora che hai rovinato i tuoi bei capelli con questo stupido colore devi pur rimediare in qualche modo. Un po' di olio di cocco gli ridarà lucentezza.*» (*will make them shiny again*)

8a. Leggi il dialogo dell'esercizio 7 e rispondi: vero o falso?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. A Anandita piacciono le treccine oleate. | V F |
| 2. La mamma critica i capelli di Anandita. | V F |
| 3. L'henné è una pianta indiana che si usa per colorare i capelli. | V F |
| 4. Samantha e Anandita hanno i riflessi ramati. | V F |

8b. Scrittura di una dialogo in gruppo.

- Tutti partecipano alla scrittura del dialogo;
- Il gruppo seleziona le persone che faranno "gli attori";
- Gli attori reciteranno il dialogo.

II) IN SALOTTO: L'OPINIONE DEL PAPÀ SUI CAPELLI E LO STILE DI ANANDITA

9. Qui sotto ci sono le opinioni del padre di Anandita. In piccoli gruppi: per capire le opinioni del padre cercate sul dizionario le parole in neretto. Avete 7 minuti di tempo! Il gruppo che finisce per primo vince!

1. Il padre di Anandita dice che lei deve mettere l'olio sui capelli. La nonna di Anandita, **venuta a mancare** a 70 anni, lo ha sempre messo: è morta con capelli bellissimi. *(venire a mancare)*
2. Anandita ha i capelli mezzi rossi e mezzi neri: il padre dice che sembra una zebra che ha preso un'**insolazione**. 
3. Anandita mangia latte e **crusca** ma il padre dice che mangia delle **schifezze**. Dice anche che il cibo di Anandita sembra **sterco** di coniglio. → 
4. Il padre di Anandita dice che lei si veste come lui quando era giovane. Lei **si pavoneggia** con i **pantaloni a zampa di elefante**. Lui invece **si vergogna** di quei pantaloni.

Adesso leggi il testo (p 2 e 3): BUONA LETTURA!



Dopo la lettura (p 2 e 3)

10. Vero o falso?

1. Mentre Anandita e la mamma discutono, il papà beve tè e mangia pane indiano. V F
2. La nonna di Anandita è morta a 70 anni, con capelli ancora bellissimi. V F
3. Anandita non conosce la storia della nonna Rupa. V F
4. Anandita ha i capelli mezzi neri e mezzi rossi. V F
5. Il papà dice che Anandita si veste in modo troppo elegante. V F
6. Il padre di Anandita è una persona molto raffinata. V F
7. Il padre di Anandita vuole trovare un marito indiano per sua figlia. V F

11. Nel testo che hai letto i genitori di Anandita parlano con lei e le dicono le loro opinioni sul suo look. In piccoli gruppi, rispondete alle domande.

1. Come si sente Anandita con i suoi genitori?
2. Come si sentono i genitori con lei? Perché si comportano in questo modo?
3. La tua famiglia come si comporta con te?

12. Vocabolario: scegli 5 parole nuove importanti nel testo che hai letto. Vicino alla parola scrivi la frase dove l'hai trovata.

PAROLE NUOVE	

C. UNA SERATA SPECIALE

13. Per questo esercizio segui le indicazioni dell'insegnante¹.

14. Anandita è molto diversa dai suoi genitori e spesso litiga con loro. Queste sono le frasi che Anandita dice ai suoi genitori quando è arrabbiata. In piccoli gruppi, leggetele e immaginate le risposte di mamma e papà. Per ogni frase di Anandita scrivete una risposta dei genitori.

«Io sono nata e cresciuta in Italia! Non voglio mettermi il puntino sulla fronte!»

«No, io non voglio mettermi il vestito indiano!»

«Ma in Italia nessuna ragazza si sposa a sedici anni!»

«Se Milano vi fa schifo e il villaggio di Mirapur è così bello...allora perché siete venuti in Italia?»

¹ This is adapted by Hess' s (2006) activity 'Considering Cultural Concerns'. The teacher draws a line on the board: at one end of the line the teacher writes the word *famiglia* (family). At the other end of the line the teacher writes *io* (I). We consider how family influences our behaviour and our identity. The teacher asks students to think about themselves, to reflect on who they are/who they would like to be (they need to think about themselves as individuals and as members of a family). Students, then, move to the board and write their names anywhere on the continuous line where they feel it belongs (the teacher does it, too). Then, the students contemplate Anandita's placement on the continuous line and an in-class discussion follows.

18. Vocabolario: scegli 5 parole nuove importanti nel testo che hai letto. Vicino alla parola scrivi la frase dove l'hai trovata.

PAROLE NUOVE	

19. Immagina come continua la storia...

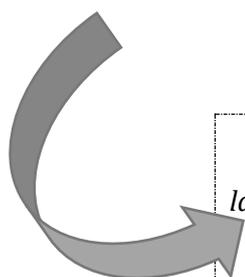
Anandita presenta Marco ai suoi genitori. Lo presenta come un suo compagno di classe e ragazzo di Samantha. I suoi genitori capiscono che Marco non è il ragazzo di Samantha ma è il ragazzo di Anandita: che cosa succede in casa Kumar? In gruppi di tre, immaginate il dialogo fra la mamma, il papà e Anandita. Preparatevi a recitare il dialogo in classe.

D. LA CENA

Prima di leggere (pp 6, 7 e 8)

20. Collega le frasi di sinistra (in ordine) con quelle di destra (non in ordine) e ricomponi alcune frasi del primo paragrafo del testo a p. 6.

1. Ore otto. La stufa è accesa e fa caldo...	a. ...abbiamo quasi mai ospiti e non ha mai cucinato la pasta degli italiani prima d'oggi.
2. Mamma pure è nervosa. Non...	b. ...giornale facendo un gran rumore
3. È una cuoca strepitosa e la sa fare bene la pasta, ma...	c. ...ma ho le mani ghiacciate.
4. Anche papà è agitato ma non lo dà a vedere. Sfoglia il...	d. (...) capisco che è agitata almeno quanto me.



la stufa =	
pure =	anche
agitata =	nervosa
sfogliare =	

21. In coppie, rispondete alle domande.

1. Secondo te di che cosa parlano a cena Anandita, i genitori, Marco e Samantha?
2. Hai mai portato il tuo ragazzo/a a cena con la tua famiglia? Come è andata?

Adesso leggi il testo (pp 6, 7 e 8): BUONA LETTURA!



Dopo la lettura (p 4 e 5)

22. Vocabolario: scegli 5 parole nuove importanti nel testo che hai letto. Vicino alla parola scrivi la frase dove l'hai trovata.

PAROLE NUOVE	

23. Recitate la scena come degli attori!

24. Lettura relax in coppia. Leggi al tuo compagno una parte di *Curry di pollo*. Scegli una parte del racconto che ti piace o ha un significato particolare per te.

25. Attività scritta.

Vuoi fare un regalo ai personaggi di *Curry di pollo*. Quale regalo compri per Anandita, per il padre, ecc.? Perché?

26. Attività finale.

LOOKING AT THE STORY AS A WHOLE

Write anything you fell about the story. It can be an interpretation describing how you feel about plot or character. It can also be a question.

A Milano non c'è il mare

G. Kuruvilla

Il blog

Il racconto “*A Milano non c'è il mare*” è stato pubblicato online sul blog *La città nuova*. Questo blog multi-autore si propone di dare voce a milanesi di origine straniera - di prima, seconda e terza generazione -, ma anche a tutti



quelli che vogliono interrogarsi sull'incontro/scontro di civiltà. A partire dal quotidiano: questioni di condominio, contatti sui mezzi pubblici, difficoltà sul lavoro, convivenza a scuola, conversazioni al bancone del bar. Senza buonismi, ma evitando anche chiusure e pregiudizi. Un tentativo di intercettare e tradurre le molte lingue che ormai si parlano in città.

Puoi trovar il blog a questo indirizzo: <http://lacittanuova.milano.corriere.it/>

L'autrice



Gabriella Kuruvilla è nata a Milano nel 1969, da padre indiano (del Kerala) e madre italiana. Madre di un figlio piccolo si è laureata in architettura ed è giornalista professionista. Ha collaborato con vari quotidiani e riviste, tra cui "Il Corriere della Sera", "Max", "Anna", "Marie Claire" e "D di Repubblica". Dopo aver trascorso sei anni nella redazione milanese di un mensile di arredamento Brava Casa, per cui ancora oggi lavora come free-

lance, si è dedicata completamente alla narrativa e alla pittura. Scrive e dipinge a tempo pieno. I suoi quadri, realizzati prevalentemente in sabbia e tessuto, sono stati esposti sia in Italia che all'estero.

Canzoni

JOSH MCK – *Corvetto: Degrado cattiveria strada verso la luce*

AMIR ISSAA - *Non Sono Un Immigrato*



A Milano non c'è il mare

Gabriella Kuruvilla

Oggi, a scuola, la professoressa di italiano ci ha insegnato cos'è l'ossimoro. L'ossimoro, secondo la professoressa d'italiano e secondo Wikipedia (a volte penso che la professoressa d'italiano sia Wikipedia, ma in formato 3D), è una figura retorica che consiste nell'**accostamento di due termini** di senso contrario o comunque in forte **antitesi** tra loro. Non mi metto adesso a spiegare cosa siano la figura retorica e l'antitesi perché la professoressa di italiano ce l'ha anche detto ma, facendolo, **mi ha agitato parecchio** le idee che, siccome non si sono ancora calmate, è meglio lasciarle per un po' lì, chiuse dentro la mia testa, a tranquillizzarsi. Comunque, poi, la professoressa di italiano, per aiutarci a capire meglio cos'è l'ossimoro, ci ha fatto degli esempi, che ovviamente sono gli stessi di Wikipedia: "disgustoso piacere" è un ossimoro, "illustre sconosciuta" è un ossimoro e, infine, "silenzio **assordante**" è un ossimoro. **Così, subito dopo, io, di mio, ho pensato che anche vivere sottoterra è un ossimoro, a meno che uno non sia una talpa.**

mettere due parole vicine

contrasto

(lei) mi ha confuso molto

deafening

da solo

underground

unless one is a mole

penso

Ma io e la mia famiglia siamo umani, mi sa. Quindi io e la mia famiglia viviamo dentro un ossimoro, perché viviamo in un seminterrato, cioè in un appartamento che sta praticamente sottoterra.

dove

E che, secondo me, in realtà era una cantina: cioè uno spazio **in cui** mettere degli oggetti, **tipo** delle scatole, **mica** degli umani, tipo noi. **Sia quel che sia**, il nostro seminterrato ha i muri scrostati e le porte che cigolano, l'elettricità che ogni tanto salta e l'acqua calda che non sempre c'è. E ha pure l'aria umida, sempre. E quindi tutto, qui, è umido: il pane è umido e anche i pigiama, sono umidi. Che non è bello andare a dormire con **addosso** un pigiama umido. Però, il nostro seminterrato ha

per esempio

non

Comunque

on

anche tutti i comfort di un vero appartamento: infatti ha la sala, ha la cucina, ha il bagno, ha la stanza matrimoniale, cioè quella della mamma e del papà, e ha pure la cameretta, che io condivido con quella ciuccia* di mia sorella (ciuccia non perché sia stupida, se è stupida o meno ancora non lo so, ma ciuccia perché lei ciuccia sempre il ciuccio: e dire che ha già 9 mesi, vabbè).

o no

anyway

[*In the passage the author creates an intentional pun with the word *ciuccia*: in Italian *ciuccia* means 'idiot' or 'dunce', but it is also the third person singular of the verb *ciucciare* 'to suck'. Finally, *ciuccio* is the noun for 'dummy'.]

Inoltre, il nostro seminterrato come un vero appartamento ha, ovviamente, anche le finestre: che però sono più larghe che alte, sono protette dalle sbarre e stanno lassù, alla fine della parete, quasi appoggiate al soffitto. E da lì, se ti arrampichi su una scala o sopra un armadio per guardare fuori come faccio io ogni tanto, quello che vedi, tra una sbarra e l'altra, sono solo le ruote delle auto, le scarpe delle persone, i gatti e i cani (se sono cani bassi) e, nel peggiore dei casi, le cacche dei cani, sia alti che bassi.

bars

in alto

wall

ceiling



(tu) sali

in the worst case

both...and...



moltissime

Poi, quando c'è il mercato, di queste cose qui ne vedi a migliaia. Però, la merce esposta sulle bancarelle di solito mica la vedi e, comunque, quello che vedi non è mai esattamente un gran vedere. Per esempio, vedi pochissima luce (il sole invece non lo vedi proprio), e spesso ti accorgi del tempo che fa solo se la pioggia disegna dei cerchietti nelle pozzanghere. E così, magari, io esco di casa senza ombrello e torno a casa tutto bagnato. Ma, per lo meno, il mio seminterrato dà sulla strada, che poi è via dei Cinquecento.

merchandise

bello

assolutamente

You often realise what the weather is like only if the rain creates/makes ripples in the puddles.

at least

Mentre un altro seminterrato del mio palazzo, che poi è quello dove abita il mio amico Paolo, dà sul cortile interno: e dal seminterrato del mio amico Paolo, anche se ti arrampichi su una scala o sopra l'armadio per raggiungere la finestra e guardare fuori, il mercato, quando c'è, non lo vedi proprio (al massimo lo senti,

courtyard

at most

che il mercato fa sempre un gran rumore). In ogni caso, da domani, io e la mia famiglia non vivremo più dentro un ossimoro: partiamo, infatti. E ci trasferiamo a Marsiglia. «Dove?», ho chiesto a mamma. «A Marsiglia», mi ha risposto. «Sì, ok, questo l'avevo capito anch'io. Ma volevo sapere: dov'è, Marsiglia?». «È in Francia». «Ed è bella?». «Certo, amore». Lei mi aveva detto che era bella anche Milano, prima di lasciare Trivandrum per venire ad abitare qui e andare a vivere dentro un ossimoro. Mi sa che ogni tanto mi racconta delle **balle**, mamma.

bugie



«Ma anche Marsiglia è una città come Milano, fatta di tanto cemento e di poco verde, dove gli unici animali che trovi in giro, a parte i cani e i gatti, sono **le zanzare, le mosche, le formiche, i topi e gli scarafaggi?**», le ho domandato. «Non lo so, però ha il mare». «Wow», ho concluso. Molti milanesi dicono che il mare di Milano è l'**Idroscalo**, ma io ci sono andato al mare e so che l'Idroscalo non è un mare. Al massimo, ma al massimo massimo, è un lago: probabilmente anche molti milanesi ogni tanto mi raccontano delle balle. Speriamo che il mare di Marsiglia non assomigli all'Idroscalo, però. «E andremo a vivere anche lì dentro un ossimoro?», le ho chiesto. «Dentro cosa?», mi ha domandato. «Dentro un seminterrato». «No: abiteremo al terzo piano». «Wow», ho commentato. «Ma a scuola ti hanno insegnato solo a dire "wow", quando sei contento?», mi ha chiesto. In realtà i miei compagni mi hanno insegnato anche a dire "**figata**" e "**mecojoni**", quando sono contento. Ma questo non gliel'ho detto. Che non è che posso sempre dirle tutto. E poi lei non sopporta le **parolacce**. **Comunque a me spiace un po'** lasciare questa zona, che poi è la zona quattro, cioè il **quartiere Corvetto**: anche se tutti dicono che è brutto e **pericoloso**, che è un **ghetto peggio del Bronx**. Però io non so com'è il Bronx, ma a questo punto immagino che sia meglio di Corvetto. Quindi nel Bronx, sì, potrei anche andare a viverci. In ogni caso Josh, un rapper che mi ha fatto ascoltare il mio amico Nicola, ha dedicato una canzone a Corvetto, e non al Bronx. E la canzone si intitola Corvetto, **appunto**, e dice cose **tipo**: «Uno: degrado. Due: cattiveria. Tre: strada verso la luce». **Boh**,

Idroscalo is an artificial lake in Milan

slang words for "cool"

bad words

mi dispiace

neighbourhood

worse

dangerous

esattamente

come per esempio

Non lo so

magari la strada verso la luce è quella che mi porterà da qui fino a Marsiglia. Che, dal terzo piano, la luce e **addirittura** il sole si dovrebbero vedere, certo un po' di più che da un seminterrato.

specialmente

Comunque, in questa canzone di Josh che si intitola Corvetto, appunto, lui dice anche: «Palazzi che **si sgretolano** dove i soldi **ci mancano**». Ed è vero perché anche il nostro seminterrato si sta sgretolando. «Perché non lo **aggiustiamo?**», ho chiesto un giorno a mamma. «E i soldi per farlo, dove li troviamo?», mi ha risposto. «Mica piovono dal cielo», ha poi aggiunto. E io ho pensato che, anche se pioverebbero dal cielo, prima che **raggiungano** il nostro seminterrato **se li sono già fregati tutti gli altri**: a cominciare da quelli che abitano all'ultimo piano, sicuramente. **Insomma**, per finire, Josh in questa canzone che si intitola Corvetto, appunto, dice pure: «**Questo mondo che ci porta a fondo dove chi sperava prima ora non ha neanche più un sogno, l'unica cosa che ci resta forse è la certezza di una vita che per noi rimane maledetta**». E qui, quando ho ascoltato queste parole, **ho pianto**. **Per cui** non vorrei aggiungere altro.

(they) crumble

non ci sono

we fix

(they) reach

qualcuno li ha rubati tutti

In conclusione

down

damned

I cried

Allora

Piuttosto stavo pensando che, se proprio dobbiamo **andarcene** da Corvetto, **potremmo trasferirci, per esempio, a Roma o a Catania**. Che sono città che hanno il mare, lo so perché le ho studiate durante le ore di geografia, ma almeno stanno in Italia, e anche questo lo so perché le ho studiate durante le ore di geografia. Mentre Marsiglia ha il mare ma sta in Francia, e questo lo so perché me lo ha appena detto mamma. Il problema non è la Francia, **in sé**, ma il francese, **in sé**. Perché a me di rimanere in Italia o di andare in un altro posto **non è che me ne freggi molto**: per me **una nazione vale l'altra**. Ma questa cosa del francese invece sì che me ne frega, e parecchio: per me una lingua non vale l'altra. Cioè, mi spiego meglio: qui, se parlo con qualcuno, quel qualcuno mi capisce e io lo capisco. Beh, non capita sempre ma spesso. Mentre, per esempio, quando andiamo a trovare i nostri parenti in Kerala, se parlo con qualcuno, quel qualcuno non mi capisce e io non lo capisco. E questo invece **capita** sempre, perché io parlo in italiano e quel qualcuno in malayalam. E io ho capito che le persone, per capirsi, devono parlare la stessa lingua.

Invece

andare via

in itself

Per me non è importante

tutte le nazioni sono uguali

A parte che, come ho appena detto, anche se parlano la stessa lingua, le persone a volte non si capiscono. Per esempio, mio padre e mia madre parlano la stessa lingua ma a volte non si capiscono, e litigano. E allora io, in quei casi, mi metto **le cuffie** nelle orecchie e ascolto della musica a tutto volume mentre quella ciuccia di mia sorella, invece, ciuccia ancora di più il ciuccio. Insomma, tutto questo per dire che il francese, come il malayalam, è un problema. Così, se proprio dobbiamo andarcene da Corvetto, vorrei che restassimo in Italia. Poi, forse, tra Roma e Catania, preferirei trasferirmi a Roma, perché è più vicina a Milano. E non vorrei trasferirmi a Roma in generale, in una zona qualsiasi. No, no:



preferirei trasferirmi a Roma, nel quartiere Torpignattara, magari in via Galeazzo Alessi. Ecco, io, se proprio, vorrei trasferirmi lì. Nella città, nel quartiere e magari nella via dove è nato ed è vissuto anche Amir, che è un rapper figlio di un egiziano e di un'italiana, che dice un sacco di cose che penso anch'io, che non sono un rapper ma che da grande vorrei esserlo.

se possibile

Anche se io sono figlio di due indiani: esistono rapper figli di due indiani? Beh, in ogni caso, Amir dice **talmente tanto** le cose che penso anch'io che quando ho ascoltato per la prima volta la sua canzone *Non sono un immigrato* ho pensato che **mi avesse rubato** le parole di bocca, e quindi avrei anche potuto denunciarlo per **furto** e chiedergli un **risarcimento danni**. Poi, ho lasciato perdere: penso spesso un sacco di cose che non faccio. Forse sono pigro, forse sono **vigliacco**. Mah: **ecchisene**. Comunque Amir, in questa canzone che si intitola *Non sono un immigrato*, dice: «La gente mi ha confuso con un immigrato, con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione, mi danno dello straniero per il mio cognome». A parte che, se proprio dobbiamo essere sinceri, io ho un cognome straniero e una faccia da straniero ma sono anche un immigrato, perché non sono nato qui ma in India. Però, per esempio, quella ciuccia di mia sorella è nata qui ma, per il fatto di avere un cognome straniero e una faccia da straniera, la gente la confonde anche lei con un'immigrata (e ha solo 9 mesi: vabbè). In ogni caso, tornando a me che ho un cognome straniero e una faccia da straniero e che sono anche un immigrato, devo dire che io lì, in India, ci sono stato davvero poco: i primi due anni, infatti, li ho vissuti a Trivandrum mentre gli altri dieci li ho passati a Milano. E se, come dice la mia professoressa di matematica, la matematica non è un'opinione, dieci è il quintuplo di due: quindi io sono cinque volte più italiano che indiano.

così tanto

he had stolen

theft

compensation for damages

coward

slang word: I do not care

Infatti dell'India non ne so quasi **nulla** e dell'Italia invece ne so un sacco: per esempio, **per quanto riguarda** l'India, non so giocare a cricket, so poco l'inglese, non so né l'hindi né il malayalam (che è la lingua che parlano i miei parenti) e non so neppure prepararmi un dahl, cioè una zuppa di **lenticchie**, che è la cosa più buona che mi fa da mangiare mia zia quando vado a trovarla a Trivandrum mentre, per quanto riguarda l'Italia, so giocare a calcio, so l'italiano e so **addirittura** delle frasi in milanese, tipo "su de doss"* o "va a ciapa' i ratt"** , che ce le dice sempre il papà del mio compagno di classe Filippo quando lo disturbiamo mentre lavora e, inoltre, so anche **riscaldarmi** una pasta o una pizza se le trovo nel frigorifero, la mamma non è in casa e io ho fame. E infatti, Amir, in questa canzone che si intitola *Non sono un immigrato*, dice anche: «Mangio pasta e pizza, io sono un italiano, mi chiamo Amir come te ti chiami Mario». A parte tutto quello che dice, in ogni caso, Amir è un vero figo e io, da grande, vorrei essere come lui. Cantare come lui, **atteggiarmi** come lui, essere famoso come lui

niente

in riferimento a



anche

warm-up

agire

e magari avere un figlio come lui: sì, vabbè, quest'ultima cosa proprio da grande grande.

Comunque, anche adesso cerco di essere come lui ma non mi viene molto bene perché mamma non me lo permette. Tipo, non mi permette di tagliarmi i capelli e di mettermi l'orecchino, come lui. E poi non mi permette di comprarmi i vestiti, uguali ai suoi: cioè, al massimo me li compra simili, perché lei fa acquisti negli outlet o nei grandi centri commerciali, quando ci sono i saldi, mentre io vorrei fare acquisti nei negozi di streetwear, magari quando non ci sono i saldi, perché lì hanno i vestiti uguali a quelli di Amir, non simili. A parte poi che mamma, con questa sua mania dei saldi, mi prende i bermuda a fine agosto e i giacconi a fine febbraio e poi, quando finalmente li posso mettere, generalmente o sono passati di moda o non sono della misura giusta, perché io nel frattempo o sono cresciuto troppo o troppo poco. Che è un problema, quello della crescita: rischi sempre di sbagliare tutto, anche l'altezza e la larghezza del corpo.



shopping centres

sales

ossessione



in the meantime

[*espressione dialettale milanese]

[**espressione dialettale milanese]

Però, al massimo massimo, se proprio non possiamo restare a Corvetto e non possiamo neppure andare a Torpignattara, potremmo trasferirci a Catania, invece che a Marsiglia. Anche perché, pensandoci meglio, forse Torpignattara non è poi così bella: perché è vero che lì c'è nato Amir e che c'ha pure vissuto, ma è da un po' che non ci vive più, anche se dice che adesso Torpignattara è meglio di quando ci viveva lui, perché prima c'erano più italiani che immigrati e invece ora ci sono più immigrati che italiani e pure perché prima le sparatorie erano all'ordine del giorno mentre ora si può girare per le strade abbastanza tranquilli.

Torpignattara è un quartiere di Roma

gunfires

c'erano tutti i giorni

I googled

walls

quindi

ho pensato

Ma, quando sono andato su Wikipedia e ho digitato Torpignattara, ho visto le foto di alcune vecchie mura, che facevano parte dell'Acquedotto alessandrino, di una chiesa, chiamata "San Marcellino e Pietro ad Duas Lauros", di un brutto palazzo, con sopra la scritta "Cinema Impero" e di un grande parco, nominato "Villa De Sanctis". Però, non ho visto le foto del mare: al che mi è venuto in mente che forse Torpignattara non è a Roma o che forse Roma non ha il mare o che al massimo a Roma il mare c'è ma non si vede.

I will realise

bummer

sono sicuro

Magari poi vengo a scoprire che il mare di Roma è come l'Idroscalo di Milano, e questa sarebbe una vera fregatura. Dunque, alla fine, se proprio non possiamo restare a Corvetto e magari non è il caso che andiamo a Torpignattara, potremmo trasferirci a Catania, invece che a Marsiglia. Perché a Catania il mare c'è, ne ho la certezza: me l'ha detto il mio amico grande G- looka, che è lo zio del mio migliore

amico Massimo. E G-looka di Catania ne sa: perché c'è nato, ci ha vissuto e ci vive ancora. Anche se ha vissuto pure a Roma, ma non a Torpignattara, e pure a Milano, ma non a Corvetto. Infatti io l'ho conosciuto a Milano, in zona Isola, in un negozio di streetwear che ora non c'è più ma che si chiamava "Get up", **che vuol dire** alzarsi e che è anche l'inizio del titolo di una canzone di Bob Marley: un cantante reggae che in questa canzone che si intitola *Get up, stand up* dice che le persone devono alzarsi, appunto, e **ribellarsi per i loro diritti**. Comunque lì, in quel negozio di streetwear che si chiamava "Get up", io ci ero andato con il mio migliore amico Massimo e con mamma, non per parlare di reggae e di ribellione ma per fare vedere a mamma dei vestiti da rapper delle marche giuste che volevo comprarmi.

which means

fight for their rights

Lei i vestiti da rapper delle marche giuste che volevo comprarmi poi, ovviamente, non me li ha comprati, però, mentre guardavo i vestiti da rapper delle marche giuste che volevo comprarmi, il mio migliore amico Massimo mi ha presentato suo zio G-looka. G-looka mi ha detto «Ciao bello!» e io gli ho risposto «Ciao zio!», non solo perché era lo zio del mio migliore amico Massimo ma anche perché mi sembrava che facesse figo chiamarlo zio. Al che lui mi ha sorriso e mi ha fatto una specie di carezza in testa scompigliandomi tutti i capelli e poi ha alzato un braccio verso di me, ha spalancato il palmo della mano del braccio che aveva alzato verso di me e mi ha detto «Dammi il cinque» e io gliel'ho dato, il cinque, cioè ho alzato anch'io un braccio verso di lui, ho spalancato anch'io il palmo della mano del braccio che avevo alzato verso di lui e ho spiacciato il mio palmo spalancato della mano sul suo palmo spalancato della mano. Proprio come avevo visto fare in alcuni film americani e in alcuni videoclip rap. E ho capito che avevo fatto bene, allora, a rispondergli «Ciao zio!» quando lui mi aveva detto «Ciao bello!».

I thought it was cool

he smiled at me



ha aperto

io lo ho dato a lui

I clapped

Poi, lui mi ha detto altre cose, ma me le ha dette veloce veloce e in un modo strano, che mi sembrava che le sue parole, mentre gli uscivano a raffica dalla bocca tipo proiettili da una mitragliatrice, si incollassero le une alle altre come i chewing gum sotto la suola delle scarpe. Avevo addirittura l'impressione che lui parlasse un'altra lingua, mica l'italiano: una lingua che era peggio del malayalam e forse anche del francese, infatti io non avevo capito quasi niente di quello che mi aveva detto. Però, alcune cose le avevo capite: tipo che lui, nei suoi circa trent'anni di vita, aveva fatto un sacco di lavori, **tra cui il pugile** e il dj, ma che adesso faceva lo scrittore, e che quando faceva lo scrittore non si faceva chiamare G-looka ma **si firmava** con il suo nome e cognome vero, cioè Gianluca Vittorio, e che Gianluca era il suo nome e Vittorio era il suo cognome e che se volevo, potevo andarmi a leggere dei suoi racconti, sia sul sito www.tobepop.net sia nel libro Milano d'autore. Così, qualche giorno dopo, sono andato prima su

non-stop

like bullets from a machine gun

stick to each other

amongst which



from 'firmare': to sign

internet, e ho letto quello che aveva scritto sul sito e poi in biblioteca, e ho letto quello che aveva scritto nel libro. **Non che io ci abbia capito molto** nemmeno di quello che scrive ma posso dire con certezza che Gianluca Vittorio scrive molto meglio di come parla G-looka, anche perché quando scrive Gianluca Vittorio le parole sono separate le une dalle altre mentre quando parla G-looka le parole si incollano le une alle altre come i chewing gum sotto la suola delle scarpe.

Non ho capito

before he gave me

Comunque, **prima che lui mi lasciasse il suo numero di cellulare (che io non ce l'ho, il cellulare, ma se devo fare delle chiamate brevi -però davvero brevi- mamma il suo me lo presta)**, prima che **ci salutassimo** e prima che io andassi a leggere quello che aveva scritto, mi aveva anche detto che era nato e che aveva vissuto a Catania, e che lì c'è il mare. Ecco. E io **mi fido** di G-looka, perché so che lui non mi racconta delle balle, nemmeno ogni tanto, come mia mamma o come molti milanesi, per esempio. E alla fine, io l'ho anche chiamato sul suo cellulare, G-looka, e allora lui è passato a trovare me e il mio migliore amico Massimo, che poi sarebbe suo nipote, all'**oratorio** di Corvetto e abbiamo giocato a calcio e lui stava in porta e **noi tiravamo** e secondo me gli abbiamo fatto un sacco di goal solo perché **voleva farci vincere** e comunque è così che siamo diventati amici. E poi lui e il mio migliore amico Massimo mi hanno riaccompagnato a casa e ci siamo salutati nel cortile ma io non gli ho chiesto di scendere nel mio seminterrato, perché un po' **mi vergogno** del mio seminterrato.

corte

mi dà il suo

we said hello

I trust

church playground

we kicked

he wanted us to win

I feel ashamed

Però, ora che G-looka sa il mio indirizzo, ogni tanto mi scrive delle lettere, a penna su carta: ed è sempre una bella cosa trovare nella casella della posta una roba che non è né una multa né una bolletta. Infatti, quando mi arrivano le sue lettere, anche mamma esclama, tutta sorridente: «È una lettera di quel tuo amico grande, non è né una multa né una bolletta!». E poi G-looka ha dei **modi di dire** che mi piacciono un sacco. Tipo: lui per dire «Ma davvero?» dice «Sì, eh?», per dire «Ho fatto una cosa sbagliata» dice «Ho combinato una **malaminchiata**!» e, infine, per dire «Che noia!» dice «Che marmellata di coglioni!», che come frase è un po' volgare, lo so, però secondo ma **rende bene l'idea.**

neither a fine nor a bill

ways of saying

dialetto siciliano per *stupid thing*

è molto chiara

Ma quando scrive come scrittore non è che scrive proprio così, però ci mette la stessa energia. E io lo apprezzo, per questo. Perché mi sembra davvero vivo, anche se lui dice spesso di sentirsi il contrario. Comunque G-looka, a parte avermi detto che a Catania c'è il mare, e io mi fido perché so che lui non mi racconta delle balle, nemmeno ogni tanto, mi ha anche fatto vedere il video di una canzone di Monkeyman, che si intitola Mammoriano. E in questo video, che è girato a Catania, anche se il mare non si vede, si vede G-looka che balla e si vedono anche tutti i suoi amici, tra cui due ragazze bellissime, che ballano.

E, in più, si vede Catania: cioè si vede la statua di un elefante e si vede il mercato del pesce. E allora io ho pensato che Catania **sta a metà tra l'India, per l'elefante,**

è in mezzo

e **Corvetto, per il mercato**. E quindi sta a metà tra il mio passato e il mio presente e che, dunque, alla fine, Catania potrebbe essere il mio futuro, quello giusto. E io comunque, più che vicino alla statua dell'elefante, vorrei andare a vivere vicino al mercato del pesce, perché, anche se il mare lì non c'è, almeno **l'odore** del mare lo sento. Allora, per essere più tranquillo, ho chiesto a mamma di darmi il suo cellulare, le ho promesso che avrei fatto una chiamata davvero breve e ho telefonato a G-looka.

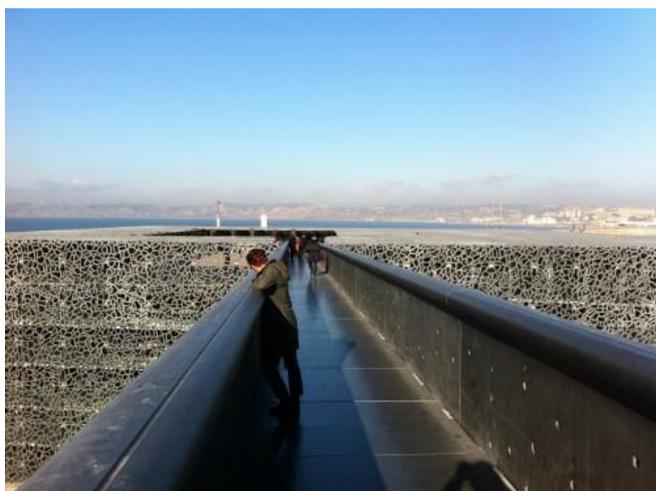
il profumo

«Ehi, G., ma com'è la zona del mercato del pesce di Catania?», gli ho domandato. «A Piscaria?», mi ha chiesto. «Boh: si chiama così la zona del mercato del pesce di Catania?». «Sì». «E, quindi, com'è?». «Si trova tra piazza Duomo, che è il centro della città, e l'Angelo Custode, che un tempo era il quartiere dei **pescatori** e dei lavoratori legati al mare e che adesso è una zona **trucida e tremenda**, disperata e magnetica». «Ah, un po' come Corvetto». «Un po'». «Ma almeno, da lì, si vede il mare?». «Da alcune case sì, ma non da tutte: perché spesso **viene nascosto** dagli Archi della Marina e da **un porto** costruito dai principi Biscari, come se fosse stata la loro piscina personale». Se proprio non posso vedere il mare, anche a me piacerebbe avere una piscina personale.



cruel and terrible

it is hidden behind... / a harbour



whether I want it or not

Comunque oggi era il mio ultimo giorno di scuola, qui a Milano: domani ci trasferiamo a Marsiglia, **che io lo voglia o no**. Cioè, così mi ha detto mamma. E quasi mi veniva da piangere, stamattina, in classe. Mi veniva da piangere davanti a tutto e a tutti: davanti ai **banchi** e davanti alla **lavagna**, davanti alla **preside** e davanti ai **bidelli**, davanti ai libri e davanti ai quaderni, davanti alla professoressa e, questo è peggio, davanti ai compagni. Poi, a un certo punto, ho anche dovuto ammetterlo, che mi veniva da piangere. «Ma ti viene da piangere?», mi ha chiesto il mio migliore amico Massimo, che è anche il mio compagno di banco. «Sì», gli ho risposto: a me non piace raccontare delle balle, nemmeno ogni tanto.

tavoli

blackboard

headmistress

caretakers

«Perché?». «Perché domani ci trasferiamo a Marsiglia, che io lo voglia o no». «Wow!», ha esclamato. E io **non me lo aspettavo** che esclamasse «Wow!». «Perché wow?», gli ho domandato. «Ma come perché: non conosci Keny Arkana?». Non ho avuto nemmeno il tempo di rispondergli, che lui **ha aggiunto**: «Se la incontri in giro per Marsiglia ti fai fare un autografo e **me lo spedisce?**». «Quanto me lo paghi?», gli ho chiesto. «Cinque euro più la **carta Exodia di Yu-Gi-Oh**, va bene?». «Sì». La carta Exodia di Yu-Gi-Oh la desideravo da anni, e in più **vale un botto**: circa cento euro.

non immaginavo

he added

lo invii a me

Manga giapponese

costa tanto

Non è che io sia attaccato ai soldi, anche se alle carte di Yu-Gi-Oh –e soprattutto a quella di Exodia- ci tengo parecchio, ma è che mamma e papà dicono sempre: **«Basta con questa storia che la gente ti chiede di fare le cose gratis!»**. Poi, di solito, dopo questo **sfogo** mamma e papà aggiungono anche una parolaccia, ma in malayalam, e quindi io capisco che è una parolaccia, per il modo **in cui** la dicono, ma non capisco cosa voglia dire, perché il malayalam non lo conosco. Ma il vero problema, adesso, è che, fino a quando non me ne aveva parlato il mio migliore amico Massimo, io non conoscevo neppure Keny Arkana. Però, poi, ho avuto l'idea (geniale) di digitare il suo nome su Wikipedia, almeno per vedere la sua foto. Così, nel caso un giorno l'avessi incontrata in giro per Marsiglia, avrei potuto riconoscerla, chiederle l'autografo e **guadagnare** i miei cinque euro più la carta Exodia di Yu-Gi-Oh. E, niente, ho digitato il suo nome su Wikipedia, ma la sua foto non c'era. Però, ho letto delle cose che mi hanno lasciato **sbalordito**. Tipo: «Keny Arkana (Boulogne-Billancourt, 20 dicembre 1982) è una rapper francese». Bene, ho pensato: c'è del rap anche in Francia, e pure tra le donne (quest'ultima non me l'aspettavo: non mi immaginavo proprio che esistessero rapper donna). Male, mi sono detto: **dato che** è una rapper, anche se è una donna, **avrei dovuto conoscerla**.

per me sono molto importanti

outburst

in which

to earn

molto sorpreso

considerando che

I should have known her



Così sono andato avanti a leggere e **ho scoperto** altre cose: che è marsigliese ma di origine algerina (così come io sono milanese ma di origini indiane), che ha iniziato a rappare a 14 anni con i suoi amici (quindi io sono avanti, dato che ne ho solo dieci, di anni, e ogni tanto rappo già con i miei amici), che **grazie alla** sua straordinaria energia e al suo **invidiabile** flow ha ottenuto un discreto successo (io non so come ho l'energia e come ho il flow ma so che vorrei avere **un successo della madonna, altro che discreto**) e che le sue canzoni parlano di robe politiche e sociali (sicuramente se lei lo fa è perché va bene così ma io in realtà vorrei parlare anche di robe d'amore, almeno **per riuscire** a dire a Letizia che mi piace **dai tempi dell'asilo**). Infine, mi sono visto un po' di video, di questa Keny Arkana. E finalmente ho visto anche lei. Che è proprio bella. Ma bella bella bella: ha la faccia da bambina, anche se ormai ha 32 anni, e porta le treccine o forse i dread, non si capisce bene perché i suoi capelli sono sempre nascosti dentro un turbante o sotto **un cappuccio**, è magra, muscolosa e si muove proprio come un rapper. Solo che lei è una rapper. Dunque una donna che fa rap. Ed è bella bella bella. Quasi più di Letizia. I suoi video mi piacciono tutti, da *La Rage*, che è del 2006, a *Vie d'artiste*, che è del 2012. Ma secondo me il migliore è *Capitale de la Rupture*, che invece è del 2013, perché in quello lì si vede bene Marsiglia. E, sorpresa: si vede tanto cemento, sì, e poco verde, ok, e di animali non se ne vedono proprio però si vedono moltissime persone di ogni tipo e soprattutto si vede un sacco di mare.

from 'scoprire'

thanks to

enviable

un grandissimo successo, non moderato

per avere il coraggio

da quando eravamo bambini



Allora **aveva ragione**, mamma: a Marsiglia c'è il mare, è vero. Non mi ha raccontato una balla. E io adesso sono contento di andarci. Mi piace proprio, Marsiglia. E mi piace pure il francese: cioè, ha un bel suono. Funziona bene, per il rap. Magari **da grande** un ragazzino digiterà il mio nome su Wikipedia e troverà scritto: «Ravi Chandra (Trivandrum, 7 ottobre 2002) è un rapper francese (di origini indiane)». Non sarebbe niente male, no. Anzi, sarebbe proprio figo. Vabbè, **chissà**. Comunque poi, per conoscere ancora meglio Keny Arkana, sono andato su altri siti e ho scoperto altre cose: tipo che lei di solito sta in un quartiere che si chiama la Plaine, e addirittura, come Josh MCK che ha dedicato una canzone a Corvetto, lei e altri rapper francesi hanno dedicato una canzone anche a la Plaine, mi sembra: perché la canzone si intitola *De l'opéra à la Plaine 2*. Così, poi, restando su internet, sono andato a cercarmi delle notizie su la Plaine, tipo foto e racconti. E adesso ne so parecchio, su la Plaine. So, per esempio, che di la Plaine ne parlava **tempo fa** anche **un tizio** marsigliese, uno scrittore che si chiamava Jean-Claude Izzo, che è morto nel 2000 ma che deve essere ancora parecchio famoso, forse più di Gianluca Vittorio e, beh, questo tizio aveva scritto che la Plaine era «il quartiere più alla moda di Marsiglia. Da un lato e dall'altro del **corso**, fino in alto, al metrò Notre-Dame-Du-Mont, c'erano soltanto ristoranti, bar, locali, antiquari e case di moda marsigliesi. Tutta la Marsiglia notturna si dava

she was right

quando io sarò adulto

who knows

in passato

un uomo

appuntamento lì, dopo le sette di sera». E pare che la Plaine sia ancora così: tutta colorata da murales e graffiti, e con le strade piene di posti dove andare a mangiare, a bere, a ballare, ad ascoltare un concerto, a vedere un film o a comprare di tutto, dai dischi ai libri.

Beh, a me interessano di più i dischi comunque. E, insomma, la Plaine sembra molto meglio di Corvetto, che invece è più grigia che colorata e che i negozi più che aprirli li chiudono, e che alle sette di sera la gente più che uscire si chiude in casa, perché un po' è troppo stanca e un po' ha troppa paura, per uscire. Però, mi sa che nemmeno da la Plaine si vede il mare. Oppure, se si vede, si vede dall'alto: perché la Plaine sta su una specie di **montagnetta**. Che, per uno che abita in un seminterrato, andare a vivere su una montagnetta è, comunque, una figata. Deve essere questa cosa qui, il passare dal seminterrato alla montagnetta, quella che al telegiornale chiamano **"ascesa sociale"**. «Mamma ma, a Marsiglia, in che quartiere andremo a vivere, lo sai?», le ho chiesto. «A la Plaine, amore». «Mecojoni!» «Cosa hai detto?». «Wow, mamma: ho detto wow». «Ma a scuola ti hanno insegnato solo a dire "wow", quando sei contento?».

invece di

piccola montagna

social improvement

A MILANO NON C'È IL MARE

G. Kuruvilla

Es 1 – prima di leggere

- a) QUESTE SONO LE CANZONI CHE ASCOLTA IL PROTAGONISTA DEL RACCONTO, RAVI
 - *Non sono un immigrato*, Amir Issa https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cN_PDAg8ns (con testo)
 - *Corvetto: degrado, cattiveria, strada verso la luce*, Josh MCK <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-rxcqEAz4o> (con testo)
- b) **Rispondi alla domanda: Come ti sembra il quartiere Corvetto?**
- c) QUESTE SONO LE CITTÀ CHE RAVI NOMINA NEL RACCONTO: Milano, Roma, Catania, Marsiglia (accessibili su googlemap)

Es 2 – prima di leggere

Vivi a Birmingham da quando avevi 2 anni. Adesso hai 10 anni, come tutti i ragazzi della tua età vai a scuola, hai i tuoi amici, le tue passioni, ecc. La tua famiglia ti comunica che fra un mese dovrete trasferirvi a Praga, in Repubblica Ceca, dove tuo padre ha trovato lavoro. Come ti senti?

Vocabulary Discussion Group

Students write up to 10 words they have recorded and learned through reading/they find particularly interesting or unusual or they think will be useful to other students. For each word or phrase, students should provide a gloss, a definition or a synonym. And they should give the sentence in which the word or phrase occurs in the text.

🚩 Es 3 – durante la lettura (pp. 1-5)

Vero o Falso?

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Il quartiere milanese Corvetto è un posto fantastico dove vivere. | V F |
| 2. Ravi andrà a vivere a Marsiglia e non ha paura di niente. | V F |
| 3. Ravi ha le stesse idee del rapper Amir Issa. | V F |

² These activities were uploaded on the University Intranet. They were online activities, some of which had to be done as group discussion activities.

4. Ravi conosce molto meglio l'Italia dell'India. V F
5. Ravi vorrebbe vestirsi come Amir ma sua madre non gli permette di farlo. V F

✚ Es 4 – dopo la lettura di pp. 1-5

Scrivi la parola giusta per ogni definizione.

Definizione	Parola
1. Appartamento sottoterra:	
2. Va bene (informale):	
3. Andare a vivere in un'altra città:	
4. In un palazzo c'è il <i>primo, secondo, terzo</i> , ...:	
5. Zona di una città:	
6.  :	
7. Fare visita a qualcuno:	
8. Niente:	
9.  :	

✚ Es 5 - durante la lettura (pp. 6-11)

Vero o Falso?

- 1) G-looka parla un ottimo italiano. V F
- 2) G-looka è molto affettuoso con Ravi e Massimo. V F
- 3) Catania è identica all'India. V F
- 4) L'ultimo giorno di scuola Ravi si sente molto felice. V F
- 5) Ravi vede il mare di Marsiglia nel video della rapper Keny Arkana. V F
- 6) Ravi cambia idea sul francese: adesso gli piace perché "suona bene" nel rap. V F
- 7) A Marsiglia la famiglia Chandra vivrà in un seminterrato. V F

- ✚ Es 6 – dopo la lettura di pp. 6-11
Seleziona la definizione corretta per ogni parola.

Parole	Definizione
1. “digitare” significa:	a. scrivere su una tastiera (di un PC, di uno smartphone, ecc.) b. scrivere con una penna c. scrivere un’email
2. “scoprire” significa:	a. Riuscire a vedere/a conoscere qualcosa che prima non vedevo/conoscevo b. Capire c. Andare in un posto lontano
3. la parola colloquiale “fregatura” significa:	a. una cosa bella e divertente b. una cosa noiosa c. una cosa che mi fa sentire deluso
4. “cioè” significa:	a. however b. that is/that is to say c. whereas
5. “fidarsi” significa:	a. to trust/to have confidence in b. to know someone very well c. to meet someone for the first time
6. “una balla” significa:	a. una cosa vera b. un segreto c. una bugia
7. “vergognarsi” significa:	a. sentirsi molto in imbarazzo b. sentirsi molto tranquilli c. sentirsi tristi
8. “a metà” significa:	a. in mezzo b. vicino a c. lontano da
9. Un sinonimo di “l’odore” è:	a. il profumo b. la puzza c. l’aria
10. “un sacco” significa:	a. molto b. grande c. un pacchetto

Es 7 – dopo la lettura di tutto il racconto

Vocabolario:

Il racconto *A Milano non c'è il mare* usa una lingua semplice, molto simile alla lingua parlata:

- Ci sono molte parole informali/colloquiali, per esempio *mica, pure, vabbe'*: puoi trovare altri esempi?
- Perché Gabriella Kuruvilla (la scrittrice) usa questo tipo di lingua, secondo te?

Es 8 – dopo la lettura di tutto il racconto

Scrivi:

Un tuo amico vuole leggere *A Milano non c'è il mare*, ma prima di comprare il libro ti chiede informazioni. Scrivi al tuo amico e raccontagli chi è Ravi (es. età, interessi, famiglia, pensieri, ecc.)

Es 9 – dopo la lettura di tutto il racconto

Rispondi alle domande:

1. Quale titolo daresti al racconto? Leggi i titoli dei tuoi compagni e vota quello che preferisci!
2. Che cosa hai scoperto sull'Italia?
3. *Curry di pollo* e *A Milano non c'è il mare*: quale racconto ti è piaciuto di più? Perché?

LINKS

Dove trovare il racconto:

Puoi leggere il testo senza glossario a questi link:

puntata 1: <http://lacittanuova.milano.corriere.it/2014/10/29/cera-una-volta-corvetto-e-un-ossimoro/>

puntata 2: <http://lacittanuova.milano.corriere.it/2014/11/07/a-milano-non-ce-il-mare-puntata-n-2/>

puntata 3: <http://lacittanuova.milano.corriere.it/2014/11/13/a-milano-non-ce-il-mare-puntata-n-3/>

puntata 4: <http://lacittanuova.milano.corriere.it/2014/11/20/a-milano-non-ce-il-mare-puntata-n-4/>

Appendix E: List of CLTs (creative literary texts) used for the follow-on experiment

Poetry:

- Due, Erri De Luca
- Io non ho bisogno di denaro, Alda Merini
- 2 poesie di Patrizia Cavalli

Short stories:

- L'avventura di due sposi, Italo Calvino (audiobook)
- ...magia del silenzio, Alessandro Tagliapietra (*this is a chapter of a book – Storia di una stella*)
- Il piccione comunale, Italo Calvino

Fairy tales:

- La passeggiata di un distratto, Gianni Rodari
- L'H in fuga, Gianni Rodari

Graphic novels*:

- Questa mattina ti ho perso,
- Hai qualcosa da dirmi?,
- Mariolina mia,
- Tornano tutti a casa,
- Andrea ama Anna dai capelli sporchi,

[*All of them are part of the book *“La fine dell'amore”*, di Ilaria Bernardini]

Appendix F: Activity sheet – follow-on experiment

Exercise 1: introduction

o 1) FREE-READING (15/20 min):
SCEGLI UN TESTO E INIZIA A LEGGERE.
-> SE TI PIACE, LEGGILO
-> SE **NON TI PIACE, SMETTI DI LEGGERE** E SCEGLI UN ALTRO TESTO
(chiedi consigli all'insegnante se vuoi 😊)

o 2) LEGGI CON IL TUO RITMO NATURALE: NON C'È FRETTA!
o 3) NON USARE IL DIZIONARIO
o 4) SCRIVI UN 'VOCABULARY JOURNAL'
o 5) LEGGI IN SILENZIO SENZA DISTURBARE
o 6) NON FARE ALTRE ATTIVITÀ



Exercise 2a: Parlare di un testo che ho letto

Parlare di un testo che ho letto/sto leggendo



- **In coppie: 3 minuti (ogni studente)**
- **Domande e risposte sul testo**
- **Cambio!**
- **Cambio coppie**



Exercise 2b: Parlare di un testo che ho letto

Parlare di un testo che ho letto/sto leggendo in italiano

Qual è il titolo del testo?

Qual è il genere?

Di che cosa parla il testo?

Consigliaresti questo testo a qualcuno? (Seleziona 1 risposta)

- Sì, sicuramente!
- Se ti piace il genere (_____), sì.
(Write the genre – fairy tale, poem, etc. - of the text)
- No.

Perché? Perché no?

Altre domande (un tuo compagno di classe ti farà alcune di queste domande, preparati a rispondere!)

Dove è ambientata la storia? (*Where does the story take place?*)

Qual è la storia?

Chi è il protagonista della storia?

Come ti sei sentito/a quando hai finito di leggere il testo?

Qual è la cosa più bella (o più brutta) del testo?

Quanto tempo ci hai messo a leggere il testo? (*How long did it take you to read the text?*)



Exercise 3: book review

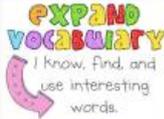
Parlare di un testo che ho letto/sto leggendo



➤ **My favourite sentence**
Leggi a un compagno la tua frase preferita: spiega il contesto della frase, perché l'hai scelta e quale significato ha nella storia.

Exercise 4: vocabulary discussion groups

Vocabulary discussion groups



- Porta in classe il tuo 'vocabulary journal' con le parole che hai imparato
- Seleziona alcune parole e/o frasi che per te sono **interessanti, inusuali (unusual)** o che secondo te possono essere **utili** ai tuoi compagni
- Prepara una spiegazione e/o un sinonimo e/o una traduzione della parola o della frase
- **IMPORTANTE!** *Since vocabulary is learned better in context, you should give the sentence in which the word or phrase occurs in your reading.*

Exercise 5: text review (written task)

Scrivi un breve articolo (circa 180 parole) per una rivista di letteratura italiana per stranieri. Parla di uno dei testi letterari che hai letto nel primo semestre. In particolare: di' qual è il titolo, parla degli aspetti positivi e/o negativi del testo ed esprimi la tua opinione. Se vuoi, puoi seguire questo schema:

Il testo che ho letto si intitola...

Il testo parla di...

Leggere questo testo per me è stato...

Lo consiglierei/non lo consiglierei ad un mio compagno perché...



Student Questionnaire 1

Survey of Italian Students' Language Background, Reasons for Studying Italian and Attitudes towards Literature.

Dear student,

This questionnaire is part of my Ph.D. study about the use of literature in the foreign language classroom. It is designed to help me understand your beliefs about, attitudes to and experience of literature in the context of foreign language learning. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on your background in Italian language study, in literature study in your own language or in other languages, as well as your beliefs concerning foreign language learning and literature. Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions: your responses are important as they will inform the later stages of the study. There are no right or wrong answers here, what I am interested in are your views about the specific topic. Thank you for your help!

Section 1: Background Information

Please tick the appropriate box or write your answer in the space provided.

1. Please state your reasons for studying Italian. Please rank them in order of priority (e.g. 1, 2, 3 ...) and leave blank any that do not apply.

General interest in the language ____	General interest in the culture ____	General interest in the literature ____	Relevant to other university studies ____
Useful for current/future employment ____	Intending to travel to Italy ____	Family/friends are Italian speakers ____	Other (please specify) ____ _____

2. What is literature in your opinion?

3. Do you read classical or contemporary fiction, poetry or plays in your first language/mother tongue?

Yes No

If you answered **NO**, why not? _____

Now go to question 4.

If you answered **YES**,

- 3.1 Which of the following do you read?

Fiction (novels and short stories) <input type="checkbox"/>	Poetry <input type="checkbox"/>	Plays <input type="checkbox"/>
Graphic novels <input type="checkbox"/>	Manga <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/>

- 3.2 Do you read classical or contemporary fiction, poetry or plays for

study? pleasure? study and pleasure?

Please turn over.

4. Do you read classical or contemporary fiction, poetry or plays in languages other than your first language?

Yes No

If you answered **NO**, go to question 5.

If you answered **YES**,

4.1 Do you read classical or contemporary fiction, poetry or plays for:

study? pleasure? study and pleasure?

5. I studied literature in secondary school for:

0 years 1 year 2 years 3 years 4 years 5 years 6 years

6. Please complete ONE of the following sentences:

a. I like literature because _____

b. I do not like literature because _____

Section 2: Attitudes towards Literature in a Foreign Language

Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by ticking ONE answer for each. The statements are not just about your current studies and in answering you should consider your experience as a foreign language student more generally.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. I believe reading literature in a foreign language improves my language skills .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. I believe that reading literature in a foreign language enhances my appreciation and understanding of the foreign culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. I find reading and understanding a literary text in a foreign language motivating .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. Students of a foreign language should be exposed to literary texts in the classroom .	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please turn over.

Appendix H: Student Questionnaire 2 (SQ2)

Student Questionnaire 2 Survey of Italian Students' Attitudes towards Literature.

ID: _____

Dear student,

This questionnaire is part of my Ph.D. study about the use of literature in the foreign language classroom. It is designed to help me understand your beliefs about, attitudes to and experience of literature in the context of foreign language learning. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on your beliefs concerning foreign language learning and literature. Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions: your responses are important as they will inform the later stages of the study. There are no right or wrong answers here, what I am interested in are your views about the specific topic. Thank you for your help!

Section 1

Please write your answer in the space provided.

1. What is literature in your opinion?

2. Please complete ONE of the following sentences:

a. I like literature because _____

b. I do not like literature because _____

Section 2

Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by ticking ONE answer for each. The statements are not just about your current studies and in answering you should consider your experience as a foreign language student more generally.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. I believe reading literature in a foreign language improves my language skills .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. I believe that reading literature in a foreign language enhances my appreciation and understanding of the foreign culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. I find reading and understanding a literary text in a foreign language motivating .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. Students of a foreign language should be exposed to literary texts in the classroom .	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please turn over.

7. **Literary background knowledge** (i.e. information about a writer, literary history and theory, stylistics, etc.) is necessary for a student to read, understand and enjoy texts in a foreign language.

8. I **only** enjoy literary texts in the foreign language if I find the story interesting.

9. I **only** enjoy literary texts in the foreign language if I find the language easy to understand.

10. When I work with a literary text in the foreign language classroom, I expect my teacher to **explain the text** using literary background knowledge.

11. When I work with a literary text in the foreign language classroom, I expect my teacher to allow me to **express my opinions** about the text.

12. When I work with a literary text in the foreign language classroom, I expect my teacher to support my reading with activities to **encourage language development**.

13. For me reading *Curry di pollo* was:

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not at all motivating | Slightly motivating | Moderately motivating | Very motivating | Extremely motivating |

Please explain your answer by commenting on your reading experience with reference to such things as topic, genre, language, activities engaged in, etc.

Please turn over.

Appendix I: Student Questionnaire 3 (SQ3), Experimental Group

ID: _____

Student Questionnaire 3

Survey of Italian Students' Language Background, Reasons for Studying Italian and Attitudes towards Literature.

Dear student,

This questionnaire is part of my Ph.D. study about the use of literature in the foreign language classroom. It is designed to help me understand your beliefs about, attitudes to and experience of literature in the context of foreign language learning. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on your beliefs concerning foreign language learning and literature. Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions: your responses are important as they will inform the later stages of the study. There are no right or wrong answers here, what I am interested in are your views about the specific topic. Thank you for your help!

Section 1: Attitudes towards Literature in a Foreign Language

Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by ticking ONE answer for each. The statements are not just about your current studies and in answering you should consider your experience as a foreign language student more generally.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I believe reading literature in a foreign language improves my language skills .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. I believe that reading literature in a foreign language enhances my appreciation and understanding of the foreign culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. I find reading and understanding a literary text in a foreign language motivating .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. Students of a foreign language should be exposed to literary texts in the classroom .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Literary background knowledge (i.e. information about a writer, literary history and theory, stylistics, etc.) is necessary for a student to read, understand and enjoy texts in a foreign language.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 2: Your experience of and opinion about the texts you read during your Italian course

Please underline the appropriate answer or write your answer in the space provided.

6. Please underline which of the following text(s) you read:

<p><i>Poetry:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due - Io non ho bisogno di denaro - 2 poesie <p><i>Fairy tales:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - La passeggiata di un distratto - L'H in fuga 	<p><i>Short stories:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - L'avventura di due sposi - ...magia del silenzio (Storia di una stella) - Il piccione comunale - A Milano non c'è il mare - Curry di pollo 	<p><i>Graphic novels:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questa mattina ti ho perso - Hai qualcosa da dirmi? - Mariolina mia - Tornano tutti a casa - Andrea ama Anna dai capelli sporchi
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Please turn over.

7. For me reading the text(s) was (underline your answer):

**Not at all
motivating**

**Slightly
motivating**

**Moderately
motivating**

**Very
motivating**

**Extremely
motivating**

Please explain your answer by commenting on your reading experience with reference to such things as topic, genre, language, activities engaged in, etc.; feel free to refer to specific texts.

8. Do you intend/desire to read further in Italian or in a foreign language? Underline your answer.

Definitely not

Unlikely

Not sure

Probably

Definitely yes

Please explain your answer.

9. During the last semester and the 2nd semester of last year, you experienced two different ways of integrating literature in your Italian language course (one involving follow-up activities linked to your reading of a single text, one involving reading different texts and no exercises). Which one did you like more and why? (Feel free to refer to any aspect at all: the impact on your motivation, the class size, the activities done in class, etc.)

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help!

Appendix J: Student Questionnaire 3 (SQ3), Follow-up Group

ID: _____

Student Questionnaire 3
Survey of Italian Students' Language Background, Reasons for Studying Italian and Attitudes towards Literature.

Dear student,

This questionnaire is part of my Ph.D. study about the use of literature in the foreign language classroom. It is designed to help me understand your beliefs about, attitudes to and experience of literature in the context of foreign language learning. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information on your beliefs concerning foreign language learning and literature. Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions: your responses are important as they will inform the later stages of the study. There are no right or wrong answers here, what I am interested in are your views about the specific topic. Thank you for your help!

Section 1: Attitudes towards Literature in a Foreign Language

Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by ticking ONE answer for each. The statements are not just about your current studies and in answering you should consider your experience as a foreign language student more generally.

<i>Statement</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I believe reading literature in a foreign language improves my language skills .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. I believe that reading literature in a foreign language enhances my appreciation and understanding of the foreign culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. I find reading and understanding a literary text in a foreign language motivating .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. Students of a foreign language should be exposed to literary texts in the classroom .	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. Literary background knowledge (i.e. information about a writer, literary history and theory, stylistics, etc.) is necessary for a student to read, understand and enjoy texts in a foreign language.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 2: Your experience of and opinion about the texts you read during your Italian course

Please underline the appropriate answer or write your answer in the space provided.

6. Please underline which of the following text(s) you read:

<i>Poetry:</i> - Due - Io non ho bisogno di denaro - 2 poesie <i>Fairy tales:</i> - La passeggiata di un distratto - L'H in fuga	<i>Short stories:</i> - L'avventura di due sposi - ...magia del silenzio (Storia di una stella) - Il piccione comunale - A Milano non c'è il mare - Curry di pollo	<i>Graphic novels:</i> - Questa mattina ti ho perso - Hai qualcosa da dirmi? - Mariolina mia - Tornano tutti a casa - Andrea ama Anna dai capelli sporchi
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Please turn over.

7. For me reading the text(s) was (underline your answer):

**Not at all
motivating**

**Slightly
motivating**

**Moderately
motivating**

**Very
motivating**

**Extremely
motivating**

Please explain your answer by commenting on your reading experience with reference to such things as topic, genre, language, activities engaged in, etc.; feel free to refer to specific texts.

8. Do you intend/desire to read further in Italian or in a foreign language? Underline your answer.

Definitely not

Unlikely

Not sure

Probably

Definitely yes

Please explain your answer.

9. Please add any further comments (e.g. the possible role/roles of literature in foreign language learning, problems you experience(d) when reading literature in a foreign language, how you deal(t) with these, positive experience(s) you have/had with reading literature in a foreign language ...):

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help!

Appendix K: Student Interview (SI)

ID: ____

Date: _____

Student Interview

- a. Can you remember what you first thought when I told you that we were about to read a literary text in Italian?
- b. Were you expecting something in particular?
- c. How did reading an Italian literary text make you feel about your learning of Italian?
- d. How would you describe your state of motivation for learning Italian now that we have completed our course?
- e. Do you think that reading *Curry di pollo* has affected your motivation for learning Italian in any way? Explain.
- f. What was your favourite aspect of working with the text?
- g. Can you describe how you felt about learning Italian during the sessions on *Curry di pollo* and during normal classes?

Extra questions to address to specific students:

➤ **To SE13:**

- 1) I noticed you volunteered more than in normal class, and your participation was more active and enthusiastic. How do you feel about this?
- 2) Looking at questionnaire 1 and questionnaire 2 I noticed you changed your opinion about this statement "I find reading and understanding a literary text in a FL motivating": you shifted from 'unsure' to 'strongly agree'. Can you explain why?
- 3) Why did you say that *Curry di pollo* was 'surprisingly' quite easy to understand, and not 'daunting as [you] thought it would be'.

➤ **To SE6:**

- 1) You said that reading *Curry di pollo* for you was 'slightly motivating': can you explain your answer?
- 2) Looking at questionnaire 1 and questionnaire 2 I noticed you changed your opinion about this statement "Literary background knowledge is necessary for a student to read, understand and enjoy texts in a FL": you shifted from 'disagree' to 'agree'. Can you explain why?

- h. In what ways do you think that reading a literary text in the Italian classroom had or will have an impact on your reading habits in a foreign language?
- i. Did you feel reading of this text changed the way in which you read?
- j. Did you feel reading of this text changed how you approach difficulty of grammar and vocabulary?
- k. How would you feel about working with literary texts in your future foreign language courses?

Extra questions to address to specific students:

➤ **To SE4 and SE9 (very motivated), and to SE6 (slightly motivated):**

- 1) In the 1st questionnaire you said you do not read in any foreign language, while in the 2nd questionnaire you said that you definitely intend/desire to read further in Italian. Can you explain this?
 - l. How do you think what a teacher does affects your appreciation of a literary text in the foreign language classroom?
 - m. Some teachers do not use literature in the foreign language classroom because they fear that students would not like it or would not be interested. How do you feel about that?
 - n. Literature is not often used at beginner level because foreign language teachers think that it is too linguistically and culturally difficult. What do you think about that?
 - o. What would you suggest/recommend to a teacher that is going to use a creative literary text with her or his foreign language students?
 - p. In what way did your teacher approach differ in normal and experimental class?

Extra questions to address to specific students:

➤ **To SE7:**

- 1) You disagreed with this statement: "Students of a FL should be exposed to literary texts in the classroom". However, I understand from your answers in the questionnaires that you love reading literature. Can you explain your answer?
- 2) In the questionnaires you were 'unsure' about two questions: whether the foreign language teacher has to explain literary texts to the students, and whether students should express their opinions about literary texts. Can you explain it?

➤ **To SE9:** You said that you enjoyed the text and the activities as you 'could expand [your] ideas of the story by also expanding [your] Italian use'. Do you find that the activities were different from what you normally do in the FL classroom?

- q. Do you think that during our sessions on *Curry di pollo* you used more Italian than in normal class?

Teacher Questionnaire

Creative literary texts in the foreign language classroom: teaching beliefs, attitudes and practices.

Dear teacher,

This questionnaire is part of my Ph.D. study about the use of creative literary texts (i.e. classical or contemporary fiction, poetry or plays) in the foreign language classroom funded by the University of Birmingham College of Arts and Law. It is designed to help me understand your beliefs about, attitudes to and experience of literature in the context of foreign language teaching/learning. Participation is voluntary and teachers of modern foreign languages across the College are being invited to contribute. Your responses are important as they will inform the later stages of the study. There are no right or wrong answers here: what I am interested in are your views about the specific topic. If you would like any further information about the study, please email Giulia Covarino on GXC496@bham.ac.uk. Thank you for your help!

Section 1: Academic / Literary Background and Personal Reading Habits

Please tick the appropriate box or write your answer in the space provided.

1. What is your first degree?

L1 Literature L1 Literature and Language L1 Language / Linguistics Modern Languages Modern Languages and Literature Other (please specify)

2. Which foreign language(s) (FL)/second language(s) (SL) do you teach?

3. Do you have any other qualification specific to FL/SL teaching?

Yes No

If YES, please specify:

PGCE Masters CTEFL/CELTA DTEFL/DELTA Other (please specify)

4. How long have you been teaching your FL/SL? _____

5. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend reading creative literary texts?

a. For work purposes: Fewer than 5 More than 5 More than 10 b. For pleasure: Fewer than 5 More than 5 More than 10

6. How many hours per week do you expect your students to be reading creative literary texts?

Fewer than 2 More than 2 More than 5

Please turn over.

Section 2: Your Learners and Your Teaching

Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below by ticking ONE answer for each. The statements are not just about your current job and in answering you should consider your experience as a foreign language teacher more generally.

<i>Statement</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. It is possible to expose students at all levels of FL proficiency to creative literary texts in the target language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. For a FL learner, creative literary texts are linguistically and culturally more difficult than other types of text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I believe that students can learn a FL through reading creative literary texts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. As a teacher, I feel confident when I use a creative literary text in my FL courses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. For me, using creative literary texts is more difficult than using other texts in the FL classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. For effective use of creative literary texts in the FL classroom, teachers must have background literary knowledge (i.e. biographical information about a writer, general literary history and theory, literary stylistics, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. For effective use of creative literary texts in the FL classroom, teaching skills are more important than teachers' background knowledge of literature.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. When I use a creative literary text in the FL classroom, my role as a teacher is to ensure that all students correctly interpret the meaning of the text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. When I use a creative literary text in the FL classroom, my role as a teacher is to promote language learning, just as it is for any type of text I use in the FL classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. When I use a creative literary text in the FL classroom, my role as a teacher is to allow students to enjoy an experience that motivates them to use the target language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please turn over.

17. When I use a creative literary text in the FL classroom, my role as a teacher is to allow students to improve their reading habits in the target language.

Section 3: Use of creative literary texts in the foreign language classroom

This section contains five open-ended questions. These are an important part of the questionnaire and give you the opportunity to comment more specifically on your views and experience of creative literary texts in the context of foreign language teaching/learning. Please answer the following questions as fully as you can.

18. Describe your feelings about using creative literary texts in the FL classroom.

19. Have you ever used creative literary texts as resources in the FL classroom?

Yes No

If you answered **NO**, this is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your help!
If you answered **YES**, please continue the questionnaire.

20. Describe how you use or have used creative literary texts in your FL classroom. Please include students' language proficiency level, type of text and activities.

Please turn over.

21. In your experience, does the use of creative literary texts in the FL classroom have any impact on students' **motivation**? Please explain your answer.

22. In your experience, what impact does the use of creative literary texts have on students' **reading habits** in the FL? Please explain your answer.

Section 4: Further Participation

23. In the next stage of the study I would like to talk to individual teachers to learn more about their views on the use of creative literary texts in FL/SL teaching and learning. Would you be interested in discussing this issue further?

Yes No

If you answered Yes, please write your name and email address here.

Name:	
E-mail:	

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help!

Appendix M: Teacher Interview (TI)

ID: _____

Date: _____

Teacher Interview

- a. How often do you use literary texts in your foreign language courses?
- b. How do you select literary texts to be deployed in the classroom?
- c. What purposes does the use of literature in the foreign language classroom have?
- d. Do you think that there is a difference between the use of literature in the foreign language classroom and its use in the translation classroom?
- e. In the questionnaire you (strongly) agreed that when you use literary texts in the foreign language classroom, your role as a teacher is to motivate students to use the target language more. In what ways does literature motivate students to use the target language more?

Extra question for T15:

In the questionnaire you said that you think there is “limited impact” on students’ motivation. Can you explain this?

- f. Some beginner students I interviewed say that literature engages/motivates them more than a textbook as they feel they learn more naturally, they use their imagination and creativity more. What do you think about that?
- g. Some claim that the use of literature in the FL classroom leads to greater ‘authenticity’ and thus heightened motivation. Could you comment on that?

Extra question for T15:

In the questionnaire you said that “you [as a teacher] have to work harder to sell their [creative literary texts] usefulness to the students”. Can you explain this?

- h. In the questionnaire you (strongly) agreed that when you use literary texts in the foreign language classroom, your role as a teacher is to improve students’ reading habits in the target language. In what ways does literature improve students’ reading habits in the target language?
- i. Some teachers think that literature in the foreign language classroom does not influence students’ reading habits unless students are already motivated to read literature on their own. However, many students who took part in my experiment did not read much literature (in some cases they did not read at all) before the experiment, but they intend/desire to read further in a foreign language now. What do you think about that?
- j. Do you believe creative literary texts are more effective in encouraging students’ reading habits (and developing their reading skills) than non-literary texts?
- k. What do you think is the role of teacher when deploying literature in the foreign language classroom?
- l. How do you think what a teacher does affects students’ appreciation of a literary text?
- m. What would you suggest/recommend to a teacher who is going to use a literary text with her or his foreign language students?
- n. Do you think any special training is required to use literary texts in the foreign language classroom?

- o. In the questionnaire you (strongly) agreed that literary texts are linguistically and culturally more difficult for students. Can you explain this?
- p. The majority of teachers agree in the questionnaire that students at all levels of language proficiency can be exposed to literature but then only a few of them say they use literature at beginners' level. Can you explain this apparent discrepancy?
- q. I conducted some interviews with students of Italian at beginners' level, to understand how they perceive literature in the foreign language classroom. I asked them their opinion about the fact that literature is not often used at beginners' level because teachers think that it may be too difficult. I was struck by the answer of one student who told me: "It is not *too difficult* if you don't use a text that it is *too difficult*." How do you feel about that?
- r. Many foreign language teachers think that students do not like literature. However, many students who answered my research questionnaire declared they like reading, find it motivating, and think students should be exposed to literature in foreign language courses. Why do you think there is such a difference between teachers' and students' perspectives?

Extra question for T11:

In the questionnaire you said that "after all these considerations, I think I should try to use literary texts much more in my lessons!". Can you explain this?

Extra question for T32:

In the questionnaire you said that "reading authentic materials such as literary texts in the FL can be overwhelming, [...] stressful and slow. [...] teachers should guide students in the reading process. When reading is not *painful* any longer and students have the right tools and the experience, they are more willing to keep reading new material in the FL." Can you explain this?

Appendix N: Teacher Interview (TI) (Italian translation)

ID: _____

Date: _____

Teacher Interview (Italian)

- a. Quanto spesso usi testi letterari nei tuoi corsi di lingua straniera?
- b. Come selezioni i testi letterari che vuoi utilizzare in classe?
- c. Quali sono gli obiettivi/scopi dell'uso della letteratura nella classe di lingua straniera?
- d. Qual è secondo te la differenza fra l'uso del testo letterario nella classe di lingua straniera e nella classe di traduzione?

- e. Nel questionario tu eri fortemente d'accordo sul fatto che quando si usano i testi letterari nella classe di lingua straniera il tuo ruolo come insegnante è quello di motivare gli studenti ad usare di più la lingua straniera. In quali modi la letteratura motiva/porta gli studenti ad usare di più la lingua straniera?
- f. Alcuni studenti di livello elementare che ho intervistato dicono che la letteratura li motiva di più che il libro di testo perché sentono di imparare in modo più naturale e di usare di più la loro immaginazione e creatività rispetto a quando lavorano sul libro di testo. Tu cosa ne pensi?
- g. Alcuni pensano che l'uso della letteratura nella classe di lingua straniera porti a una maggiore autenticità e quindi vada a stimolare la motivazione degli studenti. Tu cosa ne pensi?

- h. Nel questionario eri (fortemente) d'accordo che quando usi testi letterari nella classe di lingua straniera, il tuo ruolo come insegnante è di migliorare le abitudini di lettura nella lingua target. In quali modi la letteratura stimola/migliora le abitudini di lettura nella lingua target?
- i. Alcuni insegnanti pensano che la letteratura nella classe di lingua straniera non influenzi le abitudini di lettura degli studenti, a meno che non siano già motivati alla lettura per conto loro. Però alcuni studenti che hanno partecipato al mio esperimento che non leggevano molto prima dell'esperimento stesso (o in alcuni casi non leggevano affatto), ora hanno dichiarato di voler leggere ancora (di più) in lingua straniera. Cosa ne pensi?
- j. Tu pensi che, rispetto ai testi non-letterari, i testi letterari siano più efficaci ad incoraggiare le abitudini di lettura degli studenti (e a sviluppare le loro capacità/abilità di lettura)?

- k. Qual è il ruolo dell'insegnante quando usa la letteratura nella classe di lingua straniera?
- l. In che modo quello che un insegnante fa in classe influenza il grado di apprezzamento di un testo letterario da parte degli studenti?
- m. Che cosa raccomanderesti a un insegnante che sta per usare un testo letterario con studenti di lingua straniera?
- n. Pensi che sia necessario un training speciale per gli insegnanti di lingua straniera sull'uso del testo letterario?
- o. Nel questionario eri d'accordo che i testi letterari sono più difficili linguisticamente e culturalmente per gli studenti. Puoi spiegare perché?

- p. Io ho riscontrato che nei questionari sottoposti agli insegnanti, secondo la maggioranza gli studenti di una lingua straniera a qualsiasi livello dovrebbero essere esposti alla letteratura, ma poi solo pochi di loro dichiarano di usarla con i livelli di lingua elementari (principianti). Puoi spiegare questa apparente contraddizione?
- q. Io ho fatto alcune interviste a studenti di italiano a livello base, per capire come loro vedono la letteratura nella classe di lingua straniera. Gli ho chiesto un'opinione sul fatto che la letteratura non sia usata spesso nei livelli bassi (elementare) perché gli insegnanti credono sia troppo difficile. Mi ha colpito la risposta di una studentessa che mi ha detto: "non è difficile se usi un testo che non è difficile!" Come ti senti rispetto a questa affermazione?
- r. Molti insegnanti di lingua straniera pensano che agli studenti non piaccia la letteratura. Però molti studenti che hanno risposto al mio questionario di ricerca hanno dichiarato che gli piace leggere, lo trovano motivante, e credono che gli studenti debbano essere esposti alla letteratura nella classe di lingua straniera. Perché secondo te c'è questa differenza tra la percezione degli insegnanti e quella degli studenti?

Domanda extra per T11:

Nel questionario hai detto che "dopo tutte queste considerazioni, credo che dovrei utilizzare la letteratura di più". Puoi spiegarlo?

Domanda extra per T32:

Nel questionario hai detto che "leggere testi letterari in lingua straniera può essere stressante e molto lento [...]. Gli insegnanti dovrebbero guidare il processo di lettura. Quando leggere non è più così faticoso e difficile e gli studenti hanno gli strumenti e l'esperienza giusta, allora avranno voglia di leggere in una lingua straniera". Puoi spiegarlo?

Appendix P: Chapter Four and Chapter Five, Tables

All percentages have been subject to statistical rounding up.

Table 1. Triangulation of data (adapted from Denscombe, 2007).

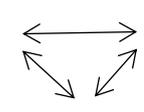
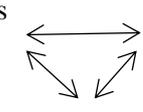
Informant Triangulation	Methodological Triangulation
<p><i>Informant 1</i> FL Teachers’ perspective</p> <p><i>Informant 2</i> FL Students’ perspectives</p>  <p><i>Informant 3</i> Teacher-as-researcher’s perspective</p>	<p><i>Method 1</i> Teacher and Student Questionnaires</p> <p><i>Method 2</i> Teacher and Student Interviews</p>  <p><i>Method 3</i> Classroom Observations</p>
<p><i>Topic</i> Teachers’ and Students’ perceptions of and experiences with CLTs in the FL classroom</p>	

Table 2. Distribution of students’ response rate to student questionnaires 1, 2 and 3 (SQ1, SQ2 and SQ3).

	SQ1	SQ2	SQ3
Experimental group Total number of students: 16	16/16	16/16	14/15 ³
Non-experimental group Total number of students: 24	18/24	n/a	n/a
Students who participated only in the follow-up phase Total number of students: 13	n/a	n/a	5/13
Total number of students who completed each questionnaire	34/40	16/16	19/28

³ When the follow-up phase started, one student had decided not to continue studying Italian as part of her University course and she was consequently removed from the rest of the experiment.

Table 3. Students selected for the interview (SI).

Student (S)	Years of studying literature	Reading habits		Attitude towards CLTs	Student's description of reading <i>Curry di pollo</i> during the experiment
		in L1	in L2/FL		
S4	6	For study	No	Positive	Extremely motivating
S5	6	For pleasure	No	Positive	Very motivating
S6	6	For pleasure	No	Positive	Slightly motivating
S7	6	For pleasure	For study and pleasure	Ambivalent (positive and negative)	Moderately motivating
S9	2	For pleasure	No	Positive	Very motivating
S13	6	For study and pleasure	For study	Positive	Very motivating

Table 4. Teachers' qualifications, language(s) taught, and teaching experience.

		Number of teachers out of a total of 33
First Degree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern Languages and Literature: 15 • Other (i.e. History and Philosophy; Education; Oriental Languages and Cultures; etc.): 6 • L1 Literature and Language: 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L1 Literature: 4 • Modern Languages: 2 • L1 Literature, Language and Linguistics: 1 		
Qualification specific to L2/FL teaching (e.g. PGCE; CTEFL/CELTA; etc.)		24
L2/FL taught (divided by teachers' country of work):		
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italian L2: 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Of which:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italian L2 only: 5 Italian L2 and German FL: 2 Italian L2 and English FL: 2 	

	Italian L2 and Chinese FL:	1
	Italian L2, English FL, Spanish FL:	1
	Italian L2, English FL, French FL:	1
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italian FL: • English FL: 	1 1
USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Italian FL: 	1
England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French FL: • German FL: • Spanish FL: • Italian FL: • Arabic FL: 	7 4 2 4 1
Number of years of experience		from 2 to 40 years

Table 5. Teachers selected for the interview (TI).

Teacher (T)	Qualification	L2/FL taught	Years of teaching experience	Attitude towards CLTs in the FL classroom
T11	MA in Modern Languages and Literature. <i>Specific to L2/FL teaching</i> Master's Degree in Language Pedagogy.	Italian, English	7	Positive and negative (ambivalent)
T12	MA in Modern Languages and Literature; PhD. <i>Specific to L2/FL teaching</i> FHEA.	German	n/a <i>(it is not specified: T12 only says "a long time")</i>	Positive
T15	MA in Modern Languages and Literature; PhD in French Studies.	French	18	Negative
T17	MA in Modern Languages and Literature; PhD in French Studies.	French	10	Positive

T29	MA in Modern Languages and Literature. <i>Specific to L2/FL teaching</i> Master's Degree in Language Pedagogy; PGCE.	Italian, English, Spanish	5	Positive and negative (ambivalent)
T32	MA in Modern Languages and Literature. <i>Specific to L2/FL teaching</i> Master's Degree in Language Pedagogy.	Italian	4	Positive

Table 6. Distribution of students' appreciation of literature.

	"I like literature"	"I don't like literature"	"I like literature" and "I don't like literature"
Students in the non-experimental group Total: 34 (100%)	19 (56%)	9 (26%)	6 (18%)
Students in the experimental group Total: 16 (100%)	15 (94%)	1 (6%)	0
Students in both groups Total: 50 (100%)	34 (68%)	10 (20%)	6 (12%)

Table 7. Distribution of students' reasons for liking literature.

Students who like literature	Reasons why students like literature <i>(some students mentioned more than one reason)</i>				
	Literature as entertainment	Literature as knowledge	Literature as reflection, stimulation and personal development	Literature as L2/FL learning	Literature as aesthetic pleasure
Students in the non-experimental group Total: 25 (100%) (19 students who like literature + 6 who have ambivalent feelings – see table 1)	16 (64%)	8 (32%)	7 (28%)	9 (36%)	1 (4%)
Students in the experimental group Total: 15 (100%)	10 (67%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	2 (13%)	1 (7%)
Students in both groups Total: 40 (100%)	26 (65%)	11 (27%)	10 (25%)	11 (27%)	2 (5%)

Table 8. Distribution of teachers' attitudes to the use of CLTs in the FL classroom.

ATTITUDE	Positive	Negative	Positive and negative	Neutral	n/a	Total of teachers
TEACHERS	20/33 60%	4/33 12%	3/33 9%	4/33 12%	2/33 6%	33 100%

Table 9. Distribution of common beneficial factors mentioned by teachers to explain their positive attitude towards the use of CLTs in the FL.

Beneficial factors of using literature in FL*	Number of teachers out of 23
Development of FL skills (vocabulary, grammar, writing skills)	10
Development of cultural and intercultural competence	9
Enhancement of motivation: <i>Teacher's motivation</i>	4 3
<i>Student's motivation</i>	1
Enhancement of students' creativity and imagination	4
Development of reading skills and reading habits**	4
Development of oral skills	3
Literature's intrinsic artistic value	1
Literature's emotional power	1
<i>* some teachers mentioned more than one factor</i>	
<i>**I separated this from 'FL skills' as 'reading skills and habits' is a specific topic of my research</i>	

Table 10. Distribution of students' answers to item 9 in student questionnaire 1.

	Q9. I find reading and understanding a literary text in a foreign language motivating.				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students in the non-experimental group Total: 34 (100%)	0	6 18%	5 15%	14 41%	9 26%
Students in the experimental group Total: 16 (100%)	0	0	8 50%	7 44%	1 6%
Students in both groups Total: 50 (100%)	0	6 12%	13 26%	21 42%	10 20%

Table 11. Distribution of answers to item 9: a comparison between student questionnaire 1 and 2. Students in the experimental group.

Q9. I find reading and understanding a literary text in a foreign language motivating.					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
Student questionnaire 1 Tot: 16 students (100%)	0	0	8 50%	7 44%	1 6%
Student questionnaire 2 Tot: 16 students (100%)	0	0	1 6%	12 75%	3 19%

Table 12. Distribution of participants' answers to item 13 in student questionnaire 2: students in the experimental group.

Q13. For me reading <i>Curry di pollo</i> was:					
	Not at all motivating	Slightly motivating	Moderately motivating	Very motivating	Extremely motivating
Students in the experimental group Total: 16 (100%)	0	1 6%	5 31%	8 50%	2 13%

Table 13. Distribution of students' answers to item 3 in student questionnaire 3: students in the follow-up group⁴.

Q3. I find reading and understanding a literary text in a foreign language motivating.					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
Students in the follow-up group Total: 19 (100%)	0	0	4 21%	11 58%	4 21%

⁴ I.e. 14/15 students in the experimental group and 5/13 students from those who only took part in the follow-on experiment.

Table 14. Distribution of participants' answers to item 7 in student questionnaire 3: students in the follow-up group⁵.

	Q7. For me reading the text(s) was:				
	Not at all motivating	Slightly motivating	Moderately motivating	Very motivating	Extremely motivating
Students in the follow-up group Total: 19 (100%)	0	1 5%	9 47,5%	9 47,5%	0

Table 15. Distribution of teachers' answers to Q21 (TQ) on students' motivation.

Q21. In your experience, does the use of creative literary texts in the foreign language classroom have any impact on students' motivation? Please explain your answer.	Number of teachers out of 33 (100%)
Yes	15 (46%)
No or limited impact	3 (9%)
It depends on the student	8 (24%)
n/a (do not reply or do not know)	7 (21%)

⁵ I.e. 14/15 students in the experimental group and 5/13 students from those who only took part in the follow-on experiment.

Table 16. Distribution of students' (SS) reading habits in L1 and FL.

	Students who read CLTs in L1			Students who do not read CLTs in L1	Students who read CLTs in FL			Students who do not read CLTs in FL
Students in the non-experimental group Total: 34 (100%)	26 (76.5%)			8 (23.5%)	28 (82%)			6 (18%)
	For study 2 (8%)	For pleasure 4 (15%)	For study and pleasure 16 (62%)		For study 8 (29%)	For pleasure 2 (7%)	For study and pleasure 17 (61%)	
	<i>*4 SS n/a</i>				<i>*1 S n/a</i>			
Students in the experimental group Total: 16 (100%)	14 (87.5%)			2 (12.5%)	10 (62.5%)			6 (37.5%)
	For study 1 (7%)	For pleasure 5 (36%)	For study and pleasure 8 (57%)		For study 7 (70%)	For pleasure 0 (0%)	For study and pleasure 3 (30%)	
Students in both groups Total: 50 (100%)	40 (80%)			10 (20%)	38 (76%)			12 (24%)
	For study 3 (7.5%)	For pleasure 9 (22.5%)	For study and pleasure 24 (60%)		For study 15 (39%)	For pleasure 2 (5%)	For study and pleasure 20 (53%)	
	<i>*4 SS n/a</i>				<i>*1 S n/a</i>			

Table 17. Follow-on experiment: distribution of freely selected texts.

Literary texts divided by <i>genre</i>	Number of students who chose each text out of 19 who completed student questionnaire 3
<i>Poetry</i>	
Due	1
Io non ho bisogno di denaro	1
2 poesie	2
<i>Short stories</i>	
L'avventura di due sposi	11
...magia del silenzio (Storia di una stella)	9
Il piccione comunale	7
A Milano non c'è il mare	4 (+ 12 students who read the text during the experiment)
Curry di pollo	3 (+ 15 students who read the text during the experiment)
<i>Fairy tales</i>	
La passeggiata di un distratto	7
L'H in fuga	11
<i>Graphic novels</i>	
Questa mattina ti ho perso	4
Hai qualcosa da dirmi?	0
Mariolina mia	1
Tornano tutti a casa	1
Andrea ama Anna dai capelli sporchi	1

Table 18. Students' distribution of intent/desire to read further in a FL after the experiment.

Q14. Do you intend/desire to read further in Italian or in a foreign language?				
Definitely not	Unlikely	Not sure	Probably	Definitely yes
0	0	0	6/16 37.5%	10/16 62.5%

Table 19. Distribution of reasons for reading further in a FL after the experiment.

Reasons	Participants (tot. 16/16)
FL reading enhances language and cultural knowledge	11/16
FL reading is motivating and enjoyable	5/16
FL reading promotes a sense of achievement	2/16
FL literary texts are accessible/not so difficult to read	2/16
<i>* some participants gave more than one reason</i>	

Table 20. Students' distribution of intent/desire to read further in a FL after the follow-on experiment⁶.

Q8. Do you intend/desire to read further in Italian or in a foreign language?				
Definitely not	Unlikely	Not sure	Probably	Definitely yes
0	0	1/19 5%	11/19 58%	7/19 37%

Table 21. Distribution of teachers' views on their role in developing students' reading habits when CLTs are deployed in the FL classroom.

Q17. When I use creative literary texts in the FL classroom, my role as a teacher is to allow students to improve their reading habits in the target language.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree	tot
1	2	4	13	13	33
3%	6%	12,1%	39,3%	39,3%	100%

Table 22. Distribution of teachers' answers to item 9 in the teacher questionnaire.

Q9. I believe that students can learn a FL through reading creative literary texts.					
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree	tot
0	2	7	17	7	33
	6%	21,2%	51,5%	21,2%	100%

Table 23. Distribution of teachers' use of literary excerpts and full literary texts.

Excerpts	Full texts	Do not specify	Total of teachers who use/have used CLTs in the FL class
18/29 62%	11/29 37%	2/29 7%	29/29 100%
Of which 2 also use/have used full texts (i.e. short stories)	Of which: 4/29: short stories 7/29: poems		<i>*Teachers could choose more than one option</i>

⁶ I.e. 14/15 students in the experimental group and 5/13 students from those who only took part in the follow-on experiment.

Table 24. Distribution of students' answers to item 15 in student questionnaire 1.

	Agree/Strongly agree Non-experimental group	Agree/Strongly agree Experimental group	Total
Q15. When I work with a literary text in the foreign language classroom, I expect my teacher to allow me to express my opinions about the text.	30/34 88%	15/16 94%	45/50 90%

Table 25. Number of teachers who agree or strongly agree with question 15 in TQ.

	Agree/Strongly agree
Q15. When I use a creative literary text in the FL classroom, my role as a teacher is to promote language learning, just as it is for any type of text I use in the FL classroom.	27/33 81%

Table 26. Number of teachers who agree or strongly agree with question 16 in TQ.

	Agree/Strongly agree
Q16. When I use a creative literary text in the FL classroom, my role as a teacher is to allow students to enjoy an experience that motivates them to use the target language.	32/33 97%

Appendix Q: Chapter Four and Five, Quotations

Quotations from student pilot (SP) of text one, field notes (FN) and extra notes (EN) from classroom observations (CO), pilot student questionnaire 1 (PSQ1), pilot student interview (PSI), pilot teacher interview (PTI), student questionnaire 1 (SQ1), student questionnaire 2 (SQ2), student questionnaire 3 (SQ3), student interview (SI), teacher questionnaire (TQ) and teacher questionnaire (TI)

Quot. 1:

I really enjoyed the story and found it very entertaining, it was really interesting to read from the perspective of Anandita and it was really funny to read about her parents meeting her boyfriend for the first time! The plot is very easy to follow, which really helped when reading the story. (SP2)

Quot. 2:

I have read the extract and very much enjoyed it. I felt that the piece was very evocative of aspects of both Italian and Indian culture and really captured a lot of the feelings that young people have, especially those living in a country who are of a foreign background. (SP3)

Quot. 3:

I tried not to use the dictionary too much. I only used it for a few phrases and verbs which I did not know. Otherwise, I tried to draw out the meaning from the context. I also found the glossary extremely helpful for certain idiomatic phrases. (SP1)

Quot. 4:

The glossary was very helpful and made the piece a lot easier to read, I did use the dictionary but after a while found that I did not need it as much and a lot of the words I looked up were synonyms of words I already knew which helped when connecting them to the story. After a while, I also found that I could connect a lot of the story together without using the dictionary and then I only needed it to look up a few very unfamiliar words and that I could rely a lot on the vocabulary and grammar that I already knew. (SP2)

Quot. 5:

The lesson was very nice! Students enjoyed it a lot. [...] They used Italian a lot, more than they normally do. I was just walking around, helping them and clarifying when something was unclear. I noticed that they were helping each other, explaining linguistic structures, grammar rules and vocabulary. [...] (CO, FN6, p. 1)

Quot. 6:

I have already completed the first two sessions on *Curry di pollo* [i.e. text one]. I am now getting ready for the third one: I have many doubts (i.e. are the students enjoying it? Am I doing it right? Should I be more determined?) and I feel the pressure as I feel I do not have enough time to work on the text – while being aware that students need a long time to familiarise themselves with reading FL literature and to start enjoying it. [...] (CO, EN1, p. 1)

Quot. 7:

We did the activity “Book review” (i.e. exercise 3, Appendix F) adapted from ER [Extensive Reading]: students had to prepare to discuss their reading for three minutes in pairs (they were guided to collect information about the story they were reading or had read). The activity went well: they used Italian and were

able to discuss, longer than usual. I mean, longer and with more interest than when they work with the textbook. The activity went on more than six minutes as I saw them enjoying it. Then we had fifteen minutes reading; students picked up a new text. (CO, FN13)

Quot. 8:

I like literature because it makes me think and introduces me to new ideas, thoughts etc. Also because it gives an insight into the mind of the author. (SP1, PSQ1, p. 1)

Quot. 9:

I like literature because anything in there is possible. Limits do not exist, it is possible to play with words AND ideas and the pleasure that I get from a well-written sentence is priceless. (SP2, PSQ1, p. 1)

Quot. 10:

I like literature because it allows me to escape for a little bit. [...] (SP3, PSQ1, p. 1)

Quot. 11:

I like literature because it enables me to imagine another world and provokes me to think. (SP4, PSQ1, p. 1)

Quot. 12:

[...] at the beginning, I was the kind of student that would look for every single word on [sic] the dictionary and this really helped me to learn a lot of new vocabulary. Now I don't do this anymore, but literature still teaches me a lot: sentence structure, the use of language, and much more. After reading, the sounds remain in my mind and structures which are normally perceived as very different from my native language start to be perceived as natural. (SP2, PSQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 13:

Interviewer: Literature is not often used at beginner level because foreign language teachers think that it is too linguistically and culturally difficult. What do you think about that?

SE3: It is not too difficult if you don't use a text that is too difficult [...]. As long as it is appropriate for students' level, I do not see why not!

(SE3, PSI, p. 2).

Quot. 14:

When teachers think about literature, they think of literature with a capital L, i.e. canonical literature. [...] Between students and teachers there is a generation gap: twenty-years-old students' literary taste is completely different from that of teachers who are thirty, forty or sixty [...]. Moreover, I think there is a difference in students' and teachers' idea of how to use literature in the classroom: [...] it seems to me that many FL teachers want to teach literature instead of using it as a resource. This is why they choose canonical literature: because that is the literature that counts for them and that they want to teach. [...] (T4, PTI, p. 3)
[My translation from Italian]

Quot. 15:

I often find it very difficult to understand and it's hard to enjoy what you don't understand. (S25, SQ1, p. 2)

Quot. 16:

It is difficult to analyse and draw conclusions from and can be too subjective at times. (S22, SQ1, p. 2)

Quot. 17:

It involves too much reading. It almost always requires analysis and I'm not particularly good at it. (S9, SQ1, p. 2)

Quot. 18:

The analysis and in depth study of works ruins the reading experience. It is like breaking it down and putting it back together to then answer an exam question/studying it. The joy of reading is lost. (S16, SQ1, p. 2)

Quot. 19:

The literature often taught at school/at university is often very old fashioned and sometimes archaic sounding, thus, difficult for me to get into. (S40, SQ1, p. 2)

Quot. 20:

I enjoy reading it [literature] for pleasure, but not studying/analysing it as such. (S20, SQ1, p. 1)

Quot. 21:

I love to read literature but I find analysing it very difficult both in English and other languages, and sometimes when studying it in the past I felt I was being told what I ought to think about the literature rather than just enjoying it for what it is. (SE7, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 22:

I like literature because [it] is an obvious source of entertainment. I only wish that I had more time I could dedicate to reading it for pleasure. [...] some aspects of studying it can be quite tedious – especially when it feels like you are trying to extract motivation of the author where those motivations were not present. (S29, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 23:

Especially when there's an exam involved, I think, at school that was the main problem because the teacher didn't have time to do it [to introduce a literary text to the class] gradually because there was an exam so just all the ideas were like thrown at us, it puts a lot of people off reading. You know, I read all the time at home in my spare time. I can go through quite a big book in a day or less and other people don't read because they say, you know, 'we have to do so much at school' and they don't want to read at home and I think that's a shame. (SE7, SI, p. 4)

Quot. 24:

I think the word literature and the word reading...everyone goes "oh no, reading!" I think because it is the university...I think there is this assumption that the department would be pushing texts that are kind of "oh, you should know this!", Dante and Petrarca or something... [...] (SE13, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 25:

Normally when a teacher says about a literary text you think it is going to be something old and boring [...]. When someone says 'literature'...because when I used to go at school and studied literature we used to go

through old books and things like that, so I kind of just had that thought in my head...I don't know why!
(SE6, SI, p. 1)

Quot. 26:

Literature usually is not a modern piece of text [...] (SE5, SI, p. 1)

Quot. 27:

In the FL classroom I enjoy using literary texts as it exposes students to many levels of nuance in the FL and in their native language. (T1, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 28:

I think that creative literary texts can play an important role on [sic] the process of a L2 acquisition. They are a great source for acquiring new vocabulary as well as idioms and a good opportunity to learn more on cultural aspects of the language. Although I have not had the opportunity to use creative literary texts in my classroom, I think that they can be of great help for introducing language topics in an unconventional manner. (T13, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 29:

I think that using creative l. t. [literary texts] is a means and way of cultural and intercultural learning, a way to show students the multifacetous [sic] ways of using a language and also a possibility to show them that, first of all, they are able to understand the content/context of a text without understanding every word and also for them to see in how many different ways language can work. (T19, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 30:

Creative literary text [sic] need to be used as they represent one style of writing. They can provide a useful starting point for exercises in the target language. They are useful to encourage close reading. They are particularly useful for teaching the use of past tenses. (T21, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 31:

They are a great opportunity for advanced learners to have a taste of the cultural aspect of the foreign language they are learning [...]. (T2, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 32:

I enjoy using literary texts with students as they allow for a variety of discussions, not simply about grammar and structure but also about cultural issues, style and metaphor/images. (T17, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 33:

I feel inspired and motivated to create and adapt my lesson using the cultural references offered by the literary text chosen in order to introduce cultural aspects of the target language to my students. In addition, I enjoy observing my students' reactions to [...] a culture other than their own. (T26, TQ, p. 3) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 34:

[...] creative literary texts are an excellent way to integrate culture into our classrooms. (T33, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 35:

I believe that being able to use literary texts, even if not exclusively, is a wonderful thing. This is both because of their intrinsic artistic value, and because they allow the students to get closer not only to the language, but also to the culture and to what language creates. (T5, TQ, p. 3) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 36:

[...] creative texts appeal to the students' own creativity and can provide a different sort of access to the language. (T10, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 37:

I like giving students extracts, from a novel or from a short story, that they can freely interpret (e.g. "What happened before?", "What will happen next?") and which allow them to use their imagination, to talk and to invent a story. This is the only aspect that I am interested in: to invent a story. [...] (T20, TQ, p. 3) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 38:

[...] studying a foreign language is not only about the grammar or about reading texts. It is also about finding pleasure in reading, getting inspired by reading, and reading something for pleasure not for doing an exercise [...]. Literary texts are beautiful; they have stylistic value. [...] Also, an artistic text gives you the desire to read it again, you like it, you read it once, twice, three times...once for sure, but then you can reread it, it is something that stays with you, it has a different value. Whereas when students do an exercise or read a text written for foreign learners, they forget about it immediately afterwards...a literary text can move you, therefore you may want to read it again. (T32, TI, p. 1) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 39:

I haven't had great experience in using literary texts and this is probably due to the fact I'm used to thinking they are too difficult for the levels I usually teach to (A1-A2). That is why I would say I fear teaching a foreign language through creative literary texts, even though I'm fond of literature! The main problems are both the idea I have to know a lot about the author or period treated - and so I often don't feel confident enough in teaching literary texts - and the fear my class won't be interested in literature. (T29, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 40:

I remember that feeling of reading foreign language short stories for the very first time and I was about 18 and I remember it's just... I didn't understand a word of it, I could see that they were words and I was just swimming around the page, and I had no idea of what was going on, it was just so... it was like walking through bricks, so difficult! (T15, TI, p. 4)

Quot. 41:

[...] at school we studied Pascoli, Leopardi, Foscolo [...]: we studied the classics, important writers from the 20th century, so that is literature for us. [...] We studied a kind of literature that is difficult. Personally, I did not understand anything about literature. Therefore, with this experience in mind I think: "wow, it is difficult...I, a native speaker, studied those texts and it was very hard. A foreign language learner will never be able to make it!". (T32, TI, p. 7) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 42:

[When I was a student] I used to read summer holiday books, very easy books...but I did not feel like I was reading a book. I knew those texts were written for foreign learners, therefore I would have not said “yes, I read a book”; I would have said “well, I read a simplified book...so I will never be able to read a real author”. (T29, TI, p. 4) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 43:

T29: [...] Maybe I feel insecure because I feel I have to know everything about the author and the historical context. I know that, in front of me, I have demotivated people and I have to make them like it [literature], and this makes me anxious. Or, if I have experienced readers who read a lot in front of me, educated people I teach literature to, I fear that they might know more than I do, and I cannot follow them.

Interviewer: So, when you use a literary text in the FL classroom, do you feel like you are teaching literature? Do you feel this responsibility?

T29: Oh [*laughing*]...well, I wasn't thinking about teaching the language anymore!

(T29, TI, p. 8) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 44:

[...] I like reading and it is probably why I came to [this university], because of the literature here. I've always wanted that to be part of my course and to be able to sort of engage in a culture and in a history of the language that way. (SI, p. 4)

Quot. 45:

Around the time I have done that questionnaire I had done a text in Spanish [as a FL] that I didn't understand at all, it was really difficult and I found it the opposite of motivating because it was too much. I think we were reading a play and I didn't understand, so little I understood that I thought it was horrible, [...]. So, I suppose I still had those feelings [...]. (SE13, SI, p. 2)

Quot. 46:

I enjoy reading anyway, and I find that it is a great way to learn new vocabulary in an interesting way, as well as sometimes learning about foreign cultures and histories. I have already purchased some Italian and French books of the genres that I usually read [...]. (SE2, SQ3, p. 2)

Quot. 47:

I was quite excited [to start reading the literary texts in Italian for the experiment] as I learn a lot from reading [...].

[...] I am really motivated to learn Italian, [...] it's really a nice language, I really like it. Now I've started learning it and I feel like...you see, I know French and Spanish...it really motivates me because I know I can build it up a lot faster. (SE4, SI, p. 1)

Quot. 48:

I found the activities very difficult because interpreting literature is hard for me [...] but I enjoy reading the book at home. I love using extra reading to improve my language skills but I would like to do it in my own time because I feel under pressure to come up with ideas. (SE7, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 49:

Reading literature in a foreign language can prove quite difficult and therefore demotivating, it is important that when doing so the teacher has a genuine passion for what she is teaching and makes the lesson interesting and provides help, so that it becomes easier for people to follow. (S2, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 50:

I did find that some literature I was exposed to in both Italian and German were sometimes not particularly engaging and I found it difficult to motivate myself to concentrate on them. (S29, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 51:

If [teachers] pick topics that we [i.e. students] [...] can relate to, I think it would make us more interested and more want to learn the vocab and the grammar within the stories. (SE9, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 52:

[Teachers should] keep it interactive and [should do] something that motivates them [i.e. students] to read the next part of the story. Depending on the person, do different exercises to keep them interested, [...] try to include everyone. (SE4, SI, p. 5)

Quot. 53:

I did think that *Curry di pollo* [i.e. text one], the plot of it, was good. It wasn't too complicated, it wasn't really boring, the things that happen are funny...so, it sort of makes you want to carry on reading it a bit more [...]. (SE5, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 54:

The language was not too hard to understand and it was good to read about a relatable and current topic. (SE11, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 55:

I enjoyed reading *Curry di pollo* [i.e. text one] because the language was surprisingly quite easy to understand; however, it wasn't boring and I learnt new words [...]. I found the genre quite playful and light-hearted and I appreciated the modern context which kept me motivated. (SE13, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 56:

I really enjoyed reading this book [i.e. text one] as it enabled me to face reading [a short story] in Italian without it being a daunting or stressful experience. It [uses an] informal style and [...] was comical. Due to this, it made it relatively easy to read and understand and thus has motivated me to read other books in both the languages that I study. (SE15, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 57:

I found the story interesting and entertaining to read. The language wasn't too difficult which means it wasn't frustrating to read. (SE16, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 58:

The story itself was fun and easy to follow, which made me want to carry on reading it. It was also something we could all relate to as we have all had arguments/problems with parents. (SE4, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 59:

I thought the themes of the story were very relevant to our age group and I think this is the main reason why I enjoyed it. (SE9, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 60:

I really enjoyed working on *Curry di pollo* [i.e. text one] [...]. I actually found myself wanting to know what happened next in the story. (SE10, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 61:

SE3 was very active [in today's class]: she was explaining pronouns [that appeared in a passage of the text] to SE12, which was surprising since SE3 is usually quite silent in the normal class and does not seem to get grammar so easily. SE13, who is often distracted in the normal class, was taking active part to the activities (e.g. volunteering during whole-class activities); also, she was having fun during group work and proposing solutions for writing the dialogue [i.e. exercise 8b, Text One - Activity sheet, Appendix B]. SE2 was also very engaged. [...] Students wrote funny dialogues: they reused some vocabulary learnt (e.g. *marito indiano; sposarsi; ragazzo/fidanzato; Makku*), they made reference to events and characters in the story. This proves that they understand the story and the characters, while enjoying the reading, which is the most important thing for me [...]. (CO, FN6, p. 1)

Quot. 62:

During the 15-minute in-class reading, they [the students] were all very concentrated and silent. Apart from SE14 (who, I believe, does not care much about what we are doing) and SE12 (who has never shown any special attachment to the course in general), none of them was distracted or looking bored. They were very attentive and focused. [...] After the reading, I asked them to discuss in pairs what they had read: they could speak about the story and/or about the language (e.g. new/interesting/difficult words/expressions, sentence structure) and ask for my help. They spoke a lot, really a lot! I was surprised: I gave them 5 minutes at first but then I extended for 2 minutes more as I did not want to interrupt their work. In the normal class, students never speak as much and as actively. (CO, FN7, p. 1)

Quot. 63:

Interviewer: I noticed you volunteered more than in the normal class, and your participation was more active and enthusiastic. How do you feel about this?

SE13: I think I felt more enthusiastic about it because I kind of knew what was going on, which sometimes wasn't the case in the language class.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

SE13: Sometimes in the language classes on the workbook...it was just with the grammar or something I'd go 'oh, I'm a bit lost'. I wouldn't really contribute much because I think I probably got this wrong, I probably missed some words. With *Curry di pollo* [i.e. text one] I understood more what was happening. I'm not usually scared to get something wrong but I liked the challenges of 'what do you think this might mean?'...yes, I suppose I did contribute a bit more, I didn't really think about it, but probably it was because I was more engaged in it I enjoyed it a bit more.

(SE13, SI, pp. 3-4)

Quot. 64:

Students discussed the two open-ended questions in pairs: they spoke a lot, in Italian. Today, for the third time, I noticed that the use of Italian is increasing. I think they use it more than they normally do in the normal class. Maybe because the text gives them meaningful things to talk about? Maybe they feel that they have more to say about it? (CO, FN7, p. 1)

Quot. 65:

During the exercise, they [the students] used Italian all the time [...]. I am quite satisfied with their use of Italian. I have noticed that they use it more: could this be because they have more opportunities to do so? Could this be the consequence of the activities [...]? Alternatively, of the topic, the characters [...] of the literature? (CO, FN8, p. 1)

Quot. 66:

They [the students] got the protagonist's concept of leaving in a *seminterrato*. They understood the feelings of the protagonist: SE13 said he lives in a place that is like a *prigione*, and SE16 added that it is like this as there are *sbarre* in the house's windows. SE11 said that he wouldn't like to live there as it is *schifoso*; SE9 said that to her it is too *buio*; [...] SE5 thinks that the protagonist feels *intrappolato* as he is isolated from the real world [...]. (CO, FN9, p. 1)

Quot. 67:

I think that I spoke more in [the experimental classes] because we had more of a chance to speak to each other. I don't feel like I speak a lot in normal classes [...]. (SE5, SI, p. 5)

Quot. 68:

I think you [the teacher-as-researcher] encouraged us as well to try, if we wanted to say something, to try and say it in Italian. I think that definitely helped a lot. I do think I tried to use more Italian in our literature classes because, especially when we were answering questions about what we just read, often the vocabulary you needed for the answer [...] was already given in the text: it was just a case of reformulating the words or like changing the word order to give the right answer...I think that helped in learning new language and structures. [...] (SE6, SI, p. 4)

Quot. 69:

It was different language use [...] there was vocabulary in there that I wouldn't have known just studying in the textbook, so definitely it widened the language use in that respect. [...] I found it easier to use Italian more because I didn't feel as much pressure, [...] it doesn't matter if you get it wrong, you just say what you want to say so...then I was like 'OK I'll say it!'. It wasn't like we had any strict grammar rules, even if we were saying something and we said it wrong you [the teacher-as-researcher] would still say that is fine! It made feel like I wasn't being tested or anything; it was just being up to give my own opinion. (SE9, SI, p. 5)

Quot. 70:

[...] you'd read a paragraph and you'd use words from the paragraph to talk about it [...]. I think in discussions between each other we [the students] used a bit more Italian than normal. (SE13, SI, p. 4)

Quot. 71:

I think I've always been told...all my teachers always [...] tell me, to broaden your knowledge and make you sort of more fluent and comfortable with the language, [you have to do things like] reading books, watching TV and things that help you a lot with learning a language. I think I was kind of accepting it but I hadn't really tried it and because I've seen now that it actually works, I think I'll definitely be interested. I sort of know I should read a bit more because it does really help, it really does. (SE6, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 72:

I never really would have thought about reading books before. I didn't think it would be that beneficial. I always thought, not a waste of time, but I can use my time better maybe looking at grammar in the textbook or something. But now that I have read a short story in Italian, I realise that you can learn a lot from it even though whilst you are reading you may not think you are learning [...]. I think that helps the understanding more [...]; the vocab was actually going in rather than going over my head. I definitely think is a good idea to do it more in modern languages [...]. (SE9, SI, p. 6)

Quot. 73:

With the textbook it was a bit less inclusive because we had to follow the structure of the textbook, which was fine, but it was nice with the story we can talk about it at any point because it is not like "we have to learn this unit or this lesson" [...] but we can talk about different parts of the pages at any point. [...] I think that was better like that. (SE4, SI, p. 4)

Quot. 74:

I obviously enjoyed *Curry di pollo* [i.e. text one] more because I found that in the other lessons it was more repetitive because we were just following [...] the [text]book and there wasn't really anything to add because it doesn't really have a meaning or a plot [...]. Whereas the story, we could follow what was happening and it was funny...and there were little things there that grasp my attention more than the textbook does. (SE5, SI, p. 2)

Quot. 75:

I think reading [...] the story [...] helped because it gave me something to follow. I know we were following the story in the textbook as well, but I felt like the story of *Curry di pollo* [i.e. text one] was more developed and I could learn more specific things like cultural things. It made me want to read the story more and obviously learn Italian more. (SE9, SI, p. 1)

Quot. 76:

[...] [P]ersonally, it made me feel good because I understood more than I thought [...] from reading the story. I thought I would struggle and that it was going to be difficult [...], but once I got into it...I feel really happy because I know more than I thought I did, which motivates me to get more from it. (SE4, SI, p. 4)

Quot. 77:

It is motivating to eventually be able to read a whole page of Italian and understand it. (SE8, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 78:

It made me feel a lot more confident I suppose because I thought "I can do this"...and this is a natural text, it is not something from the workbook that is made for people learning, [...]. It is a natural Italian thing. [...] Maybe I was looking forward to it a bit more, I suppose, because it felt like working through a text is more

satisfying [...]. When you finish it and you realise you understood most of it and you've spoken about it, is nice. [...] I was achieving something and it felt like I'd achieved something. (SE13, SI, p. 1)

Quot. 79:

Interviewer: Literature is not often used at beginner level because foreign language teachers think that it is too linguistically and culturally difficult. What do you think about that?

SE6: I would have agreed with that statement before I studied it myself, but I think that as long as you are given the right materials and help through reading it, as long as you can understand the gist, I think being able to complete something like we did, a piece of literature, for beginners especially, I think it actually gives you a confidence boost and is really beneficial to you because you realise you can do it and then is helpful and you can look back and you can take things that you've learnt from the text and use it in your language.

(SE6, SI, p. 4)

Quot. 80:

Reading pieces of literature with varying topics and themes is very motivating as it enlightens your knowledge and allows you to read and experience cultures and lives you might not have previously known about or come across. The different styles of writing are also interesting and the differing levels of language are challenging yet intriguing and fascinating. It can be very hard to read at times but this certainly helps to improve your language by exposing you to vocabulary and structures that you might not necessarily come across in day-to-day life. (SE11, SQ3, p. 2)

Quot. 81:

Motivation originates from the desire to better understand the artistic text, the literary text. But in order to understand it better you necessarily have to improve your comprehension, your FL skills. [...] The more you know [the FL], the more you enjoy [the CLT]! (T32, TI, p. 2) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 82:

I enjoyed Italian literature very much because it is vastly different to what I'm used to due to the diverse topics explored and the structure of most of the pieces. I much prefer reading shorter stories as opposed to long novels as I feel I can engage and understand shorter texts more so I would probably venture to read shorter pieces of text in the future. (SE11, SQ3, p. 2)

Quot. 83:

I think reading in a foreign language in any form is beneficial when learning. You can pick up new vocabulary and structures by actually seeing how it is used which makes it more interesting. (SE6, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 84:

I have always enjoyed reading and, although reading in foreign languages is much more difficult, it helps me extend vocabulary and become more familiar with natural syntax of that language [...]. (SE7, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 85:

I thought it would be hard at first but through *Curry di pollo* [i.e. text one], I have realised that it is a very useful way to learn the language and understand the culture, which we don't always learn about through textbooks. (SE9, SQ2, p.2)

Quot. 86:

I find reading foreign novels helps my language learning. In a similar way to when being submerged in the language and culture, when reading foreign literature, one can more easily associate new vocabulary with memory/function and thus learn vocabulary more effectively [...]. (SE12, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 87:

I don't really read much at home, so if we hadn't done this with the story I probably wouldn't be motivated to want to read more in Italian. [...] I think I am more motivated now because I know it can be interesting, I can learn things from it. (SE4, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 88:

I think [I will read further in a FL] as it is a very rewarding experience and certainly feels less like academic work as you can read whatever you like to improve your language. I don't know how likely I am to select a foreign text over an English [i.e. her L1] text though as I like to pick up a book to relax and (as lazy as it sounds) you certainly have to put in more effort reading a foreign text. On the other hand, I think that's largely to do with my confidence with the language, so as this improves I feel like I'm more likely to look for foreign reading material to gain that feeling of accomplishment I get with reading in Italian. (SE13, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 89:

I find it interesting, and quite rewarding when you can read for a while without having to check a word in the dictionary because it shows how much you are learning in that language and how you are progressing. It's also important, I think, with regards to understanding the culture of another country; you can learn a lot about the society of a country from its literature, I think [...]. I will continue to read in Italian for fun; I won't just read for work set by the university lecturers because I think it's important you read for pleasure in different languages, not just because you're obliged to. (SF4, SQ3, p. 2)

Quot. 90:

When reading literature in a foreign language I usually have to sit with a dictionary and search vocabulary as I go. (SE2, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 91:

Sometimes reading literature in a foreign language can be especially tiring because it is frustrating when you have to look up every single word just to understand the meaning of one sentence. (SF1, SQ3, p. 2)

Quot. 92:

I think that studying texts in foreign language greatly helps language learning, as you are exposed to a wide range of vocab and styles of writing. It can be quite challenging as I do not understand a percentage of the vocab in most texts when reading for the first time. (S21, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 93:

I sometimes found it difficult to remember and keep track of all the words I have researched when reading a text. To help with this I usually write a glossary when reading the text which helps me to learn the vocabulary but also saved me time. (S33, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 94:

I, like many of my classmates, struggle to read in a foreign language because I find it frustrating when I come across a word I don't know. Therefore, I lose interest very quickly because I have to translate the text sentence by sentence which is very time-consuming. (S34, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 95:

Sometimes I can find it difficult to read and understand a text when I don't know the vocab / am having to translate every word. In this case, I find translating a few of the sentences into English [i.e. the L1] and writing them down can help: they act as a base for my understanding of the text. (S39, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 96:

I often find myself striving to understand every single word in a text which can make reading a slow and laborious task when working on challenging texts. The challenge for me is to work past that as most of the time one word is not important in understanding a sentence. (SE12, SQ2, p. 3)

Quot. 97:

[...] if I read I don't have to understand every word. I think that's the kind of my main point from it [the experiment]. It doesn't matter if you don't understand it all: just understanding the general meaning will still enable you to understand the whole story. (SE6, SI, p. 2)

Quot. 98:

At first I thought that because there were a lot of new words that I didn't know I wouldn't be able to understand the story, but I realised that there are ways of understanding a text like this. (SE9, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 99:

I was surprised by how much of the story I understood without looking up the meanings of unfamiliar words. This [...] gave me more confidence in what I knew and understood. (SE14, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 100:

[I]t [the experiment] made me realise that you don't have to translate everything; you are not going to understand everything that is going on and it is just...you would never read anything [...] translating everything. [...] I think that is something that I had to let go, which was trying to understand everything and to know exactly what was happening all the time, and just relax and try to get what I could from it. It is a better way of dealing with it I think. (SE13, SI, p. 4)

Quot. 101:

I used to read and then trying to translate in my head, but you [the teacher-as-researcher] always didn't want us to do that! [...] I would try and translate it straight away, but if you actually just read it and try to understand it in the language it is actually a lot easier because if you try to do word by word translating into English [i.e. the student's L1], I think it means that you don't understand as well as you can if you just simply read in the target language. Yes, it definitely changed the way I read in a foreign language. (SE9, SI, p. 2)

Quot. 102:

[...] it helped with me understanding not to look up everything, to get the gist more than literal translation. Whereas before, especially when I read in French, I do get the literal translation and then sometimes it takes forever to do it and I do not enjoy it as much: whereas I found that this time round with Italian story, when I

wasn't focusing on 'What does this mean? What does that mean?' I was understanding it, so thinking 'oh, OK, I get it!'. [...] So even though I wasn't understanding the literal translation, I could still get to the main point of what was being put across. I never used to do that before in language. So I guess it has changed the way I read actually because I would have usually looked up every word but I tried not to do that this time. (SE5, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 103:

The kind of exercises that you [the teacher-as-researcher] gave us, following each session that we read, they were really helpful because they deepen...like developed the understanding that you already had of the text. If I was stuck on a part I didn't understand [...] and I just skipped over it, even though I understood the general meaning, using these exercises helped me to understand these words I'd missed out or these phrases I'd missed out, and I think they did...they do obviously add to the meaning and to my appreciation of the text so if you can understand it all it is obviously better and I think this kind of exercises helped you to do it. (SE6, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 104:

[...] I picked up a lot of lovely words. I liked the fact that on the story you [the teacher-as-researcher] gave us the words you thought we wouldn't know and then translation next to it. It was good because it was there and it was a lot easier than having to read it not knowing what it is and looking it up in the dictionary, which is also a good practice, but it was easier, it makes it more fluent, it doesn't break up the text having to go check somewhere else and then lose what was going on which I've had to do with the other books, French books I've read. [...] I liked the fact that it was there. (SE4, SI, p. 2)

Quot. 105:

Shall I be honest? Maybe, since you were asking them the question, their answer could be influenced by the fact that you were also their teacher. They said that reading [during the experiment] stimulated them to read more: I would like to know whether they actually did it or not! (T11, TI, p. 3) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 106:

[...] well, this is what happens with me: I am not really a reader but if you suggest a book to me and we talk about it, I feel I want to read it [...]. (T11, TI, p. 4) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 107:

[...] if one does not have the habit of reading or does not like it or simply has never thought of doing it...if you [as a teacher] do not suggest any reading, they will obviously never have the opportunity to read in their life. (T29, TI, p. 4) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 108:

[...] if anything is going to help them [i.e. students] to change their reading habits, it will be the motivation coming from actually finding literature interesting, you know, seeing what it can teach about the language and the culture. (T17, TI, p. 3)

Quot. 109:

If you suggest a [literary] text, motivating and getting students involved, showing them that the foreign language is not so impossible to understand as they assume [...], this can make them less worried about the

language and, if you read it in class, [...] they may be curious to read it on their own. (T29, TI, p. 3) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 110:

I do think that there are students who are looking for things that they can do to improve their language competence and sometimes they don't know where to look and it seems crazy to us because we think that there are so many things that you could do, but in actual fact they want something that is quite accessible, that they can read in their own time and that is not necessarily related to something that is on their course, but nonetheless will help them with vocabulary acquisition, will help them deal with the variety of grammar structures. [...] I would say to them: "well, [...] read something, read some fairy tales or if you're interested in women's writing, read some women's novels. [...] in terms of literature, I tried to see what they might be interested in, and then suggest something because I think that it is helpful [...]. So I do think that there are students who are looking for advice about literary material that they might read [...]. It seems inconceivable that we [i.e. teachers] have to advise them on that kind of thing, but the problem perhaps is that there is so much available that they don't know where to start. [...] (T15, TI, p. 5)

Quot. 111:

Q22. In your experience, what impact does the use of creative literary texts have on students' reading habits in the foreign language?

I believe that any work we do on reading skills will boost students' reading confidence, which can only be a good thing. (T9, TQ, p. 4)

Quot. 112:

Some [students] might read some short novels, books for young adults or translations of English [i.e. the L1] popular novels, but the impact is more likely to be discernible in the classroom via close attention to grammar rules (e.g. tenses, use of the subjunctive) and idiomatic expressions. (T15, TQ, p. 4)

Quot. 113:

Contextualized inputs definitely get students more engrossed in reading. Indeed, literary texts can convey a more creative use of the language, thus enriching a mere linguistic act. As a consequence, students' performance is improved, in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and stylistic nuances. [...] (T33, TQ, p. 4)

Quot. 114:

[Literature] refine[s] [students'] analytical ability so, whenever they read, they will read more carefully as a result. [...] I think, because they are engaging not just with things like syntax but understanding meanings and cultural references, I think it will help them to read more carefully. Literature can do that [...] and there is also this process of translating itself that helps them reading. [...] I think any kind of translation in details will help your reading skills. It would not be just literature but I think literature does do it as well. (T17, TI, p.3)

Quot. 115:

[W]hen I use a literary text these are the different steps:

- A small presentation of the author and the historical period (if necessary);

- Brain storming from the title or from an image representing the content of the text, so that they can bring out words and can make hypotheses on what they are going to read. [...];
- An activity on new words;
- Reading comprehension, with different kinds of activities (according to their level): questions, T/F, matching titles to paragraphs, drawing the scene (if they are students of Arts);
- When possible, a focus on the language and the sound of words, highlighting puns and figures of speech;
- Some questions about their feelings and opinions, then the students compare their first impressions (before reading) to what they have found out after reading;
- The lesson can finish with a creative activity: they can continue the story [...]; otherwise they can embody one character and write another kind of text, using the ideas and feelings they have just read and analysed [...]

(T11, TQ, p. 2)

Quot. 116:

Students need to understand whether they are reading just for sense, or for details. So whether they are deep reading, looking for particular information. [...] literary texts are longer [than other text types] so [students] need to know how to read longer texts and to have longer attention span and also to see how a story develops. (T12, TI, p. 3)

Quot. 117:

[...] most students do not read because they think that reading a book in a foreign language is like climbing a mountain, or that it is so demanding that all the pleasure of reading is taken away. The teacher should guide them towards the literary text to show them that they can read it on their own, or he should give them the tools to tackle it on their own. [...] maybe one should start with short texts; maybe the most important thing is making the students aware that there is no need to understand every single word. (T29, TI, p. 3) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 118:

Reading authentic materials such as literary texts in the FL can be overwhelming, especially for beginner students. Teachers should be aware of this and other difficulties. For example, reading in the FL can be stressful and slow. Students should know how to do active reading and how to cope with texts. Thus, teachers should guide students in the reading process. When reading is not painful any longer and students have the right tools and the experience, they are more willing to keep reading new material in the FL. (T32, TQ, p. 3)

Quot. 119:

[I have used literary texts] as inputs to work on reading comprehension, textual analysis and grammar. (T26, TQ, p. 2) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 120:

The literary texts were used to introduce vocabulary and grammar points. (T28, TQ, p. 2) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 121:

[I have used literary texts] with a focus on vocabulary and grammar and [to enhance] conversation. (T31, TQ, p. 2) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 122:

I prefer to read more modern things because I can relate to it more than old...old stories. [...] I think that teachers have to pick up topics that we can relate to. I think that would make it a lot easier because if they pick up something from the 18th century we can't understand or we can't relate to the feelings of the characters or anything, then it is going to make us disinterested and don't want to read on. (SE9, SI, p. 1 and p. 3)

Quot. 123:

I know it is important to study historically famous authors such as Moliere and Dante etc. but I wish there were some variation in texts as they are all old authors and very difficult and heavy texts so it would be refreshing to study more contemporary or modern authors that could be of more interest to people today. (S16, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 124:

Literature in foreign language should be at the right level/nor too hard as it can be demoralising (hard enough to be a challenge, but not too hard). (S18, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 125:

I would be more enthusiastic if more popular modern novels were used that would easily be referred to. (S40, SQ1, p. 3)

Quot. 126:

I think literature in foreign language learning is very important, but the literature chosen should stay up to date with the interests and culture of those studying it. For example, it's very hard for beginner language learners to read medieval texts in foreign languages or even what are considered to be in the canon of that language, when the vocabulary they will actually be using will be everyday modern language. (SF3, SQ3, p. 2)

Quot. 127:

All depends on what is being read: I think it depends on the plot, on the content of it. [...] If the main plot is understandable I think is more enjoyable. (SE5, SI, p. 2)

Quot. 128:

It was nice to see that it was modern and...towards our age group [...] and less heavy academically. [...] Less demanding, on a content wise rather than language. You know, learning about a family in Italy is much easier to understand and you can focus on the language rather than a difficult, medieval idea. (SE13, SI, p. 1)

Quot. 129:

I feel that literature is important in learning a language; however, it has to have a plot that is interesting. If I didn't enjoy the story, then I am less likely to want to put the effort into try to understand it. (SE5, SQ2, p. 2)

Quot. 130:

In as far as such texts are part of the TL [target language] culture they are essential for a holistic understanding of this culture. There is a danger of truncating “culture” to what is going on “now” and forget the past, which has shaped where we are at present, albeit not necessarily in directly attributable ways. Reading creative literary texts should open students’ minds to this complexity, and thus to the complexity of life and of people’s behaviour. (T12, TQ, p. 2)

Quot. 131:

SE13: [...] you think ‘oh no it’s going to be something really educational!’ if you see what I mean. But [...] this modern and easy-to-read in regards to the story was surprising...everyone was surprised about that. [...] In general I think it wasn’t what we were expecting but it was good!

Interviewer: Do you think that *Curry di Pollo* was educational? You know, in the way you were referring to Dante and Petrarca.

SE13: I think it was in regards to modern Italian culture and to see how the style of writing of modern writers is. Because that is the thing...it is the word ‘literature’ as well and then everyone automatically thinks old masterpieces...and it is a very different thing to...just a book, something that you might pick up and read for fun, you know? I don’t know many people who would sit with Dante’s *Inferno* and ‘ah, I’m really enjoying this!’ and I don’t think that there are many on a beach or something. I think that was nice to see there was something enjoyable and light-hearted, a bit funny, and good towards our age...so a teenage girl and family...it is relatable.

(SE13, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 132:

[...] I think it is all about the choice of the text so I think, maybe, when we are under pressure and we haven't got time choosing the right text takes a long long time. You know what? Sometimes you use the text that you like and the students don't like it and it makes you to make less of an effort because first of all you think of the time involved and then you sometimes fear that they might not like it or find it boring [...] when I look for translation passages I sometimes find something that I am really pleased with and then the students don't like it, and you feel quite frustrated because you just think about all the newspaper websites that you looked through, all the novels that you kind of leave through trying to find something that had the right combination of elements, and you feel personally quite aggrieved if it doesn't go down very well! [...] And for one text that you select there are probably five that you don't use. So it's a difficult call really, and I think as a teacher you have to feel engaged with it. I think sometimes personally you feel you want the things that you present students to reflect your interests as well, so it's quite hard to find something that you personally feel captivated by, but also that is right for them. (T15, TI, p. 8)

Quot. 133:

I have to tell students which books they are going to read and then they have to order them and they need them. I can't say “we get ten books and we are going to have a little look and you can each choose your favourite one”. I would like to be a lot freer; I would like students to enjoy, being freer and actually choosing what they want to read with me. But because the system is so closed and so assessment-focused and there are students’ rights and they need to know these things in advance...you know, we are expected to do all this

planning and so all the choices are taken away. And I think is this lack of choice – it is not that they necessarily dislike what we are reading them, but they did not choose it. (T12, TI, p. 8)

Quot. 134:

It is difficult to find texts that one can actually use or that one can make usable for lower levels while still being literature [...]. It would be nice but turns out to be impossible because literature is culturally and linguistically more difficult. Whereas, for instance, I can select another type of text [non-literary] and simplify it, I cannot alter literature in its expressed form because then it would not be literature anymore. I can select any other type of authentic text and simplify it...a literary text can be simplified with a glossary, with expedients, but I must keep it as it is in the original; but how can I keep it as it is if it is difficult? Therefore, I need to find literary texts for lower levels, but I cannot think of any...so, if someone gives me a list of literary texts that I could use, then I will use them! (T29, TI, p. 8) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 135:

I began my study with the idea that a literary text is like any other text that may be used in the FL classroom and, therefore, it can be deployed as other FL texts are deployed. However, now that I am searching literary texts appropriate for my students, I have slightly changed my mind because: 1) literary texts are not like other texts as I had to work on the ones I selected much more than I normally work on a FL text (i.e. looking for and reading longer texts, analysing their features and glossing them is a long and time-consuming work); 2) literary texts cannot be abridged or modified like non-artistic texts, as you want to keep their artistic features and keep them authentic. [...] (CO, EN5, p. 1)

Quot. 136:

I try to offer different types of literary texts (poems, short stories, graphic novels, etc.) but this is all up to me, even if I try and look for some advice on literature for young adults, literary texts for foreign learners, etc., nothing comes up: there are only literary extracts on FL Italian textbooks and nothing on the Internet. [...] furthermore, if I look at literary texts for teenagers, all I can find is canonical literature taught in school, which is exactly what I am trying to avoid. (CO, FN10, p. 5)

Quot. 137:

SE5: [...] I am not very good at literature analysis, so when I am reading it in another language I find it really hard to try to understand what they are saying and then I have to do the analysis on top. I'd rather that there'd be just no analysis and that is only "ok, this is what's happening" and "it's funny" and "I can understand it".

Interviewer: Did you expect literature analysis [during the reading of *Curry di pollo*]?

SE5: Yes, I expected some. But the stuff that we did wasn't really detailed like "why has the writer chosen to use the word 'green'?". It was more "why do you think this character is acting this way?". I prefer to do things like that rather than really detailed stuff like "why has the writer chosen to write it this way?".

Interviewer: Why do you think you prefer this approach?

SE5: Because I find it easier to understand: I can relate to this character and they are probably acting this way because of this; whereas there is more technique involved in...it is a lot more literature-based rather than content-comprehension-based when you have to analyse certain things about the author. Whereas what we did was more "what have you understood?", "can you rephrase what they've said and why it is this way?".

(SE5, SI, p.1)

Quot. 138:

I think we were able to...especially in speaking terms, we were able to give our opinions so I think that is why we were a bit more willing to do more speaking with the story [...]. [...] we were giving our own opinion it didn't matter if we were wrong or not because it was our own thought. So I think that's why it made it easier because we weren't worried about what people could think or anything. (SE9, SI, p. 4)

Quot. 139:

I guess that's what it is with the literature: it has kind of a lot to do with your interpretation of the text and your understanding [...] rather than saying this means this and this is the right answer to this. (SE6, SI, p. 1)

Quot. 140:

I think maybe when I was at college, at A-level, I was given some texts to read but again because they were older, I don't know, I didn't really bother to pick them up and read them. I think also because they didn't have many follow-up activities, I think they just said "here is some literature: go and read it!" and then that was it and I thought "that is not going to happen". If they were not going to engage with us, then I didn't really see much point, I just thought I might as well spend my time better to learn my grammar and vocab than do all that stuff. (SE9, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 141:

I think the way we were introduced to it [the literary text] was more...slightly gentle, rather than [...] "translate this!". (SE13, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 142:

I think that working in a group helps a lot [...] because if you don't understand something and someone else does, then it's a lot easier than going and looking up yourself. You learn a lot better if your friend explains it to you, so I really appreciated the group work that we did during the literature lessons [experimental sessions]. Not that we don't do any in the normal ones but I think there was more opportunity for discussion and conversation in the literature one. (SE6, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 143:

They [the students] enjoyed the group activity a lot. They were very active and amused during the exercise: they were laughing, searching words (using smartphone to translate, using the book to check the grammar, asking me directly) [...]. I was walking around, helping them and clarifying when something was unclear. I noticed that they were helping each other, explaining linguistic structures, grammar rules and vocabulary. It was very helpful even if they were doing it in English [...]. (CO, FN6, p. 1)

Quot. 144:

Interviewer: So, do you think that what a teacher does influences your appreciation of literature?

SE4: Yes, because if the teacher just gives us a book and just says do the exercises it'd be a bit like 'OK'...and you try to remember to do it but if you are doing it in class, doing it together and it is more interactive, people want to join it more. I appreciated more because I wanted to read it.

Interviewer: Did it happen to you? I mean to be given a book and to be told “read it and do the exercises”?

SE4: Yes, and it is just like “yes, I will because I have to” but it doesn’t motivate me to do it as much as if once every now and then the teacher would do an activity or an interactive game about the book beforehand or during, which makes me want to know what is the next part of the story, and carry on reading. So it’s better to interact with the students or the students interact between themselves than just having a book to read and exercises to do after.

(SE4, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 145:

The text was always introduced by a very brief presentation of the writer and by an activity to introduce key-words to facilitate text comprehension. Then, students would start reading the text individually and would answer comprehension questions to guide them through the reading. Exercises on grammar points and/or vocabulary would follow, based on the learning objectives of the lesson. Finally, through pair or group work, activities where students would discuss and debate with each other first and then with the entire class, sharing their own interpretations of and their points of view about the text, or parts of it, would follow. (T14, TQ, p. 2) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 146:

If the students’ level is advanced we find the main points of the text. Before that, we clarify the difficult words, then we try to find the main points of the text. For comprehension, we answer the questions mentioned in the text; if there is not, I would ask the students. Later, we decode the words and try to find the family words and put them in sentences. We also look at the language used in the text and the audience (first person or third person). Grammatically, we look at different features of grammar such as: past tense, present tense, imperative, etc. Students also are encouraged to reflect on the topic by writing few sentences about it. (T22, TQ, p. 2)

Quot. 147:

Depending on the curriculum and core rubrics requirements, I prepare activities to introduce the text, or a selection of it, to the students; conduct a more in-depth analysis of its genre, structure, content, context, and author; and, finally, work on it with a focus on the language, in terms of its communicative aspects as well as more specific grammar topics. In planning said activities, I try to address the four different types of learners, so that everyone in class has a chance to get their affective filter lowered, and collaborate with their peers. (T33, TQ, p. 2)

Quot. 148:

[We use] translation of extracts from novels both into English and into French. Extracts are mostly 20th or 21st century extracts. The aim is to test their [students’] close reading ability in both languages, their ability to write with style in their native language, to apply grammatical rules in the target language, and to encourage vocabulary learning in the target language. (T21, TQ, p. 2)

Quot. 149:

[...] how can you use literary texts? How do you read them? This is something that worries me: how can you read them in a way that is not boring for them [the students]. [...] Unless I use a literary text for linguistic work: say I select a text with a lot of *imperfetto* and then I analyse the *imperfetto*, I prepare comprehension

questions and an activity to make students speak about the content of the text. But I feel like literature can offer more and I do not know how to exploit that. (T29, TI, p. 7) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 150:

[I would like to] understand how I can use a literary text, exploit what its real potential is because I feel that there is a potential [...] and one could use it well, you could have beautiful lessons [...]. (T11, TI, p. 8) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 151:

In the FL classroom what you try to give to the students is an experience, which could be that of reading a text or also that of appreciating the ‘work of art’, the experience, the emotions [...]. (T32, TI, p. 2) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 152:

[...] if you have a teacher that really enjoys what they are doing, what they are teaching, you automatically want to do better and [...] you begin to enjoy it more. (SE5, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 153:

[...] if the teacher is enthusiastic and excited about it [the text] before you’ve even started, it is obviously going to influence your idea of what kind of text it is going to be and if they are not interested or enthusiastic about it, then why should you be? You haven’t really got any motivation or reason to be enthusiastic about it. (SE6, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 154:

Knowing that the teacher is keen to let you read a story [...] the fact that the teacher can relate to the story as well, I think that helps in the teaching because that makes us more motivated to want to read on. (SE9, SI, p. 3)

Quot. 155:

[...] we [the students] knew you [the teacher-as-researcher] were enjoying it, so you know, we were like “[she] really likes this and so it must be quite good!” and then because you liked it we were beginning to like the exercises more. I think the teacher’s emotions are a massive factor in any class, not just language. (SE5, SI, p. 4)

Quot. 156:

[...] you [the teacher-as-researcher] seemed to be enjoying it [the experimental class] more because we were participating more...it was a mutual thing so everyone enjoyed it more, which I think was quite nice because when you see that your teacher is passionate about something it makes you feel like...even if you are not, you want to be more passionate about it. (SE13, SI, p. 5)

Quot. 157:

[...] I think your [the teacher-as-researcher] teaching was more engaging when we were doing the story. [...] I think you showed you were willing for us to be able to understand, like you were quite encouraging that we would be able to understand [...]. (SE9, SI, P. 5)

Quot. 158:

[we will read the text] because I [the teacher] think that this is a beautiful text, that may engage you and that may help you think, use the language in a motivating way; or maybe it will make you think about something that you had never thought before, maybe I will introduce you to a new writer [...]. (T29, TI, p. 6) [*My translation from Italian*]

Quot. 159:

I am much more motivated when I use this text [*Curry di pollo*]: I selected it, I did it because I liked it and I knew it was right for my students. I feel confident while using it as I see that they follow me, they like it, they learn new words and are stimulated to talk. The textbook does not have the same effect on me: I do not like it that much, I find it quite heavy and sometimes uninteresting [...]. (CO, FN6, p. 1)

Quot. 160:

I feel very lacking in confidence when students do not show interest or do not show as much interest as I would expect. I feel so enthusiastic about this story and about the characters and I am working so hard to let them enjoy it, that sometimes I would just like them to show more enthusiasm. (CO, FN5, p. 1)

Quot. 161:

[...] when I believe in what I do, I am aware of what I am doing and I like it, I feel they [the students] like it and believe in it more. The level of my confidence affects my perceptions of students' reactions. (CO, EN2, p. 2)

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